

Cassani military sword

Literal translation

OF FENCING

In fencing there are **two turns**, or rather **circles**, that is, **straight** and **reverse**; which are divided into **four simple blows**, and these are:

1. **Below**
2. **Reverse-below**
3. **Above**
4. **Reverse-above**

And the **compound blows** are **twelve**, that is:

Below, and Reverse-above.
Reverse-above, and Below.
Reverse-below, and Above.
Above, and Reverse-below.

Above, and Reverse-above.
Reverse-above, and Above.
Below, and Reverse-below.
Reverse-below, and Below.

Below, and Above.
Above, and Below.
Reverse-below, and Reverse-above.
Reverse-above, and Reverse-below.

ASSAULT AT TWO STEPS

The manner of making use of the said blows, as much compound as simple, is necessary (in my judgment) to do them with **two steps**, beginning with the **left foot**, and immediately to return backward with the same **two steps** with which one assaulted, and to do neither more nor less with the recovery, **never turning the face from the enemy**.

The **simple blows** are good that they go **two by two**, with the order of the steps, **two forward and two backward**, as I have said above, because with the **first step**, which is always made with the **left foot**, one beats the sword of the enemy, and with the **second step**, which is made forward with the **right foot**, one offends the enemy; afterward immediately one must return backward with the order of the **two steps** with which one went to assault, and in the said return attend only to **defending**, and not to offending; again let it be noted that in returning backward with the said **two steps**, one **never turns the back to the enemy**.

ASSAULT AT THREE STEPS

To assault the enemy with **three steps forward**, likewise it is necessary with the recovery to return backward with the same **order of three steps**, and not to return backward either with more or with fewer than the steps with which one went forward, and **never to turn the face away from the enemy**; attending, as above, to defending in returning backward with the said **three steps**.

The **three steps forward** which are made when one assaults the enemy, it is necessary to begin them with the **right foot**, and not with the left, as I said above in the assaults of **two steps**.

The blows to be made in the assaults of **three steps** are the under-noted, that is:

Above, Reverse-above, and Above.
Reverse-above, Above, and Reverse-above.

Below, Reverse-below, and Below.
Reverse-below, Below, and Reverse-below.

And the **four simple blows** said above, **at one, at one per turn**.

ASSAULT WITH ONE STEP

One can also assault the enemy with **one step at a time**, making the **two turns**, or circles, that is **straight** and **reverse**, which I said at the beginning, and one can go forward and backward at good pleasure, according as the occasion presents itself.

The fencing with **two swords** can be done with **three assaults**: one is done with the **below**, and below with **both hands**; the other with the **above**, and above also with **both hands**; and the **third and last**, which is the **most difficult**, the **below with one hand**, and the **above with the other**, and it is conversed, employing the hands immediately one after the other, in such manner that finishing the one, the other begins; and it can be done with the order of **one or two steps**.

In these three modes of assault with **two swords**, one cannot so easily observe the order of the steps, such that there is not some amount of difficulty, the swords being long, and there being continuous motion, and of the arms and of the feet one cannot resist fatigue for so long a time, as in the other assaults said above.

And from the aforesaid exercise with **two swords**, one easily learns to fence with **sword and cloak**, **buckler**, and **gauntlet**, with **sword and rotella**, and with **sword and dagger**, which although they are of different denomination, nevertheless are **similar**, and are done with the same **order of the two steps**, two forward and two backward.

So that in all blows, whether they are **simple**, that is **at one, at one**, or **compound, at two, at two**, and **at three, at three**, in whatever manner they are done, it is necessary to **terminate and finish them with the right foot forward**, and not with the left, and afterward to return backward with the recovery, with the same **order of the steps** with which one went to assault the enemy, doing neither more nor less; and always to study to **oppose oneself to the enemy** with the said assaults, or with the contrary, that is, with the same blows that he makes, but **at time**, such that finishing the one, the other begins.

For which reason **Saint John Chrysostom**, in *Homily 42*, says that just as the **medicines of the body**, through the ignorance of those who compose them, many times kill instead of healing, so also of **arms** he says that harm occurs, because he who does not know how to use them wounds himself with them; and the cause is that we seek sooner the things that can harm us than those that can benefit us.

For declaration and greater understanding of the said fencing, there would be needed here nearby **demonstrations**, or **painted figures**, to see and note as much the **position, place, times**, or **blows**, as also the **acts and gestures** which in such things are accustomed and can be done; but because every curious person and one devoted to the military art, only by exercising with swords, or by fencing by himself, without other demonstrations or figures, in his house, or with others in

the public schools of such exercise, (in my judgment) will be able better to learn it and to put it into **execution and practice**, than if at times I were to design and demonstrate them in this place.

Therefore, so as not to be long, and in everything burdensome to the Reader, I leave them aside, and I do not place them here, both for the aforesaid cause, since of these a man can do without, they being in everything deprived of the **vital spirit**, which demonstrates and offers the movements, the blows, and the times with the distances and differences from one place to the other; and also because the work is of **little importance and volume**, to which the expense seems to me not to be fitting in any way, to have those painted and fabricated in fine form.

For me it suffices, for now, to have given **this little of light** of the blows mentioned above, and of the manner of making use of them as needed; it remains that **the young combatants** strive, as much as lies in their power, to put it into practice, always however guided by the **straight duty of reason**.

Modern translation

ON FENCING

In fencing there are **two turns**, or rather **circles**, that is, **straight** and **reverse**; these are divided into **four simple blows**, which are the following:

1. **Below**
2. **Reverse-below**
3. **Above**
4. **Reverse-above**

And the **compound blows** are **twelve**, namely:

- Below and reverse-above
- Reverse-above and below
- Reverse-below and above
- Above and reverse-below
- Above and reverse-above
- Reverse-above and above
- Below and reverse-below
- Reverse-below and below
- Below and above
- Above and below
- Reverse-below and reverse-above
- Reverse-above and reverse-below

ATTACK IN TWO STEPS

The way to make use of the said blows, both compound and simple, is—as it seems to me—to perform them **with two steps**, beginning with the **left foot**, and immediately returning backward with the same **two steps** with which one attacked, doing neither more nor less in the recovery, and **never turning one's face away from the enemy**.

The **simple blows** should properly be delivered **two by two**, with the order of the steps being **two forward and two backward**, as stated above. This is because with the **first step**, which is always made with the **left foot**, one strikes the enemy's sword; and with the **second step**, which is made forward with the **right foot**, one wounds the enemy. Then one must immediately return backward with the same **two steps** with which the assault was made, and in this return attend only to **defending**, and not to attacking. Again, be careful that when returning backward with the said two steps, **you never turn your back on the enemy**.

ATTACK IN THREE STEPS

To attack the enemy with **three forward steps**, one must likewise, upon recovery, return backward with the **same order of three steps**, and not retreat either with more or fewer steps than those with which one advanced, and **never turn one's face away from the enemy**; attending, as above, to defending while returning backward with the said three steps.

The **three forward steps** that are made when attacking the enemy must be begun with the **right foot**, and not with the left, as was explained above in the assaults of two steps.

The blows to be used in assaults of three steps are the following sequences:

- **Above, Reverse-above, and Above**
- **Reverse-above, Above, and Reverse-above**
- **Below, Reverse-below, and Below**
- **Reverse-below, Below, and Reverse-below**

And also the **four simple blows mentioned earlier**, delivered one at a time.

ATTACK WITH ONE STEP

One may also attack the enemy with **one step at a time**, performing the **two turns or circles**, that is, **straight and reverse**, which were described at the beginning; and one may go forward and backward at will, according to how the occasion presents itself.

The **fencer with two swords** may perform **three assaults**:

- one **below**, and below with **both hands**;
- another **above**, and above with **both hands**;
- and the third and final, which is the **most difficult, below with one hand and above with the other**, and conversely, using the hands immediately one after the other, so that as one finishes, the other begins. This may be done with the order of **one or two steps**.

With these three modes of assault with **two swords**, one cannot easily maintain the order of the steps, since there is no small difficulty when the swords are long and there is continuous motion of the arms and feet; for they cannot withstand fatigue for so long a time as in the other assaults described above.

From the **aforementioned exercise with two swords**, one may easily learn to fence with **sword and cloak, buckler, and gauntlet**; with **sword and rotella**, and with **sword and dagger**. Although these have different names, they are nevertheless **similar**, and are performed with the **same order of steps**, namely **two forward and two backward**.

Thus, in all blows—whether **simple**, that is, one by one, or **compound**, two by two or three by three, in whatever manner they are performed—it is necessary to **finish them with the right foot forward**, and not with the left, and then to return backward with the recovery, with the **same order of steps** with which one attacked the enemy, doing neither more nor less.

One must always study how to **oppose the enemy** with the said assaults, or with the contrary—that is, with the same blows that he makes—but **in proper time**, so that **as one finishes, the other begins**.

Therefore **Saint John Chrysostom**, in *Homily 42*, says that **medicine for the body**, through the ignorance of those who compose it, often **kills instead of healing**. Thus he also says of **arms** that harm results when those who do not know how to use them employ them. The reason is that we often seek more those things which can harm us than those which can benefit us.

For clearer explanation and greater understanding of the said fencing, there should properly be **demonstrations or painted figures**, so that one might see and note **movement, place, time, and blows**, as well as the **acts and gestures** that occur in such matters. But since every curious person and one devoted to the military art, **by exercising with swords alone**, or by fencing with them—without other demonstrations or figures, either at home or in public schools of such exercise—may (in my judgment) better learn it and put it into **execution and practice**, than if I were to teach and demonstrate them here;

Therefore, so as not to be **overlong** and not to burden the reader, I omit them—not without reason—for such things a man can do without, since they are in every respect **devoid of vital spirit**, which alone demonstrates and conveys movements, blows, and tempos with their distances and differences from one place to another; and also because the work is of **small scope and volume**, for which such expense does not seem fitting.

For me it is enough, for the present, to have given **this small amount of light** on the blows mentioned above and on the manner of varying them as needed. It remains that **young practitioners** strive, as much as lies in their power, to **put it into practice**, always guided by the **straight duty of reason**.

Original text

DEL SCRIMIRE

Nel scrimire vi sono due giri, o sian circoli, cioè dritto, & riverscio; li quali si dividono in quattro colpi semplici, & sono questi, cioè:

1. Sotto.
2. Rifotto.
3. Sopra.
4. Rifopra.

Et li colpi composti sono dodeci, cioè:

Sotto, e Rifopra.
Rifopra, e Sotto.
Rifotto, e Sopra.
Sopra, e Rifotto.

Sopra, e Rifopra.
Rifopra, e Sopra.
Sotto, e Rifotto.
Rifotto, e Sotto.

Sotto, e Sopra.
Sopra, e Sotto.
Rifotto, e Rifopra.
Rifopra, e Rifotto.

ASSALTO A DUOI PASSI

Il modo di valersi di detti colpi, tanto composti, come semplici, bisogna (al giudizio mio) farli con duoi passi, cominciando col piede sinistro, & subito ritornarsi a dietro con li medesimi duoi passi, che si assaltò, & non far né di più né di meno col riparo, non voltando mai faccia dal nemico.

Li colpi semplici, è bene che vadino a duoi a duoi, con l'ordine delli passi, duoi avanti, & duoi a dietro, come di sopra ho detto, perché col primo passo, che sempre si fa col piede sinistro, si batte la spada del nemico, & col secondo passo, che si fa innanzi col piede dritto, s'offende lo nemico; di poi subito si deve ritornare a dietro con l'ordine delli duoi passi, che si andò ad assaltare, & in detto ritorno attendere solo al riparare, & non all'offendere; di nuovo s'avverta, che nel ritornare a dietro con li detti duoi passi non si volta mai le spalle al nemico.

ASSALTO A TRE PASSI

Ad assaltare lo nemico con tre passi avanti, similmente bisogna col riparo ritornare a dietro col medesimo ordine di tre passi, & non ritornarsene a dietro né con più né con meno, che delli passi, che s'andò avanti, & mai non voltare la faccia da dosso al nemico; attendendo come di sopra al riparare nel ritornare a dietro con detti tre passi.

Li tre passi avanti, che si faranno quando s'assalterà lo nemico, bisogna cominciarli col piede dritto, & non col sinistro, come di sopra dissi ne gli assalti delli duoi passi.

Li colpi da farsi a gl'assalti di tre passi sono li sottonotati, cioè:

Sopra, Rifopra, & Sopra.
Rifopra, Sopra, & Rifopra.

Sotto, Rifotto, & Sotto.
Rifotto, Sotto, & Rifotto.

& li quattro colpi semplici sudetti, a uno, a uno per volta.

ASSALTO CON VN PASSO

Si può anco assaltare lo nemico con un passo alla volta, facendo li duoi giri, over circoli, cioè diritto, & riverscio, che al principio dissi, & si può andare avanti, & a dietro a beneplacito, secondo che si presenterà l'occasione.

Il scrimire con due spade si può fare con tre assalti, l'uno si fa col sotto, e sotto d'ambe le mani, l'altro col sopra, e sopra pur d'ambe le mani, & lo terzo, & ultimo, ch'è il più difficile, lo sotto con una mano, & lo sopra con l'altra, & è converso, adoperando le mani immediatamente l'una doppo l'altra, talmente finendo l'una, l'altra incomincia, & si può fare con l'ordine d'uno, o duoi passi.

A questi tre modi d'assalto con due spade non si può così facilmente osservare l'ordine de' passi, che non vi sia alquanto di difficoltà, essendo longhe le spade, & continuo moto, e delle braccia, & delli piedi non si può resistere alla fatica così lungo tempo, sì come ne gl'altri assalti sopradetti.

Et dall'esercizio predetto con due spade facilmente s'impara à scrimire à spada e cappa, brocchiero, & manopola, à spada e rodella, & à spada & pugnale, quali ancorché siano di diversa denominatione, tuttavia sono consimili, & si fanno col medesimo ordine delli duoi passi, duoi avanti, e duoi a dietro. Talché in tutti li colpi, ò siano semplici, cioè à uno, à uno, ò composti à duoi, à duoi, & à tre, à tre, in qualunque modo si facciano bisogna terminarli, & finirli col piede

dritto avanti, & non col sinistro, & ritornarsene poi a dietro col riparo, col medesimo ordine delli passi, che s'andò ad assaltare lo nemico, non facendone di più, né di meno; & studiare sempre d'opporrsi al nemico con li detti assalti, ò con lo contrario, overo con li medesimi colpi, ch'esso fa, ma à tempo, che finendo l'uno, incomincia l'altro.

Perilché S. Giovanni Chrisostomo in Homel. 42 dice, che sì come le medicine del corpo, che per l'ignoranza di chi le compone molte fiato uccidono in vece di sanare. Così dell'arme ancora dice avvenire, perché chi non le sa adoperare se ne ferisce; & la cagione è, che cerchiamo più tosto le cose, che ci possono nuocere, che quelle che ci possono giovare.

Per dichiarazione, & maggior intelligenza della sudetta Scrima ci vorrebbero qua presso le dimostrazioni, over figure depinte, per veder, & notare tanto il sito, luogo, tempi, ò colpi, come anco l'atti, & gesti, che in simili si sogliono, & possono fare; ma perché ogni persona curiosa, & all'arte militare dedita, solo con l'essercitarsi con le spade, ò scrimare da se medesimo, senz'altre dimostrazioni ò figure, in casa sua, ò co' altri nelle pubbliche Scuole di tal essercitio (al giudizio mio) meglio lo potrà imparare, & porlo in essecutione, & pratica, che talvolta io col designarle, & dimostrarle in questo luogo.

Però per non esser io longo, & in tutto al Lettore noioso le tralascio, & nò le pongo quà, sì per la causa sudetta, poiché di quelle l'huomo se ne può star senza, essendo quelle in tutto prive del spirito vitale, che dimostra, & porge, & li movimenti, li colpi, & li tempi con le distanze, e differenze dall'uno all'altro luogo, sì ancora perché l'opera è di poco rilievo, e volume, à cui la spesa à me pare che non si convenga in modo alcuno; per far quelle dipingere, & fabricare in bella forma.

A me basta, per hora haver dato questa poca di luce delli colpi di sopra accennati, & del modo di valersene à bisogni: resta che li giovani militanti si sforzino al lor potere porla in pratica, guidata però sempre dal dritto dovere della ragione.