

R. Desamere: His Treatise Upon the Noble Arte of Defense

(1st edition)

The Treatise Text:

To Her Hyghness, the honorable and most noble Mary Grace, Prynness of Glenn Abann and Duchess of Gatland. Upon the completion of thys little worke of fence from mine own hande I hoped to dedicate it to Your Grace who has always been a great patroness of the Arte of Defense. Knowing fondness in your hearte for the battlefield and the love you bear for those of your subjects who do practice the Arte it is my greatest hope that thys small worke of mine might please you and I ask you to accept it as a Twelfth Nyght gyft.

The practice of arms is a noble pursuit. Our ancestors bore arms in defense of their homes and country and it is only just and ryght that we continue the practice of arms as they did before us so that we may be able to protect what they built for us. Thus it is fitting and honorable that gentlemen should be well practiced in the Arte and that they spend their tyme in the pursuit of its mysteries and truth. For not only is it honorable and just that we practice the pursuits of our ancestors but pursuing the Arte is also a wholesome pastime that builds the health and strengthe of true Englishmen.

Of Crucial Aspects of the Arte: Judgment and Power

The foundations of the Arte are Judgment and Power. Through Judgment a fighter is able to understand how to fight, how to stand, how to attack, when to attack, how to defend, and what weaponnes are best to use against their opponent. However, Judgment can be gained through practice and experience as well as the study and keeping four simple precepts.

- A fighter should always take care to note the range of his opponent and stay out of his opponents range until he is prepared to attack.
- When considering ones range a fighter should ensure that they are using their range to their advantage so that they are positioning themselves so that their opponent is within their range yet they are not within his.
- A fighter should always strive to both attack and defend in one time.
- Attacks should be executed with aggression and ferocity.

However, a fighter can have all the knowledge in the world but without Power of body a fighter is not physically able to fight and Judgment will give him no aid. Without Power he can no hold his weaponnes nor can he oppose his opponents attacks with enough force to protect himself nor will he be able to execute attacks of his own. Power

is also crucial to a fighters ability to continue the fight for without it he lacks the stamina to physically fight as long as his opponent and when his body tires his opponent will use that opportunity to take advantage of him. Thus in addition to his pursuit of knowledge in the Arte he must also pursue strength of body. He should be active in many other manly artes and take care that he does not over indulge in wine or food but rather should live moderately striving to temper his consumption of wine and sweet meats with wholesome fare. He should pursue many other gentlemanly artes such as riding and guard against the temptation to spend his entire days indoors or in improper sport. Thus he will make his body strong and hearty and cultivate the strength, agility, and stamina, necessary, for a student of the Arte.

Of Measure, Distance, and Timing

As Power and Judgment are the foundation of the Arte of Defense, then Measure, Distance, and Timing are the cornerstones. Knowledge of these cornerstones will help lead to greater Judgment and greater Judgment will in turn lead to a greater understanding of the cornerstones as well. Timing is necessary so that a fighter may gain an understanding of the temp of the fight and the time it takes to execute and attack or movement. A fighter should always strive to both attack and defend in one time rather than two as taking more time leaves him vulnerable to attack from his opponent. Distance is necessary to understand the range within which a fighter can attack his opponent and his opponent can attack him. Measure, a child of Distance, is necessary so that a fighter may understand the distance of his movements as well as those of his opponent.

Of The Sword

There is an infinite variety of weaponnes available to a student of the Arte of Defense but none are as noble or as ancient as the sword.

Your sword should consist of a blade with a point and two edges for striking, a guard, a grip, and a pommel. The weaponne should be of reasonable length, keeping the height and build of the fighter in mind. Thus the sword of an average man should be between 1 and 1.2 yards in length.

The sword can be divided into three sections. The first parte, being the parte of the sword closest to the guard, is the strongest parte of the sword due to its width and proximity to the hand. Due to its strength, this portion of the sword should be used for parrying attacks and protecting the body. The third parte, being the tip of the sword and the section furthest from the guard, is the weakest portion of the sword. It is, however, faster and easier to maneuver than the forte making it ideal for thrusting. The second parte is neither stronger than the forte nor weaker than the foible. Rather it is between the two. It can be used for attacking with a blow or for defending from a blow by forming the True Cross.

The first thing to learn upon beginning your study of the arte of defense is how to hold the sword. Your right hand should grip the sword comfortably with your first finger held straight over the intersection of the guard and the quillions, pointed toward the end of the sword, and your second, third, and fourth fingers should gently wrap around the grip holding the sword securely in your hand. However, if you prefer, the first or second finger may be used to wrap around the quillions where they cross the guard to add strength.

