

# The Quarter-staff

after Joseph Swetnam, 1617



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Note: the following is based on a transcript of Joseph Swetnam's 'The Schoole of the Noble and Worthy Science of Defence' hosted at [www.thearma.org](http://www.thearma.org). Some spelling has been modernised and minor edits made for readability. Any errors are entirely my own - William Carew, November 2012.

## Introductory remarks

The first chapter shows what weapons are chiefly to be learned, with many other principal notes worthy of observation.

Because old weapons lie rusty in a corner, and every man desires the newest fashion of weapons, especially if they seem to be more danger to the enemy than the old, therefore it is my intention and purpose at this time to express and set down both the true and false play principally of the rapier and dagger, and staff, for I hold that the skill of these two weapons are chiefly and necessary of every man to be learned, for to have the use of a rapier to ride with, and staff to walk on foot with, for those whom have the skill of these two weapons may safely encounter against any man having any other weapon whatsoever, as hereafter you shall be sufficiently satisfied...

## The Quarter-staff



Keep the point of your staff right in your enemy's face, holding one hand at the very butt end of the staff, and the other a foot and a half distant, looking over your staff with both your eyes and your feet at one and a half distance apart, or thereabouts, according to this picture, always standing cross with your enemy, I mean, if his right hand and foot be foremost, let yours be so likewise, and if his left hand and foot be foremost, then make you your change and cross with him also.

Now, if your enemy charges you, either with a blow or thrust, and you are lying in the guard, as shown above, then your defence is this: if charges you above the waist, whether with a blow or thrust, strike yourself against it, keeping up the point of your staff, as high as your head; but as soon as you have defended, whether it is a blow or a thrust, immediately answer (riposte) your enemy again with a thrust, and hastily recover your guard again, and in the giving of a thrust, you may let go your forehand off your staff, but hold the butt end fast in one hand. And as soon as you have discharged your thrust, pluck back your staff, and clap both your hands on it again, and recover your guard; do not stay long, but see whether your enemy will begin with you, and begin with him first, with a false thrust, as herein you shall see the manner how to do it: and when you can do it, what need do you have to stand long about that which may be done immediately, and without danger?

Now if he offers either a blow or thrust to your lower parts under your waist, if it is a thrust, strike it away, by turning the point of your staff towards the ground, but be sure not to strike it with that large a compass, that the point of your staff may pitch in the ground, or you may deceive yourself in your defence; if he charges you as low with a blow, then you may strike it as you do a thrust, or you may pitch the point of your staff into the ground two or three foot wide of the side he charged you at, and you may, in pitching down your staff, let go your forehand so that it does not hit you, and then all parts are defended as high as your head, so that you always have a care to keep your staff in the right place, that is to say, if your right hand and foot are foremost, then leave all your body open, so that your enemy cannot endanger you on the outside of your staff, but if he will hit you, he must strike or thrust inside your staff, and then you must defend all blows or thrusts by bearing your staff over your body towards the left side; for this we call the forehand defence, and this defence consumes no time: but if in holding your staff in the right hand, as before said, and for your guard you bear your staff over towards the left hand, then you leave your right shoulder, arm or face open and unguarded, that which must be defended backward, but you may defend twenty thrusts or blows beforehand, better than one backward; for the back defence is not as ready, nor as certain, as the forehand defence, and therefore keep and continue your guard, according to the picture, for then if he offers a thrust on the outside of your staff you need not fear nor offer to defend it, for there is no place in any danger; instead, all is guarded, especially from the waist upward.

