



# *School voor Historische Schermkunsten*

## Pieces you can use for defense when in need, by Sebastian Heußler.

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*School voor Historische Schermkunsten* – [www.bruchius.com](http://www.bruchius.com)



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# Pieces you can use for defense when in need, by Sebastian Heußler.

Translation and introduction by Reinier van Noort

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## The author

Born in 1581 as the son of a bookprinter, Sebastian Heußler may have been expected to become a bookprinter himself as well. Indeed, he did become a bookprinter in 1601, even buying a house and setting up his own printing shop in Nürnberg in 1603. However, Sebastian was much more interested in the Knightly Arts of Fencing. In 1607 he left his shop, to travel across Europe to several countries, such as the Netherlands, France, England, and Italy, to learn fencing under various masters. In 1615, in the introduction of the first edition of his fencing treatise, Heußler refers to himself as a *Monatsreiter* – a mercenary. In 1645, a general for the Danish king by the name of Sebastian Heußler is mentioned, which may very well refer to Sebastian Heußler, the author, book printer, fencer and (former) mercenary<sup>1</sup>.

Clearly, then, Sebastian Heußler was a man who gained great experience in the Art of Fencing, both on the fencing floor, and in battle. Therefore, it is interesting that (at least) the 1615 edition<sup>2</sup> and the 1617<sup>3</sup> edition of his *Neu Künstlich Fechtbuch* (“New Artful Fightbook”) contain a book section of 14 pages long<sup>4</sup>, with the title *Diese hernach verzeichnete Stuck behalte im Gedechnuß / das du sie (welches Gott verhüten wölle) In deinen Nöthen zur Defension gebrauchen kanst.* (“Keep these pieces recorded after this in mind, so that you can use them for defense when in need (may God prevent this).”).

## The lessons

The 43 lessons presented in this section differ from the lessons on the thrust and on *Caminiren* before it, and from the lessons on the cut following it, in that the techniques in them are frequently described as wounding the enemy (rather than just hitting him), and in the very frequent advise to seize the enemy’s sword with the left hand at or near the hilt, or sometimes even at the weak of the blade, for your own safety when making your attack. Clearly then, as the title indicates, the lessons described in this section are less concerned with polite fencing in a friendly atmosphere, and more with actual violence and self-preservation.

The lessons are supported by seven illustrations. Interestingly, the first and third illustrations differ between the 1615 and 1617 editions. In the 1615 editions, these plates are copies of illustrations 6 and 7 from Capoferro's *Gran Simulacro*<sup>5</sup>, while the plates in the 1617 edition (which are presented in this document) are original plates. Interestingly, in the case of the first illustration, both plates give the starting position of the first lesson, while in the case of the third illustration, each plate shows one of the possible attacks described in lesson 8.

## About the translation

In the following translation of Heußler's pieces “that you can use for defense in your need”, the following terms deserve some more attention.

- “*Catheniren*” and “*Reissen*”. These two words are often used together, suggesting that they may refer to the same or at least similar actions. “*Reissen*” is translated literally as “to wrench”. “*Catheniren*” most likely comes from Italian “*Catenare*”, meaning “to chain together”. Here it is translated as “to subject”. These terms then seem to refer to an action by

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1 The biographical information on Sebastian Heußler presented here is based on the following article: Maurer, Kevin, 2010, [Sebastian Heussler \(1581 - 1645\) Buchdrucker, Freifechter and Kreigsmann, from Nürnberg](#). Meyer Frei Fechter Guild, retrieved 24 July 2013.

2 From the title page, the copy consulted here appears to have been the second edition.

3 Heußler, Sebastian, 1617, *Neu Künstlich Fechtbuch*, Nürnberg, Sebastian Heußler.

4 Heußler, Sebastian, 1617, *Neu Künstlich Fechtbuch*, Nürnberg, Sebastian Heußler, pages 179-192.

5 Capo Ferro, Ridolfo, 1610, *Gran Simulacro dell'arte e dell'uso della Scherma*, Siena, Salvestro Marchetti and Camillo Turi.

- which the blade of the opponent is dominated and put aside so that he cannot attack you.
- “*Passiren*” from Italian “*passare*” was translated as “to pass”.
  - “*Pattiren*”, from Italian “*battere*” was translated as “to beat”. Note that the more usual Germanised form of “*battere*” is “*battiren*”.
  - “*Stringiren*”, from Italian “*Stringare*”, has been translated as “to engage”.