Of Stance and Wardes

Once a fighter has mastered the composition of the weaponne and how to hold it, hemust then learn how to stand. You should always take care to stand comfortably with your feet shoulder width aparte and knees comfortably bent with your ryght foot turned towards your enemy and your left foot turned at a ryght angle to you ryght with your heels slightly out of line. Your torso should be upryght. You should not lean forward or backward because doing so would cause you to be off balance and position your head closer to you enemy. You should be always upryght with you torso turned from your enemy. You should maintain your ward with your ryght hand holding your left hand out, away from your body, taking care not to hold it straight out since when you hold it straight out you are telling your enemy your range with that arm. When you stand in your wardes you must stand so that you present the smallest target for your opponent and so your sword wardes and protects your body from attacks.

There are three main wardes in which you may carry your sword. The First Warde, or the Tall Warde, is framed by holding your sword high over your head with you arm held straight up from your shoulder and you palm facing down. You should point your tip down towards your enemys face or chest. However, take care not to hold your sword pointed to close to you body because your enemy could easily beat your weaponne into your body before an attack. Neither should you hold it too far out as your enemy can then beat your sword away and attack you from underneath. In the Second Warde, or the Open Warde, your weaponne should be held straight out from you shoulder with your upper arm held straight out from you shoulder and your forearm turned in towards your enemy. Your palm should face down and your sword should be pointed at your opponents chest. (insert woodcut from Di Grassi with broad warde fighting low warde and reliable open warde and low warde respectively) The Third Warde, or the Low Warde, is framed by holding your weaponne low by your ryght thigh, with your palm facing down and your sword pointed at your opponents chest. The Fourth Warde, or Forward Warde, is framed with a dagger or secondary weaponne in the off hand. You should stand with your ryght foot forward, but your torso refused so that your dagger or secondary weaponne is held out in front of your sword and your sword held back next to your torso at waist level.

It is important to remember that these wardes are not stances from which you should always fight. They are positions designed so that you transition through them as you fight so that they can provide protection as you and your opponent change position. You do not only want to fight your opponent in the Tall Warde because that leaves areas of your body open for attack. Rather, while you may want to begin in the Tall Warde, you will want to transition into the Low Warde after your first attack in order to protect areas of you body that you first attack left unguarded.

Of Paces

Once you have learned your wardes and how to stand, you will then learn how to move. All movement is made by forming a pace. You should take care not to make your pace too large as doing so will prevent you from being able

to move comfortably and quickly. It will also prevent you from being able to change your movements or adapt your fight quickly if your opponent changes his attack. You should also be careful not to make leaping or hopping movements either forward or backward but you should always take care to be firm and confident in your stance and movements, always maintaining contact with the ground as losing contact with the ground will cause you to lose your balance and control over your body position.

The most basic movement is the straight pace, which can be performed both forward and backward. To form a pace you must first stand in your guard and then you should raise the toes of your front foot, push off from your rear leg, and step one foot's length forward. You should then follow by moving your rear foot forward one foot width. When you finish your body and your feet should be in the same position you were before you started.

Once you can move forward and backward you should then learn how to move left and right. You may move laterally by means of two methods, a sliding step or a sloping step. To make a sliding step to the right you should first take care to stand in your guard with your right foot forward. From there you should first move your right foot one foot width to the right following it by moving the left foot one foot length to the right as well ending with your feet in the same relative position that they were when you began the movement. To make a sliding step to the left you should again stand in your guard with your right foot forward. From there you should move your left foot one foot length to the left, following it by moving your right foot one foot width to the left as well, again ending with your feet in the same relative position that they were when you began the movement. You should be careful when making a sliding pace not to make the pace too large as doing so will slow your movement and could affect your balance. A sloping pace is formed by moving your rear foot to the left diagonally past your front foot. This movement will void your body out of the line of attack and create an opening in your opponent's defense.

In addition to straight, sliding, and sloping movements a fighter should also be able to move circularly and should be practiced at executing the demi volte and true volte. To form a demi volte you should first stand in your guard with your right foot forward. From there you should move your rear foot circularly to the right until it is in line with your front foot. The true volte is formed in much the same way and the rear foot is moved circularly to the right until it is forward of the front foot.

Of Striking and Defending

It is imperative that you always take care to strike and defend at the same time. If you do not, choosing instead to strike without defending or defend without striking you are putting yourself into great danger. Every movement a fighter makes creates an opening through which their opponent can attack them. If you strike without defending then your opponent can easily void your attack follow your attack with an attack of his own and without a defense the fighter is left exposed to his opponent's attack. Similarly, if you defend without attacking you give your opponent the opportunity to recover themselves for a second attack.

It is also necessary that you always remember to execute your attacks with aggression and ferocity. Without aggression and ferocity your attacks will lack the needed emotion and violence to overcome your opponents defense. If a fighter lacks aggression he is in danger of overpowered by his opponent who will use the fighters timidity and lack of ferocity against him. You must never hesitate or falter when considering your attacks or your opponent will surely use your uncertainty against you.