And in your defence, always have a care to the true carriage of your staff, so you do not carry it beyond the compass of true defence, for fear of the false play: for if you over carry your staff, I mean further than needed, you cannot recover it again quickly enough to defend the feint (false). Now, if your enemy assaults you upon the contrary side, you must change both your foot and hand to cross with him, as before: but take heed when you change, that you do not come in with your hind foot, but let that foot stand firm and fall back with the foremost foot with every change. And having defended your enemy's assault, with a little increasing in, answer him with a thrust, thrusting out your staff with your hindmost hand, and stepping forth with your foremost foot, and the same instant of your offer, let go your forehand, but after your offence immediately recover your hand upon your staff again: now if your staff is shorter than your enemy's, then (for your better advantage) step in with your hind foot with the answer, but never strike one blow with your staff, for he that lifts up his staff to strike, may easily be hit by the defender with a thrust, for in the same motion that the attacker lifts up his staff to strike, the defender, may with a speedy thrust, hit him in the breast, and hold him off upon the point of his staff, if the defender thrusts out his staff with his hind hand, especially if their staves are of the same length, then he that strikes, cannot endanger the other with a blow, for he that strikes holds both his hands upon his staff, until he has discharged his blow, whereas he that thrusts, has two foot of length over him that strikes, so that he puts out his staff, to his most advantage, as before said.

It is necessary, that he who uses the staff, has use of both his hands alike, for thereby he may the better shift his staff from hand to hand, whereby to lie cross always with your enemy, changing your hand and foot, as he changes for lying the one with right hand and foot foremost, and the other with the left, then he that strikes first, cannot choose but endanger the others hand. But if you cannot change your staff to lie cross with your enemy's staff: then for your defence of a blow, pitch the point of your staff into the ground, and let go with your forehand, and when you have discharged the blow with as much speed as you can, answer his blow with a thrust, for the greatest secret of all most chiefly to be remembered at this weapon, is, if your enemy but once offers to lift up his hands to strike, then immediately chop in with a thrust at his breast, shoulder, or face, for so you may hit him as you will yourself, so that you take your time of answering.

If your enemy strikes with his staff, he holds it fast in both his hands when he delivers his blow, so therefore, if you thrust and release your forehand as you discharge your thrust, or draw in the forehand close to the hind hand which holds the butt end of the staff, and so thrust him out, you may keep the striker upon the point of your staff, so that with his blow he cannot reach you, being equally matched in length, but must come upon his death, or danger himself greatly.



Look under your staff with both your eyes, with the point hanging slope ways downward by your side, bearing out your staff at the arms end, higher than your head a little according to this picture. In looking under your staff it will seem to your enemy, that your defence is only for your head, then he will think to hit you in the body with a thrust, for the body seems to lie very open to him, and if he does charge you with a thrust, carry the point of your staff over your body close by the ground towards the other side, and having defended the thrust, turn up the point of your staff immediately towards your enemy's breast, and charge him with a thrust: again, if your enemy charge you with a blow at your head, lift up the point of your staff and meet the blow half way, and draw back your hands, for fear of endangering your fingers: having struck away his staff, answer him again with a thrust (as before said). Now if your enemy charges you with a blow at your side, either pitch the point of your staff into the ground to defend it, or else change into your low guard and so cross with him; if your enemy strikes a full blow at your head, you need not fear either of your hands, but by striking with your staff to meet his blow, you shall defend it upon the middle, or near the point of your staff, although he strikes purposely at your hand, yet he cannot touch your hands nor any other part of your body: but upon the defence of your body draw back your hands. Now it behoves you to be perfect, not only in this guard, but also in changing your staff from hand to hand, according to your enemy's lying: to do well you should change, as he changes, sometimes the point of your staff should be hanging down by the right side of your body, and sometimes by the left, according to your enemy's lying, the best way to make your change, is to let your staff slip through your hands, like a weavers shuttle, for this is a most speedy change compared to the common manner, and by a little practice you may grow perfect in it.

### **The best guard for a dark night at staff**

If you meet with your enemy in the night, and he charges upon you, the best means for your defence is immediately to chop up into this high guard, except your staff be of a sufficient length to keep him off with charging the point upon him, or else the third means is to trust to your heels, but if you will trust to your hands, then either keep him off with your point, or else above all parts, chiefly defend your head, which is not to be done, but only by this guard, except a man may see the blow before it lands; now you must put your hands a little further asunder then you do for the day, so that the blow may be defended by taking him upon the staff between both your hands if it is aimed at your head, as is the fashion of most men to strike at the head (as I have said before) rather than to any part of the body. Now having taken the blow between your hands, run in and close with him, for if you stand off at length in a fight, any time, being in the night, it is very dangerous, if you suffer him to discharge many blows, but either answer him with a thrust, or else close with him and turn the butt end of your staff into his breast or face, as you see occasion.