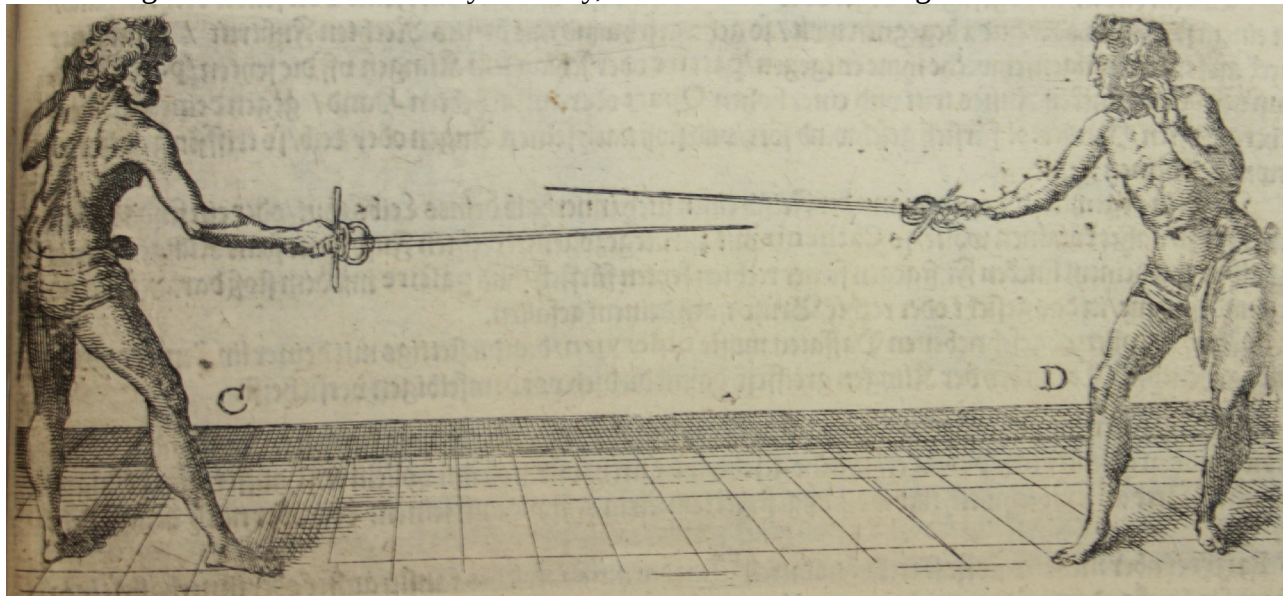
## **Acknowledgements**

The illustrations of Heußler's plates were photographed by Bert Gevaert, and are shown here with his kind permission, and the kind permission of the Library of the University of Leuven. Jan Schäfer provided helpful suggestions to improve this translation.

## The second part / Single Rapier fencing

Keep these pieces recorded after this in mind, so that you can use them for defense when in need (may God prevent this).

1. Set yourself in the *Tertia* (as they tend to call it) when your enemy thrusts or cuts at you from his right hand on the inside of your body, as can be seen in this Figure.



Then go forwards with your right footstep, against your counterpart towards his right side, and confront his weapon with beating or striking, though so that this takes place with your strong on his weak. Then after that go on forwards with the left footstep and a strong thrust. Thus you wound your enemy in the face or breast, according to what you yourself want.

You can also practice similarly when someone wants to make you a feint.

2. When you are placed in the above-mentioned guard or *Tertia*, and your enemy wants to confront you with a thrust, cut or feint from his right hand, then swiftly go against him with your right footstep, and your strong on his blade's weak, beat or strike his blade to the side, then swiftly pass forwards with your left foot's step and a high *Quart* or raised hand towards your opponent's right hand, and thrust to his eyes or body. Thus you will certainly hit and wound your enemy.

3. If you are in the above-mentioned guard, when the enemy does a thrust on the inside of your body, or makes a feint and he wants to come too close to you, then subject him his blade with drawn back right foot. Straightway step forwards with your left foot towards his right side, and thereon pass forth with the thrust. Thus you wound him in the face or right breast, to your liking.