When striking or attacking it is important to remember that you should take care to lead the attack with your weapon rather than your body. If you lead the attack by moving your body first not only are you depriving yourself of the defense of your weapon but you are also signaling your intentions to your opponent. Thus you should always take care to begin your attack by moving your sword first.

There are two basic attacks: the thrust and the cut. The Thrust is generally to be preferred over the cut as it is most often a faster attack requiring only that the attacker thrust their weapon forward at their opponent. However, there are times when it is faster to attack with a cut than a thrust. If an attacker strikes at their opponents head with a thrust and misses their target they should follow up their failed attack with a cut to the head or shoulder. Here the cut is faster than the thrust because the cut can be executed in one motion while a thrust would take two motions; one motion to bring the sword back in line and a second motion to attack the opponent again.

There are three basic methods which a fighter can use to defend himself. The first method is to use your weapon to oppose your opponents attack. When using this method of defense you should take care to always oppose the third section of your opponents sword with the first section of yours and to always parry your opponents weapon to the outside. In this way you will oppose the weakest portion of his weapon with the strongest section of yours. Once you have defended yourself and gained control over your opponents weapon in this fashion you may either move forward at a slope or straight pace attacking your opponent with a thrust. The second method a fighter can use to defend himself is very similar to the first but rather than simply oppose your opponents weapon with your own you should use your weapon to beat your opponents weapon out of line. This will generally open a hole in your opponents stance through which you can attack with a thrust. The third method with which a fighter can defend themselves is to void their body out of the line of attack using a circular, sliding, or sloping pace. Once you have voided your body you can then attack your opponent from a new line using a thrust. This method can be performed alone but it is also very effective when performed in conjunction with one of the first two methods.

On Who Hath the Advantage, The Attacker or The Defender

Many teachers of the Arte of Defense debate whether it is more advantageous to attack or defend first. Some argue that it is better to attack first because in attacking first you not only have the opportunity to potentially catch your opponent off guard, by attacking first you can gain control of the fight. Others argue that it is better to defend first because in defending you have the opportunity to watch your opponents attack and judge the best method with which you can defeat them. However, their arguments are in vain as there is no true advantage to be

had in either attacking or defending. True advantage can only be gained by having true pace, time, and space in the fight. Thus it is more important to take care that you always frame a good warde and a true pace than to try to find some pretend advantage in defending or attacking.

Of Attacking and Defending with Single Rapier

1. If your opponent attacks you from the Tall Warde you should frame the Low Warde, parry his attack to the outside with your hand while advancing your right leg forward and to the right of your opponent while striking him with a thrust to the lower torso. Similarly, you could also frame a Forward Warde executing the same parry, advance of the front foot, and thrust to the torso. By executing the parry and attack from the Forward Warde you have positioned your left hand slightly further forward so that you may begin your parry sooner. This warde also refuses your torso and allows you to generate more force in your attack. If your opponent holds his blade too close to his body, standing in the Low Warde, beat his sword into his body with your sword and execute a thrust to his torso.
2. If your opponent attacks you from the Open Warde you should frame a Low Warde, parry his attack to the outside with your hand. Advance with a slope pace while maintaining control over your opponent's weapon with your hand and execute a thrust to the torso. Similarly, you could also defend by framing a Forward Warde to once again place your off hand further forward for defending and refusing your torso to generate more force in your attacks.
3. If your opponent attacks you from the Low Warde you should take care to frame a Forward Warde. When your opponent attacks with a thrust parry his attack to the outside and, maintaining control over his weapon, close and attack with a thrust to the torso or execute a slope step to your opponent's right side and attack with a thrust to his torso or thigh.

Of Rapier and Dagger

Rapier and dagger is an aggressive and ferocious form and should be an integral part of every fighter's practice. In many ways it is one of the most important fighting forms a student can learn because the dagger is often the first secondary weapon that a student acquires. Furthermore, not only is the dagger capable of defending the body against attacks, it is also an offensive weapon which a fighter can use to attack his opponent.

A fighter should take care to remember to hold his dagger away from his body and not to hold it too closely for by holding it too closely to him he denies himself valuable time to parry his opponent's attack. It is also important to remember that with the dagger a fighter should always parry attacks to the outside line. If an attack is parried to the inside line his opponent can still strike him with his attack as he is parrying it across his body. Thus he should always take care not to parry attacks across his body but rather to the outside. The dagger should be used to defend the left side of the body from the upper thigh to the head and the sword should be used to defend the right side of the body and the lower left side. A fighter should guard against using the dagger to defend the lower left side of the body due to the length of the dagger and as doing so would cause the fighter to bring his torso too far out of line.

and may cause him to come off balance. In addition it would make it more difficult to move back into a warde to defend against your opponents next attack.