Now if it is in the day, or you can see the blow before it lands; if your enemy charges you with a blow at the side, meet his blow by carrying it over to the other side, and pitch the point of your staff in the ground, and loosen your foremost hand for endangering of your fingers, but hold the hind hand fast at the butt end of your staff. But now, upon this high guard you cannot defend the feint (false) as well, nor as surely, as when you lie on the low guard; for if your enemy offers a thrust on the one side of your staff, and immediately chops it home to the other side, he may endanger, nay, he may hit a skilful and cunning player, especially if you over carry your staff in defence of the feigned blow or thrust. Therefore, if you lie in the low guard with your staff or pike, you shall defend a thrust with the point of your weapon long before it come near you, and yet your point is ready to answer more speedily than it is when you lie on any other guard, but he who lies with his staff point or pike on the ground, has very little space to his body, no more than the length of his arm where he holds his weapon: therefore he whom suffers a thrust to come so near, it will quickly come to the face or body, yet because most soldiers heretofore have used this fashion of lying, and are not experienced in the low guard, according to the first picture of the staff; but in your practice use both, you shall find the benefit thereof better; now if you frame yourself in the high guard, your staff must not be, in length, above eight foot at most, but rather shorter, for else in defending your enemy's thrust, a long staff will hit the ground, and by that means, your enemy's thrust may endanger you: therefore, for this high guard, you must look that your staff be of a length that allows you to carry the point clean from the ground in defending a thrust, but for the low guard it does not matter what length your staff is.

## **Questions and answers between the Master and Scholar, concerning the staff**

### **The Scholar**

You have given me direction for two sorts of guards, which do you commend best that I may repose myself upon?

### **The Master**

I commend the low guard best, for it serves with the quarter-staff of seven or eight foot, or for the long-staff of twelve foot, and for the pike of eighteen foot, for I have made trial with men of good experience who have lain in other guards according to their practice, as some at quarter-staff will lay their point upon the ground athwart their body, holding the butt end of their staff as low as their waist: if he lies that way the best way to hit him is to offer, or feign a thrust at his face, and immediately put it in below that, for he will carry his staff up to save his face, but cannot put it down again before you have hit him underneath as before said, but with quickness you may hit him in the face or breast, and never feint (falsify) your thrust but put it in suddenly, turning the heel of your hind hand upward with it: and if your enemy lie at half-staff, holding it in the middle, his hands that so lie are in danger of every blow that comes, but the best way to hit him that lies so without danger to yourself, is with a false thrust, and that is to offer it in the one side of his staff, and to put it home on the other, according to the direction of the false play that follows.

But first let me make an end of that which I have begun, and so we will proceed; some will lie with the long-staff, or pike with the point on the ground, and the butt end as high as his head or higher; indeed this has been and is common fight with the pike amongst the soldiers, and the defence of this guard either for blow or thrust, is to swerve the upper-hand, this way, or that way, according as he sees the danger of the opponents assault, and then immediately launch out the staff or pike by lifting them up, upon the outside of their foot or else by gathering him up on their left arm, and so launch him out as aforesaid: he that uses this guard, must be strong, and very active, and nimble, but whatsoever he be, high or low, weak or strong, the low guard is best.

## **The Scholar**

If the low guard is so strong for my defence, what need have I to learn any other?

## **The Master**

It is true, a man can be but sure if he practice all the days of his life, but it is not amiss for you to know more than ever you shall have occasion to use, for having the perfect use of the low and high guard, you may close with any staff-man, if you think you can make your parry good with him when you have closed.

## **The Scholar**

I pray you, instruct me in the best manner of closing.

## **The Master**

When you encounter with any man that has a staff, a Welsh-hook or a halberd, and yourself being armed with any one of these weapons, present a thrust to the face of your enemy, and follow it in with your hindmost foot also; and as you encroach in, clap up your staff into the high guard, and you shall carry your enemy's point over your head by that means, but you must not be slack in following it in, for he will bear the point of his weapon so high to defend his face, that he cannot recover his staff to endanger you, and when you have made your close, you may turn the butt end of your staff in his face if you lift, or you may trip up his heels, if you are cunning in wrestling: but if he have any short weapons about him, then I wish you to take him about the middle and unarm him of it, or else to hold him fast so that he cannot hurt you, but if you be armed with a bill or a hook, then in your half-close you may fall away turning the edge or your bill or hook towards his leg, and so by a drawing blow rake him over the shins, and keeping up the butt end of the staff for the defence of your own head, and so you may fall out of his distance, and recover your guard before he can in any way endanger you.

If your enemy closes with you in this manner, and offers the butt end of his staff to your face or breast, then fall back with your forward foot, and make a quick change, and you shall have him at a great advantage, both for defence and likewise to turn in the butt end of your staff into his face or breast, and if you lift this is a sure defence for such an assault, believe it, for I know it, he that is perfect in the low guard, may with a staff encounter against the Welsh-hook, halberd, partisan, or glaive, and I hold that a staff with a pike to have odds against any such long weapon, being equally matched in length, for odds in length with any weapon is very much an advantage, where I wish if any do appoint the field with any of these aforesaid weapons, it is not amiss for the one of them to bring a hatchet or some other edged tool into the field to cut the longest staff, unless you match them beforehand.

## **The Scholar**

I pray you, let me hear the reason so many think that the hook or any edged weapon has great odds against the staff.

## **The Master**

Indeed without cunning and skill, the Welsh-hook, and these other weapons are more fearful to the ignorant, but he that is cunning in the false play and slips, belonging to the staff may with a false thrust or with slipping his blow endanger any other, being weaponed with any other of these weapons aforesaid. For if you feint (falsify) your thrust according to my directions in the false play, that is, to offer your thrust on one side, and then to put home the second determined thrust to the other side of his weapon, and then if your enemy has a hook, halberd, or bill in defending the feint

(false), the head of his weapon will so over carry him by reason of the weight, that he cannot command it nimbly back again, whereby to defend the feint (false); if your enemy be armed with a hook, halberd, partisan or glaive, if he charges you with a blow, then slip his blow, either by the plucking in of your staff, keeping of the point upright until his blow is past, and then you may answer him again, either with blow or thrust, for by slipping a blow, the weight of the head of any of these aforesaid weapons will go with such a swing that it will turn his body in such a manner around, I mean, beyond the compass of defence.

Again, if you think that your face is out of his reach, he who charges you with a blow with any of these aforesaid weapons, you may let fall the point of your staff, so that his blow may pass clear over your staff, and so chop home a thrust with it under your enemy's weapons, and then recover the point of your staff up hastily again.

### **The Scholar**

If I be armed with any of these aforesaid weapons, what guard will you direct me to frame myself into?

### **The Master**

I still commend the low guard for any long weapon, whether it is a staff, pike, hook, halberd, partisan or glaive; my reason is that the point being as high as your head, and the butt end as low as your thigh, then your weapon is more ready to defend either blow or thrust, if you be charged never so suddenly, whereas if your point hangs downwards towards the ground, you can never lift it up quick again to defend your thrust; but a blow may be defended easily, for that blow comes more leisurely, because it is fetched with a greater compass, and a thrust goes with far more celerity than a blow, being put in cunningly. But of these weapons shall follow more at large in the second book.

Now if your enemy have odds in the length of his staff, then let your enemy make his first assault, and upon defence of his assault step forth with your hindmost foot, and so you shall gain six foot at the least in reach; but if your staves be both of one length, then upon a charge or answer, increase in only with your forward foot, and stand fast with your hind foot, only to pluck back your body again, and if you make the first assault, and your enemy defends it, as he makes a sudden answer, then it will be hard to recover up your staff into its place, to defend it according to the low guard: but for a sudden shift the best defence is bearing your upper hand over your body, and letting your point fall to the ground, according to the old common order of the fight with the pike, at single hand, I mean, hand to hand, or I may say, man to man.

### **The Scholar**

I pray you, how would you instruct me to frame my guard with my staff, if I were to encounter with an enemy armed with sword and dagger, or rapier and dagger?

### **The Master**

I hold the low guard best, charging your point directly to the enemy's breast, and always have a special regard that you do not offer a blow, for he may defend it double upon the back-sword and dagger and run in under the staff; likewise if you offer a thrust, do not let your staff loose out of your forehand, but hold him fast, so thereby you may be more ready to charge him again, and again if he encroach in upon you, for if you let go one hand, then your enemy may very well defend the thrust of the staff, as I have directed in the description of the rapier and dagger concerning the staff, for with that one defence, being experienced in it, you may endanger any staff-man that is not wary, and with it, well experienced in both these weapons, so that you take your opportunity upon his assault, I mean in answering him quick, as soon as you have defended his assault, whether it be blow or thrust.

Now if your enemy strikes at the point of your staff, thinking to cut it off, then, as you see his blow coming, let fall the point of your staff, and immediately chop home a thrust, for in so doing his blow will fly over your staff, as by your practice you may be perfect in this slip, for so we call it. I have known a man with a sword and dagger who cut off the end of a pike-staff, but I hold him an ignorant and unskilful man that was holding the staff, for though I hold, that a man skilful at the sword and dagger may encounter against a reasonable staff-man, the same opinion I hold still, and my reasons you shall hear; if extreme need requires, and upon necessity, then the best means is to be furnished with the best means beforehand at the time of need, it may greatly steady you, for every common man has not the knowledge of the best rule, unless he has knowledge of the best rule because he has learned it and practiced it with those which could show it, for it does not come by nature to anyone, yet every ignorant dunce, when he is persuaded to go learn skill, will say; when I am put to my shift, I will do the best I can: so a man may, and yet without skill be killed, although he did his best, my opinion further of this follows.

Now the best guard with a sword and dagger, or rapier and dagger, against a staff is this; put your dagger on the inside of your rapier or sword, and join them both together, making your cross with them within a foot or thereabouts of the hilt of your rapier or sword, and looking clearly with both your eyes under them, or between both your weapons, and then if your enemy charges you with a blow at your head with his staff, bear them both double against the blow, and having defended it, turn your point and turn your knuckles inward of your right hand, and so to go in with full speed and strength upon him.

But if he charges you with a thrust, then immediately let fall the point of your rapier downward, and force him down the more stronger, and more quicker with your dagger, for to that end I do appoint you to put your dagger in the inside of your rapier or sword. In this manner you may defend either blows or thrusts of the staff, yet I must confess, there are great odds in the staff, if the staff-man be very skilful, but otherwise the rapier and dagger has the odds, if furnished with skill.

### **False play to be used at the staff**

If you both lie in the low guard, according to my former directions, then offer or feign a thrust under your enemy's face to the fairest side of the staff, which to you seems to lie most open or unguarded, but then immediately in the same motion let fall the point of your staff as low as his waist, so that you may pass clear under the butt end of his staff; for if with any part of his staff he touches or entangles your staff, then you cannot put in your feint (false) as directly as you should, or as you may, if you pass clear with your first offer, then may you bring up your point on the other side of his staff, and thrusting it home, you may hit him on the shoulder or face, as you will yourself; yes although he be very skilful or cunning, so that you have the true stroke of it: as to make it plainer, then in offering your feint (false), let fall the point of your staff, striking as if it were a blow, but let it fall two foot wide of that side, which lies open, and then bring it up again on the other side, and put it in with a thrust, for he will carry his staff to defend your feint (false), and so by that means open up the side which lies well-guarded, and always mark which part of your enemy lies most open or most discovered to you, and there offer your feigned thrust, first to the fairest, but hit him with your second or determined thrust to the contrary side, and if you feign your thrust to the right side, then thrust it home to the left, and if you feign your thrust to the left side, then put it home to the right; and you may hit him in the breast, shoulder, or face, whether you lift yourself, so that you offer your feign thrust three foot wide of his body. For if in offering your feigned thrust, he hits your staff, it will so entangle your point, that you cannot recover it to hit him with your determined thrust, because before you can clear your point, he will be in his guard of defence again.

## **The defence of this false thrust**

This thrust is to be defended two ways, the first is to bear it against your enemy's offer, but have a care that you do not over bear it, so that if he mock you with his feigned thrust on the one side, you must quickly bring your staff back again into its place, to meet him when he comes on the other side of the staff, and so defend it, keeping your point upright. Now the second defence is to bear your staff over your body against his offer, as you do against every ordinary thrust; for you must suppose that every thrust will come home, for the defender does not know when his enemy offers a thrust, whether it will come home or not: therefore (as I said) you must bear your staff against every thrust, but you should bear your staff but a foot out of its place, whether it be against blow or thrust: for if you over carry it, you cannot recover it to defend either blow or thrust, if it be feinted (falsified) at you. Now if your enemy feints (falsifies) upon his first offer, carry your staff over your body, keeping the point upright against his first offer: now upon your offer of defence, at the first you see that you make no seizure upon his staff, then immediately you may perceive he dallies with you, only to deceive you with false play, but then your offer of defence, both for the true and false play, must be all done with one motion; for if you see that with the first offer above he shortens his thrust without putting it home, then turn down the point of your staff towards the ground, meet him below, and so strike it away; but be sure that you defend always beforehand, for to strike it backward is no sure defence.

Yet to make this forehand defence plainer, this is meant; if your right hand is placed foremost in holding your staff, then you must defend both the true play and the feint (false) towards your left hand, but you must not defend the first offer forwards, and next, which may be the false thrust, backward, but both must be defended towards your left side: and so likewise, if your left hand is foremost, then frame your defence towards your right side, as before said.

Now if you cannot change hands, as (it may be) your enemy can, then keep your guard upon that hand you can best use, and you shall find that he has very little odds after you have practiced it a while; for you may offer to defend any false play so well as if you cross handed one to the other.

## **A false blow**

Now if you would hit your enemy on the head with a blow, you must offer a false blow at the head, as if you would strike him on the first, but when it has come half way, stay your hand, or check your blow before it meets with his staff, for he will bear his staff against your blow, thinking to defend it strongly, before it come to endanger him: but the checking of the first blow will be an occasion that he will over carry his staff beyond the compass of true defence, so that you may immediately come with a second blow, and strike it home over the point of his staff; so by this determined blow, you may hit him in the head or face.

## **A slip at a staff**

If your enemy charges you with a blow, you lying in your guard according to the picture, even as you see the blow coming, pluck in your staff, and withdraw your head and body a little back, bearing your staff, during the time while the blow has its passage, close upright by that side of your face which your enemy charge you at, to defend that side; if the blow does not reach home, but if it passes short, and goes clear of you without touching your staff, then his staff will fly away with the greatest swing, so that it will pass beyond the compass of true defence, but if it be a Welsh-hook, or any other headed weapon, then the slipping of his blow will be more an occasion of the over carrying of his blow, by carrying of his blow around, so that his blow being past, you may immediately charge him with a blow at the head, or thrust him in the back, and do it quickly before your enemy recovers his weapons into the place of defence.

## **Another feint (false)**

You may offer a downright blow at your enemy's head, fetching it with a great compass, so that it may seem to your enemy, that you mean to strike him down, but as your blow is coming, draw back your hand and change your blow to a thrust, and chopping home to his breast or any other part of his body that you will, he will bear his staff to defend the blow, I mean if he is not very skilful and cunning, and if he does he can only defend himself, which to do he must be very wary when he bears his staff to defend the blow, so that he does not over carry his staff, and so to bear it a little and then to check his staff, and be ready to turn down the point to defend the thrust. But he that is skilful will, or should, chop out a thrust if his enemy offers a blow, and the thrust should be thrust out with one hand, and loosen the other, I mean thrust with the hand which holds the butt end of the staff; then you shall keep him out at the point of your staff; for then the blow cannot endanger you, except there is great odds in the length of your staves, for commonly he that strikes, holds both his hands upon his staff when he delivers his blow, and thereby there is three foot odds in reach between the striker and he which thrusts.

## **Another very deceiving false thrust at the staff**

Your enemy lying in guard, offer a feigned thrust towards his foot, and then immediately raise your point again, and thrust it home to his face or breast, for if he turns down the point of his staff to save the false thrust below, then because he is not so cunning, nor so strong, he cannot put up his staff in time enough to defend his upper part; and therefore to not turn down the point, if your enemy offers a thrust below, is more sure; but if a thrust is made below or above the knee, pluck up your leg, and either thrust with him, or keep up your staff to defend your upper part, which are the killing places, rather than to turn it down to defend your leg or foot, where there is not so great a danger of death as the body being hit, but at the staff all parts may be defended with skill.

## **Principal points to keep in continual remembrance (not staff specific)**

Now to sum up all the chiefest lessons into one, and for order's sake we can make four divisions of them.

The first is to remember to frame yourself into your guard, before you come within your enemy's distance, and so approach well-guarded.

Secondly, remember if your enemy charges you with a blow, at whatever weapon, yet answer him with a thrust immediately, after you have borne the blow double, according to my direction, following the first picture; but if your enemy charges you with a thrust, then answer him with a thrust at the closest place which lies unguarded, whether it is his knee or your answer may be to his right arm, shoulder or face, all which you shall find unguarded in time of his offer. Now if he has a close-hilted dagger, with a false thrust you may yet hit him in the dagger arm if he does not fight very warily, or else in the dagger hand if does not have a close-hilted dagger. Be constant and steady in a good guard and be slow to make your play unless your enemy increases upon you.

Thirdly, do not let fury over-come your wits, for in a mad fury skill is forgotten, for he who is in drink or over hasty, such a one in his anger, does not think upon the end result of killing, nor fears to be killed.

Now the fourth and last, which should have been the first, is to remember to keep a true distance, and if your enemy gathers and encroaches in upon you then charge him with a thrust, although you can't put it home, for a thrust will scare him, and a person in right wits will be loath to come within the reach or danger of your weapon. But if you suffer your enemy to come within distance, even if you had all the guards in the world, if you stand still without making a play, he will hit you in spite of your teeth, therefore be doing that same with him betimes; and he will retreat and fall away from you for his own ease.

Note, this I wrote because I would not have you in any error when you need to use your weapon, as the best defence for a shot is to stand out of the reach of him; even as the best defence of your body from hurts and scars is to be proceeded beforehand with skill and cunning, and to remember it when you hast occasion to use it; but if you want skill, then keep out of your enemy's reach.

Now if you cannot remember these four chief points as before said, then bear in mind these two; the first is to defend the blow double, keeping both the points upward, and secondly, remember that if your enemy gathers in upon you, thrust to his knee, or whether he gathers in or not, then thrust to his knee or thigh, but never step so far forth with your thrust that you endanger your own face.

### **Observations for a Scholar or any other**

Let your staff of practice be seven or eight foot, and better, button both your foils and your staves before the practice with them, for otherwise the unskilful may thrust out one another's eyes; although there was no harm meant, yet an eye may be lost unless it can be prevented.

### **On practice weapons**

To make your buttons take wool or flocks, and wrap it round in leather as big as a tennis ball, then make a notch within a half an inch of your wooden foil or staff, but if it is an iron foil, then there be an iron button riveted on the point, as broad as two pence, and take your button being made as before said, and set in on the end of your staff or foil likewise, and then take leather and draw hard upon it, and bind it with shoemakers-ends of parch-thread in the notch, and another leather upon that again, for one leather may be worn out with a little practice.

### **Conclusion**

Thus I will here conclude and make an end with this short direction concerning this one weapon, because I have spoken something already touching and concerning this purpose, although not so amply as now it is, and yet hereafter I will speak more and large hereof, this only serves but to rouse up your spirits, that you may the better prepare yourself for the next. The horse starts at the spur, so (in love) I prick you forward in this commendable art: and so, I hope, that this whetstone will make your blunt wits somewhat sharper: gold is not put in the fire to be consumed, but to be purified; even so, I hope the travel which I have taken herein will not make you prove worse, but rather somewhat the better in all goodness.