Nota, with all above-described *Passadas* you must observe, that you always seize your counterpart's cross near the blade with your left hand, so that you ensure yourself against the same.

4. If someone stands in his posture and does not want to do anything, then make a feint with a short step, though such that the point is lowered. If he parries, then swiftly go through and thrust forth with a full step on the outside of his blade with your strong on his weak with a well outstretched arm, on his body or to the face.

5. But if he does not parry, then thrust strongly without going through thereon. You can perform this outside or inside his body, either left or right. But when thrusting on the inside of his body, you must take heed, that this must be done in the *Quart* with a high hand, and your body must be well turned, otherwise it is dangerous for you as this figure shows.





6. When someone keeps standing in his posture and guard of *Tertia*, then go through with your blade's point to his right side. Swiftly make him a short feint, as if you want to thrust. If he parries, then straightway go through again, and thrust with the *Quarta* towards your counterpart's left breast, with a long right step, and the left foot back towards the right side, so that the body is turned, and the hand is high. Thus you wound him.

7. Or else with a narrow step swiftly go through twice one after the other, and thrust forth to his left breast or eye with a long right step, and the left foot drawn back towards your right side, so that the body is turned and the hand is high. Thus you hit your enemy.

8. Resolutely make a high feint, so that your counterpart does not know other than that you want to thrust him to the body immediately. If he parries, then swiftly lower your blade. Walk forth with the left step and a bent-down body well to the outside of his body, and thrust in at him under his belt. Straightway seize at his cross with your left hand, so that he can do you nothing in turn. But if he does nothing, then thrust forth immediately. Thus you hit him high.



9. N.B. To be used against all feints. When you stand in a set aside *Tertia* with the blade straight, and your counterpart performs a thrust, or wants to make a feint, then let nothing hinder you. Straightway go through resolutely with your weapon's point to the outside of your counterpart's body, and see [to it] that you come with your strong on his weak. Pass forward

immediately with your left foot on the outside of the Line, towards his right side, and thrust him over his blade. Thus you certainly wound him in the face or on the body.

10. If you are located in the before-mentioned *Tertia*, and your enemy confronts you with a thrust, cut, or feint from the right hand, then straightway make a thrust deeply in at him to the face high in the *Quarta*, then strike his blade's weak with your strong, after that turn yourself back with your body and your left foot, so that you come off the Line, towards his left, and immediately after that thrust the *Quarta*. Thus you hit swiftly. After that do another cut from your right hand, so that your counterpart can carry out nothing more.

11. In the above-mentioned guard or *Tertia*, when the enemy binds on the inside, then straightway go through with the point almost without any movement of the body. If thereafter the enemy goes on that on the outside, or wants to thrust, then go through again to his inside, thrust with a turn of the body from the straight line towards his left side, in the *Quarta* to his breast. Thus you wound him. Do equally as you have heard before a cut from the right hand after that. Thus you stop your enemy, that he can do nothing else, and set yourself speedily in the *Cavation*.

12. In this before-written going through or *Cavation*, when you have gone through with the blade, then strike his blade on the outside with the step forth of the right foot. Straightway lower yourself with the thrust under his blade, and thereupon step with the left foot. For your reassurance also seize his blade with the left hand.

Nota, you can also perform this piece written before this, thrust or cut, when you are in the *Quarta*, but only you need in the going through your blade in a straight line. Yet, in all these pieces keep the step or feet somewhat narrow, so that in the going through and through again the body stands more backwards than forwards.

13. If you want to give your counterpart cause that he will go in below, then gain and bind him with the third part of your blade on his first part, though with a high arm and hand, so that you show the openings below and give yourself open, and he gains cause to come in. When he comes, then step back swiftly with your right foot, wrench or subject his blade in the *Prima* or *Secunda*. Thus you can wound him with the thrust in the face or on the breast.

14. If you find your enemy standing in the *Tertia* or *Quarta*, then straightway give yourself from afar with your point somewhat low towards your left foot. When your enemy's weapon goes down against you on the outside, to engage or bind you, then make him a feint immediately on that, as if you wanted to strike the first part of his blade with the second of yours. You must however do this with great fury, so that he thinks that you want to immediately thrust in on him on the outside. Thus he swiftly goes through, and when he has gone through, then strike his weak with your strong with the step of the right foot. Then pass towards his right hand, and thereon thrust strongly with the step of the left foot. For the sake of safety at the same time seize with your left hand on the end of his weapon. Thus you have certainly wounded him on the breast with the *Prima* or *Secunda*.

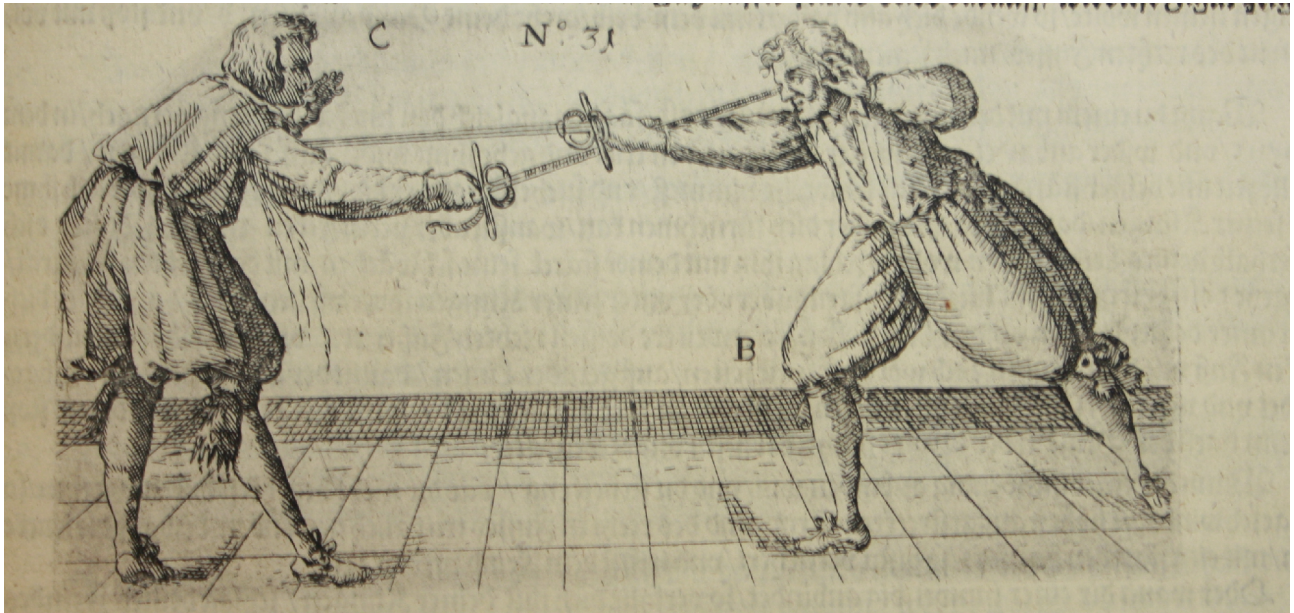
15. When you go to gain your enemy's blade on the inside of his body, briefly stand still so far from his blade that the points come together, and take heed what he wants to do. If he does nothing, engage him with a narrow step, his first with your second part of the blade. If he disengages, then immediately thrust at him. Thus you certainly hit with a high *Quart* on the breast or in the face.

16. When someone binds you, on which site he wants, then swiftly go through and after that thrust him to the body. However, if you beat with the right footstep before you thrust, then you are more certain. After the completed thrust always stay on the blade of your enemy in turn.

17. If you have bound someone on the inside with a wide step, as soon as he disengages, then



beat or subject his blade. Then, after that walk with your left foot aside from his body, as this figure shows.



18. If you have bound someone on the inside with a wide step, then draw the back foot close again to the front right. When your enemy disengages, then swiftly go through in turn on the inside, and thrust high in the *Quarta* on his left breast with turned body.

19. When you bind from the outside, and the enemy wants to take your blade with the hand when the point is high, then immediately turn yourself with the body, turn your hand outwards, and thrust to his body with a full step of the right foot.

20. When you engage someone with the wide step, then after that immediately draw the left foot close, if he disengages and engages in turn, then unhurriedly widen the step and go on his blade again, so that you always take his weak with your strong, and try as often as he moves the hand, to stay on his blade, so that he cannot carry out anything against you. But if you do notice, that he wants to thrust you on the outside of your body, then strike him his weak with your strong with a step of the right foot, and resolutely go him on the body over or under his blade with the left footstep. Then if he wants to thrust you on the body on the inside of your blade, then widen your right footstep, and turn the back left foot with the whole body well to his side, off the straight line, so that the body is equally turned and assured. The left arm also stretched well backwards helps the body with the turn. Then thrust high to the breast in the *Quart*. Thus you hit without doubt.

21. If someone wants to engage you on the inside, and you stand narrow, so that you do not desire to go through, then swiftly go forth with a strong thrust, with high outstretched arm, and the step of the right foot and the body turned to the left side. Thus you are assured, and hit your enemy on the body.

22. Or when someone engages you on the inside, then lower yourself with your blade, strike the enemy's weak with your left hand, and walk outwards with your thrust well on his right side with your left foot forward. Thus you hit him under the belt on the body.

23. Or when someone wants to thrust on you, or engage you, on the outside of your body, then strike his weak of the blade with your strong. Then lower yourself under his blade, and after that thrust. But for assurance seize his cross with the left hand

24. Or when he wants to come on your outside, then swiftly go through, and walk forth on the inside with your body turned to his left breast with a full thrust.

25. When someone thrusts or cuts at you on the inside of your body, then go forward with your right foot, a high arm to parry him on your strong. Then after that step with your left foot on his right side so that you are safe. Thus you can give him a thrust on his chest or a cut in his face.

26. When someone engages you, from which side he wants, then swiftly, resolutely go through again and straightway after that thrust in turn.

27. When someone cuts at you from the outside, then go against him strongly with the taking out of your blade. Then lower your blade, and swiftly thrust forth at him below the belt of his body with your left lifted high under his blade.

28. When you go someone on the inside of his body, and he straightway furiously wants to thrust at you, then immediately turn yourself backwards with your body and the left foot set towards your right side, and having thrust after that. Thus you hit your enemy on his left breast.

But in case you note that he is suspicious, and wants to make you a feint, and after that confront you on the outside, then you have the counter against that in the IX. lesson, which are well to observe and safe.

29. When you stand in the *Tertia* with the point high, and likewise your opponent, then draw the right foot somewhat narrow and the blade back, then go forth resolutely with the *Quarta* thrust to his left breast, with the right foot forward again, and the left foot stepped backwards on your right side, so that your body is well turned. Thus you surely hit your enemy.



30. But if in the above-mentioned posture he wants to thrust you past your point, then swiftly go through, on that step with the left foot well outwards, and thrust on the outside in the *Prima* or *Secunda* to his right breast, above his blade. Thus you hit.

31. Or in the set posture, when you have both drawn back the blade and foot, then thrust forth in high *Quart*, the hand well turned, and with the right foot stepped well towards his right side. Thus you hit him on his right breast, or else in the face. You can also if you want beat before, and then thrust.

32. [In] this next [lesson], as [in the] 29. 30. 31. lesson, when you stand in the *Tertia* with open



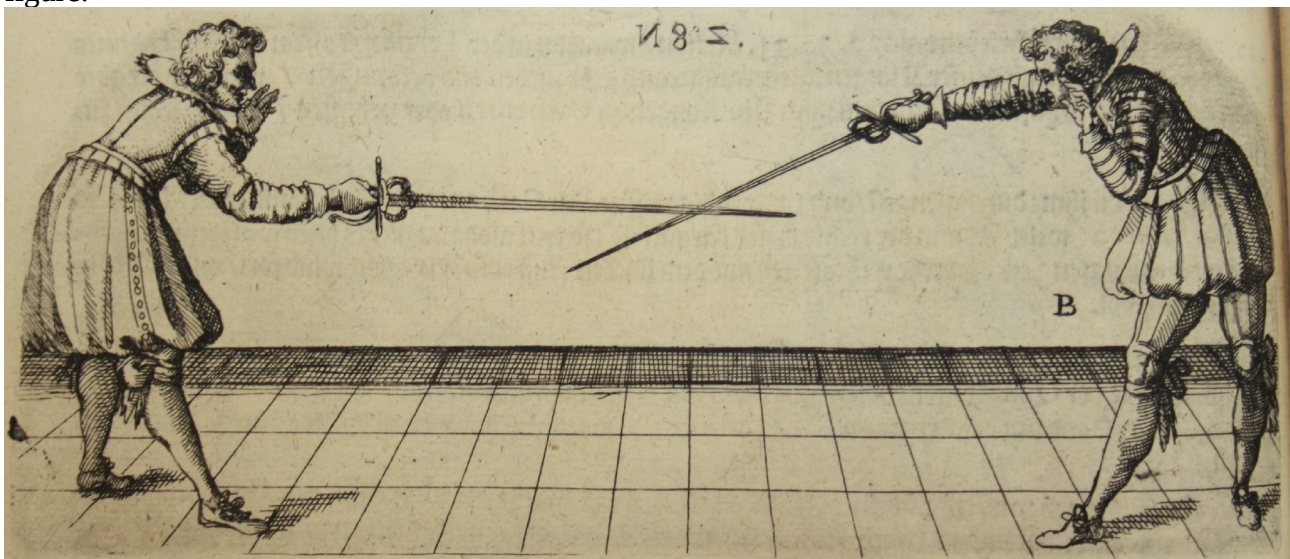
body outside of your enemy's right side with your blade, you can also use and pass when instead he wants to go low on you. Then you have the advantage of subjecting or wrenching his blade, and to thrust after that.

33. When you go through on him, and want to wrench or subject on the inside, and he notices it, then he will disengage (which then is the right break on that). Then nevertheless resolutely step forth swiftly with bent or lowered body to your right side with the left foot, and thrust. Thus you hit still.

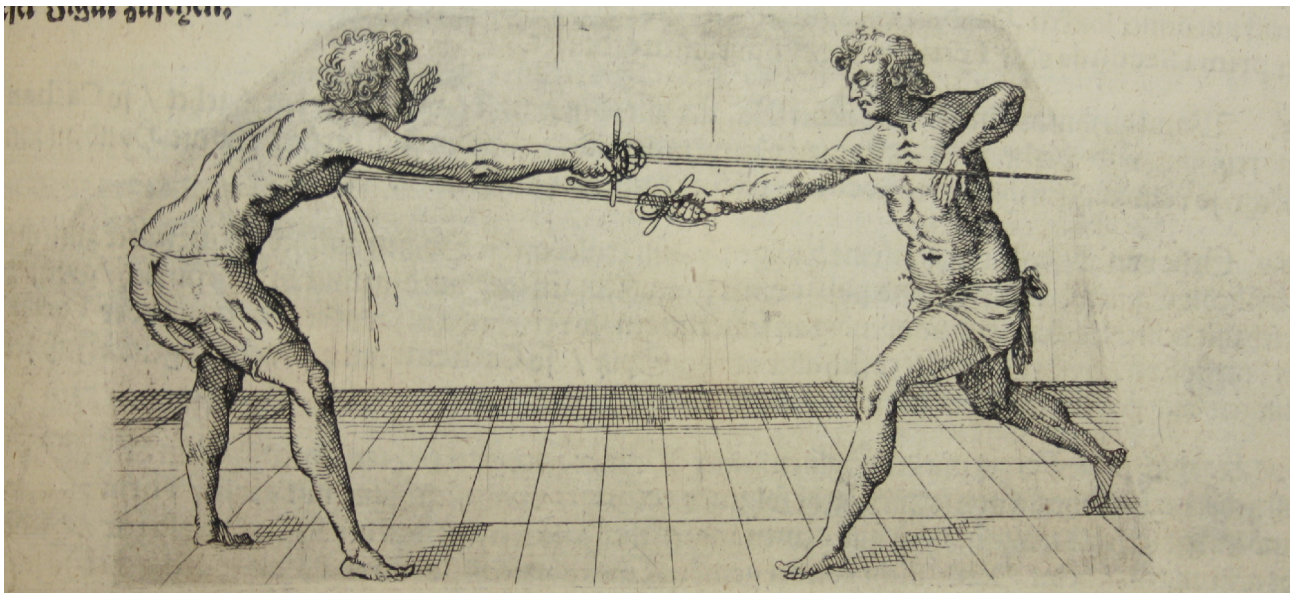
34. When you go of outside your enemy, then swiftly go through under his blade with turned-around hand with the *Quart*, make a feint as if you want to thrust immediately. If he parries, then thrust him with turned-around hand in the *Prima* or *Secunda*. Thus you quite surely hit him in the body below the belt.

35. Or else go outside your enemy's body, and resolutely make a deep feint in the *Quarta* above his blade to his face. If he parries high, then swiftly lower yourself with the point under his blade, and thrust in the *Secunda*, with your left footstep to his right breast. Thus you hit him. However, for your assurance, perform such with a bent body, and with your left hand seize at his cross.

36. When your enemy is placed in the *Prima*, *Secunda*, *Tertia* or *Quarta*, then in all these four guards, go on the outside to your enemy's body, on the same, and with a narrow step gain his blade with your *Secunda* on his *Prima*. But take heed well, that your blade stands with the point straight and somewhat down, so that your enemy cannot [thrust] in on you below, as can be seen in this figure.



Then if he will go through, then in all these above-said postures or guards go high in the *Quarta*, and turn your body bent, with the left foot backwards towards his left side, and thrust him to the face, or breast. Then immediately do a cut from your right hand at him, so that the counterpart can carry out nothing else. Thus you wound him certainly with the thrust and with the cut, as can be seen in this figure.



37. In all these four guards go on the outside on the blade, as said above, and as soon as the enemy goes through, with a step forward of your right foot towards his right side strike his blade with your strong on his weak, and during the strike step forwards with your left foot. After that thrust immediately, seize on his blade with your left hand, for your assurance. Thus you wound him on the breast, with the *Prima*, *Secunda* or *Tertia*, as it seems best to you.

38. When you bind him, in the same manner as said above, and he goes through, then subject and wrench him and position with the thrust as said above, and the left foot forwards, and the hand on his weapon. Thus you wound him in the *Secunda* on the breast or in the face.

39. Go forth on the outside on his blade. If he then lifts the point, to take your strong, then let your point sink down, and pass forth under his blade, with the left foot forwards. At the same time seize with your left hand on the inside on his blade. Thus you wound him in the *Secunda* or *Tertia* with the thrust on the breast. But if he lowers himself with the point, then subject his blade with drawn back foot, and thrust over the same on his breast.

40. Set yourself in the *Tertia* with the point of your weapon towards your right side. Expose the body a little, though somewhat from afar. Next go resolutely and equally with great fury to your enemy. Pretend as if you want to strike him his first part of the blade with your second part. But take heed, that your hand does not depart from the straight line. If he then goes through, then swiftly strike with your strong on the outside of your enemy's weapon's weak. Straightway after that go forwards with the right footstep, and seize on the counterpart's weapon with your left hand, and thrust forth. Thus you wound him with the *Prima* or *Secunda* in the face or on the breast, as you yourself want.

41. When your enemy stands in the *Tertia* or *Quarta*, then approach him in the *Tertia*, bind him with your *Secunda* or other part on his blade's first part with a wide step. If he goes through, then strike his blade out with your left hand. Then go forwards with your left foot and a full thrust. Thus you wound him with the *Tertia* on the breast. However, always seize the end of his blade with the left hand, so that you are assured, and he cannot do you anything else.

42. When the enemy, in whichever guard it is, stands high or with the point above your belt, the go at him resolutely with a deep feint and lowered point or a thrust. Then he will either parry or thrust at your body, or he will want to bind you on your blade. As he now does what he wants, strike with the step of the right foot on the inside of your counterpart's body with your strong on his blade's weak, and resolutely step in with your left foot forwards, and thrust him to the face or to his



right breast. However, for your assurance, seize with your left hand to his blade's cross. If you want you can immediately make a cut to your enemy's face from your right or left side, while drawing back.

43. When your enemy sets himself low and long, then go forth at him, and make a thrust on the inside, or a deep feint towards his left side. If he does nothing, then thrust forth. But if he sets himself for defense, and wants to take out your thrust, or in turn thrust at you in turn or do otherwise, then wrench or subject his blade swiftly, and then step resolutely with your left foot forwards towards his right side and thrust. But always seize with your left hand at his cross, as mentioned above. Thus you hit him with the *Prima* or *Secunda* in the face or on the breast.

Or when someone stands low against you, then go at him on the outside, subject his blade with the right footstep, and with the left foot thrust forth resolutely after that. Thus you hit.