It is important when selecting a dagger for fighting that you choose a dagger that is substantial enough to withstand attacks from your opponents blade. It should be approximately 12-18 inches and stout enough to deliver a significant blow to your opponents sword upon a beat attack.

Of Attacking and Defending with Rapier and Dagger

1. If your opponent attacks you from the Tall Warde you should frame the Low Warde, parry his attack to the outside with your dagger while advancing your ryght leg forward and to the ryght of your opponent while striking him with a thrust to the lower torso. In addition, from your Low Warde you may parry his attack with your sword to your ryght, execute a sloping pace to the left and attack his ryght side with your dagger. Similarly, you could also frame a Forward Warde executing the same parry, advance of the front foot, and thrust to the torso. By executing the parry and attack from the Forward Warde you have positioned your dagger slightly further forward so that you may begin your parry sooner. This warde also refuses your torso and allows you to generate more force in your attack. If your opponent holds his blade too close to his body, standing in the Low Warde, beat his sword into his body with your sword and execute a thrust to his torso.
2. If your opponent attacks you from the Open Warde you should frame a Low Warde and parry his attack to the outside with your dagger. Advance with a slope pace while maintaining control over your opponents weapon with your hand and execute a thrust to the torso. Similarly, you could also defend by framing a Forward Warde, parrying his attack with your dagger to the outside and attacking with a thrust to the torso while advancing with a slope pace.
3. If your opponent attacks you from the Low Warde you should take care to frame a Forward Warde. When your opponent attacks with a thrust parry his attack with your dagger to the outside and, maintaining control over his weapon, close and attack with a thrust to the torso or execute a slope step to your opponents ryght side and attack with a thrust to his torso or thigh. Use the quillions of your dagger to help maintain control over your opponents blade.

Of Rapier and Buckler

Rapier and buckler is a fine and noble form that was practiced by our ancestors in ancient times and thus a form which every student of the Arte of Defense should be proficient in.

When practicing the arte of rapier and buckler combat a fighter should take care to hold the buckler out, away from the body, so that he might use the geometry of the buckler to defend the largest proportion of his body, as buckler forms a cone of defense, protecting a larger circular area behind it. He should also remember to take care

not to tilt the buckler, leaning the top portion towards his own head, for in doing so he presents opponent with an angle platform which his opponent might use to discharge attacks at his head.

The buckler should be used to defend the upper left side of the body from the head to the waist while the sword should be used to defend the entire right side of the body and the lower left side of the body from the waist to the feet. As with the dagger, a fighter should guard against using the buckler to defend the lower left side of the body as doing so would cause the fighter to bring his torso too far out of line and may cause him to come off balance. It would also make it more difficult to move back into a ward to defend against your opponent's next attack.

When selecting a buckler a fighter should take into consideration size and weight. A heavier buckler will be able to more stoutly withstand the blows of your opponent and can potentially be used to generate more force when beating your opponent's blade off line. However, a heavier buckler will become more difficult for a fighter to maintain form with and to hold aloft for the duration of the fight. A lighter buckler will be easiest to hold aloft and to move deftly during the fight but will not be as sure in its ability to withstand blows as a stouter buckler. Thus a fighter should take care when selecting bucklers for himself and choose judiciously a buckler that most closely suits his needs.

Of Case of Rapier

One of the most gentlemanly and noble forms of the art is Case of Rapier. Utilizing two swords this complex yet vicious form is often the favorite of many fine gentlemen.

When practicing Case of Rapier it is vital to remember to keep to the two blades on different lines so as to prevent them from being parallel to each other. If the blades are held so that they are parallel to each other your opponent can parry them into each other, using one blade to block the other. In addition, by keeping the two blades on different lines you are able to prevent your opponent from parrying them into each other and you are positioned so as to most easily attack and defend at the same time.

As you are fighting with two swords when you practice this form the sword in your right hand should be used to defend the entire right side of the body from the head to the feet. Likewise, the sword in your left hand should be used to defend the entire left side of the body from the head to the feet.

A fighter should give the same consideration to selecting weapons for Case of Rapier that he gives to the selection of all of his swords. He should consider not only how the sword looks and feels in his hand, but also its weight and balance. He should also consider the length of the weapon as well. The sword should be correct to his height but each fighter's height will also support a small range of sword lengths, all of which will be suitable to the fighter. While a longer sword will provide the fighter with a longer range the added length makes it more difficult to defend against and execute cutting attacks and to redirect an attack once your opponent has gotten within your range. A shorter sword lacks the range of its longer cousins but it also lacks their shortcomings.

Pictures of Treatise:



