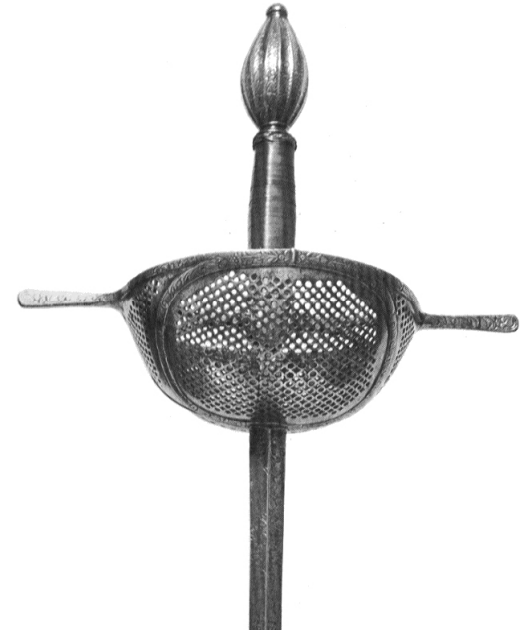


# GREAT REPRESENTATION OF THE ART AND USE OF FENCING

BY RIDOLOFO CAPOFERRO

EDITED BY ROGER KAY

TRANSLATION BY JEREK SWANGER AND WILLIAM E. WILSON



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# CONTENTS



PREFACE v

DEDICATION vii

TO THE GRACIOUS READER ix

## OF FENCING I

CHAPTER I Of Fencing in General 1

CHAPTER II The Definition of Fencing and its Explanation 6

CHAPTER III The Division of Fencing That is Posed in the  
Knowledge of the Sword 8

CHAPTER IV On Measure 9

CHAPTER V Of Tempo 11

CHAPTER VI Of the Body, and Chiefly of the Head 14

CHAPTER VII Of the Body 16

CHAPTER VIII Of the Arms 18

CHAPTER IX Of the thighs, calves, of the feet, and of the pace 20

CHAPTER X Of Defence, of the Guard 22

CHAPTER XI On the Way of Seeking Measure 24

CHAPTER XII Of Striking 26

CHAPTER XIII Of the Dagger 28

# CONTENTS

## (CONTINUED)

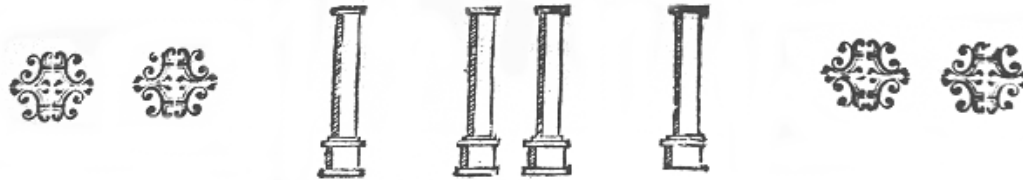
THE USE OF FENCING	29
OF THE ART AND THE USE	The Difference That Is Found Between The Art And The Use Is Explained 29
ADMONITIONS	Some Admonitions, Or Advice, Of Fencing 31
EXPLANATIONS	Terms Of Fencing, Which Pertain To The Use 35
WAY OF LAYING THE HAND ON THE SWORD	41
OF THE GUARDS	42
FIGURE EXPLAINED BY WAY OF THE ALPHABET	44
VARIOUS FIGURES	46
OF SOME TERMS OF THE CUT	122
SECURE WAY OF DEFENDING ONESELF FROM EVERY SORT OF BLOW	123
TABLE OF PLATES	124
INDEX	125

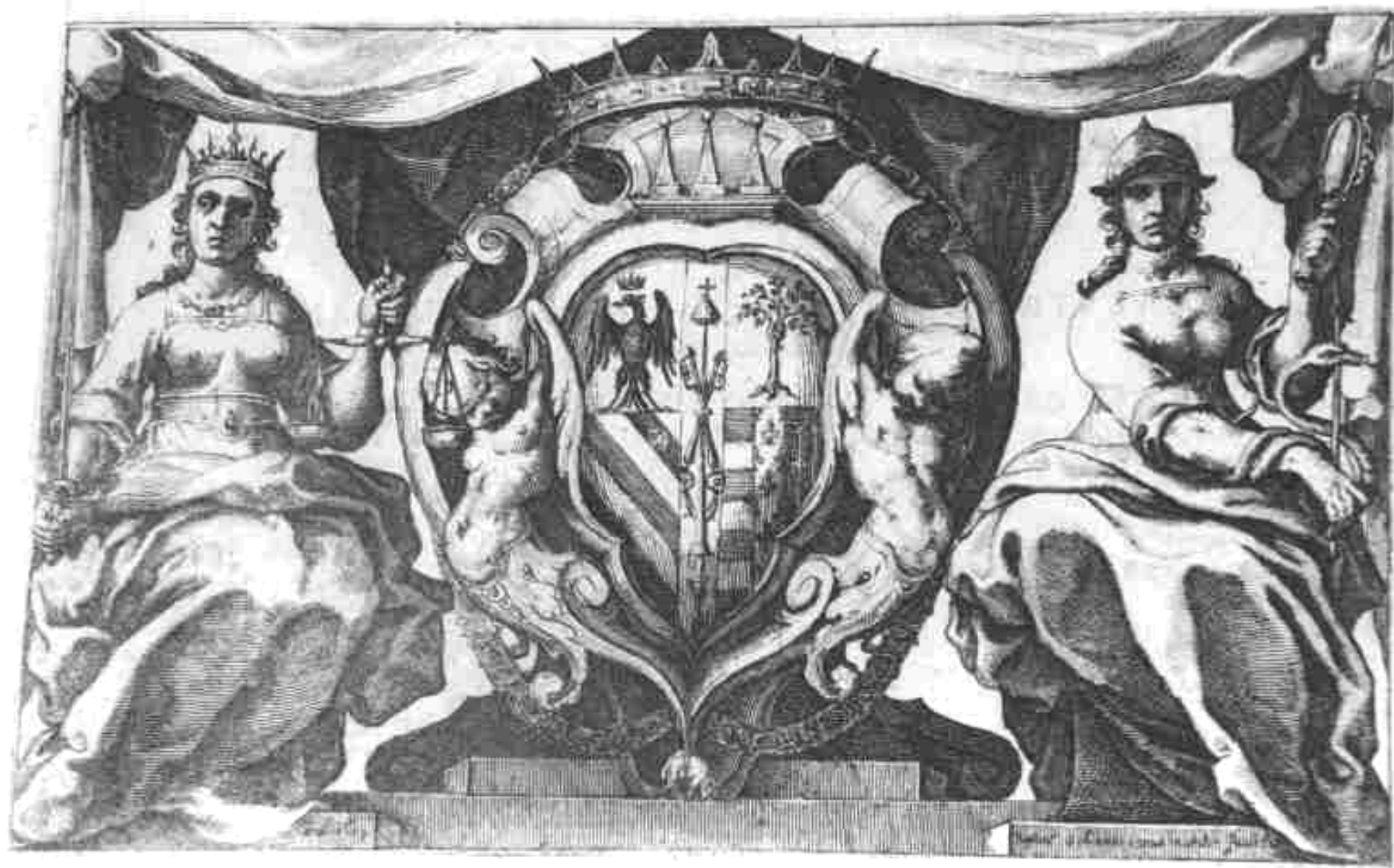




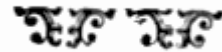
## P R E F A C E

**T**his document is an English translation of Ridolfo Capoferro's famous treatise on fencing titled *Great Representation of the Art and Use of Fencing*. It was born from a need to have a well formatted reference for learning Italian renaissance fencing and the inability to obtain a copy of the beautifully presented and out of print *Italian Rapier Combat* by Jared Kirby. The very excellent translated text for this document was provided by Jherek Swanger and William E. Wilson who have, to their credit, made their translation available to all who wish to read it. The illustrations in this document are from scans of the original treatise and were kindly provided by William E. Wilson. My contribution to this document has been to format the text and illustrations and lay them out in a manner that is easy to read and also to create an index that can be used to search for technical terms. The Swanger and Wilson translation remains essentially unchanged apart from the removal of Capoferro's incomplete table of contents, minor typesetting changes, and spelling changes.





DEDICATED TO THE MOST SERENE SIGNORE DON FRANCESCO  
MARIA FELTRIO DELLA ROVERE,  
SIXTH DUKE OF URBINO.



**E**very father (Most Serene Signor Duke), in order that his children should acquire reputation, procures for them some place in some noble court, and of some protection, to provide for them the best that he can. Thus do I, which, finding the present book on the instruction of fencing born of the better part of me, attempt to place in court, and because more dear to me than any other are the progeny of my intellect, I plead with Your Highness to grant them some place in your court, which, being a perfect compendium of the world, considered perfect, shown in and of itself of so much beauty and goodness as is found in the world, the same is dedicated to the Most Serene Don Federigo, your son, recommending it to his protection, although a lad<sup>1</sup> in child's gowns, and in jests, and gay dances, it appears nonetheless that there are enfolded in his hands triumphs and spoils, and as young Alcide<sup>2</sup> with infantile hand, not yet equal to the purpose, menaces the Hydra, slays the serpents, then in the generous shining of his aspect is seen the greatness of his ancestors, the magnanimity, the valour, and the innumerable other virtues, which have exhausted the greatest and most famous historians, and which will render him above every Prince, and named and illustrious; would they not prove sufficient to confer such eminence, in truth only the virtues of Your Excellency being in number and quality so great, that it rightly could come to be called a diligent imitator of the perfection of GOD? It is not to be marvelled at, therefore, by Your Highness, if I long to introduce into your Most Serene House, and place under the protection of the Most Serene Prince, your son, this book of mine; but considering the singular graciousness, very characteristic of Your Highness and of his Most Serene Blood, I cannot but strongly hope that Your Highnesses, without regarding the baseness of the subject, will favor it fully with your

---

<sup>1</sup> Capo Ferro dedicated his text to Federigo della Rovere (properly Federico Ubaldo della Rovere), the son of Francesco Maria Feltrio della Rovere (i.e. Francesco Maria II), sixth Duke of Urbino. Don Federico was born May 16, 1605, and was thus not yet five years old when Capo Ferro signed his dedication on April 8, 1610. Don Federico does not appear to have lived up to the hopes of the author, nor of Duke Francesco Maria he is said to have slid into debauchery, and withdrew from Urbino to Pesaro. Shortly after having himself proclaimed Duke, he was found dead in bed on June 28, 1623, barely 18 years of age. It has never been resolved whether his demise was a result of drunkenness or treachery. At any rate, contemporary accounts indicate that when the Bishop of Pesaro related the news to Federico's father, Duke Francesco Maria expressed neither surprise nor regret.

<sup>2</sup> i.e. Hercules, from the Greek "Alkeides", descendent of Alceo

most powerful favour. But whereas indeed it may not be proper for Your Highnesses to receive such baseness with such grace, consent at least (as I humbly beseech you) that it can stand alone in the public hall of your Royal Palace, and in the other public places of your ample Dominion, as much glory moreover will arise merely from the authority of having a place among those who are humbly dedicated to serving and revering Your Highnesses, for whom I pray to the Lord God for complete and perpetual happiness.

FROM SIENA ON THE 8TH OF APRIL, 1610.



YOUR MOST SERENE HIGHNESS'S MOST  
HUMBLE SUBJECT, AND MOST DEVOTED  
SERVANT, RIDOLFO CAPOFERRO OF CAGLI.

# TO THE GRACIOUS READER

## RIDOLFO CAPO FERRO OF CAGLI.

**I**t is not my intention to hold you at bay with pompous and splendid words, in the recommending to you of the profession of arms that I practice. It is extolled in the due order of its merit, for which it is greatly prized and honoured, and always praised, and the greatness and valour are commended of those who worthily carry the sword at their side; among whom today shines gloriously the Most Illustrious Signor SILVIO Piccolomini, Grand Prior of the Religion of the Knights of Saint Stephen in Pisa, and General of the Artillery and Master of Chamber of S.A.S. because not only is he endowed with full and marvellous advantage of that of the sword, but also of every other chivalric art, as his heroic actions by the same, to the wonder of all, clearly make manifest. But to turn to the sword, I say it is the noblest weapon above all others, in whose handling the majority of the industry of the art of fencing is honourably employed; therefore according to my judgment, the carrying of arms does not alone constitute the entire work, and that is not what makes the essential difference between a completely valorous man, and a vile and cowardly one, but as well the profession that someone practices to know how to employ them valorously in legitimate defence of himself and of his homeland, which no one truly can do with honour, if he has not first humbled himself, and placed himself under the law and rules of the discipline of fencing.

Which, in the manner of sharpened flint, and honing valour, reduces him to the apex of his true perfection. The reason being that this science is laudable and so overly precious, that rather it would be a hopeless work to want to undertake the task of recounting all of its excellence; I do not believe that any rebuke must fall upon me, because I have set myself to press it into terms of undoubtedly brief, infallible, and well ordered precepts, avoiding as much as possible the blind and dark confusions, the deceitful and fallacious uncertainties, and burdensome and ambitious long-windedness. Now, even as through recognition of my weak faculties, I do not presume to have the joy of success of the full response to the fervour of my most ardent desire, so am I assured that my sincere and cordial labour has not turned out to be accomplished in vain, deferring such to comparison to those who dealt with the same topic before me. Considering that such thing relied upon the virtue of that by whose favour all graces descend unto us, I hope fervently, by these more faithful instructions of mine that may serve no less useful and delightful to you than showy ones, for a small particle of that sweet display of the true glory, that it pleases the graceful spirits always to courteously offer to one who with sincerity of heart goes perpetually labouring in their honoured services.



# OF FENCING

## CHAPTER I: OF FENCING IN GENERAL

I

**T**here is nothing in the world which Nature, wise mistress and benign mother of the universe, with greater genius, and more diligent regard, provides Man for the conservation of his self (of which, more so than any other noble creature, he shows himself very dear of its safety), than the singular privilege of the hand, with which not only does he go procuring all things necessary for the sustenance of his life, but arming himself yet with the sword, noblest instrument of all, he protects and defends himself against any assault whatsoever of inimical force; following nonetheless the strict rule of true valour, and of the art of fencing.

2

Hence one can clearly discern how necessary to man, how useful, and honourable may be the said discipline, and how it is that to everyone it may be necessary, and good, and maximally in demand to those armed with singular valour who are inclined to the noble profession of the military, to which this science is subordinate in the guise of an alternative or subservient discipline, as is the part to the whole, and the end of the middle is subject to the final end.

3

The aim of fencing is the defence of self, from whence it derives its name; because “to fence” does not mean other than defending oneself, hence it is that “protection” and “defence” are words of the same meaning; whence one recognizes the value and the excellence of this discipline is such that everyone should give as much care thereunto, as they love their own life, and the security of their native land, being obligated to spend that lovingly and valorously in the service thereof.<sup>3</sup>

4

Thence it is also seen that defence is the principal action in fencing, and that no one must proceed to offense, if not by way of legitimate defence.

5

The efficient causes of this discipline are four: reason, nature, art, and practice<sup>4</sup>. Reason, as director of nature. Nature, as potent virtue. Art, as regulator and moderator of nature. Practice, as minister of art. Reason

---

<sup>3</sup> There is a play on words occurring in this passage. In Italian, “fencing” is “scherma”, and “to fence” is “schermire” while “protection” is “schermo”. “Defence”, however, while etymologically related in English, is not in Italian (the word is “difesa”).

<sup>4</sup> i.e. reason, nature, art, and practice are causes, whose effect is the discipline of fencing. It is the causes that make the physical manifestation of fencing what it is.

directs nature, and the human body in fencing is its defence; within reason is considered judgment and will. Judgment discerns and understands that which must be done for its defence. Will inclines and stimulates it to its self-preservation.

6

In the body, which in the role of servant executes the commandments of reason, will be considered in the frame, proper size; in the eyes, vitality; and in the legs, in the torso, and in the arms, agility, vigour, and quickness.

7

Nature directs and prepares matter, and the sketch, and the arrangement to some degree in order to receive the final form and perfection of the art.

8

Art regulates nature, and with safer escort guides us according to the infallible truth, and by the ordinance of its precepts to the true science of our defence.

9

Practice conserves, augments, and stabilizes the strength of art and of nature, and more so than does knowledge, instils in us the sage knowledge of many particular details.

I O

Art regards nature and sees that owing to the small capacity of matter, it cannot do all that which it intends to do, and yet considers in many details its perfections and imperfections, and in the role of architect seizes thereof and makes some beautiful model, and thus refines and sharpens the rough-hewn things of nature, rendering them little by little to the height of their perfection.

I I

From nature art has undertaken in defending oneself the ordinary pace; the guard of terza for resting in defence, and those of seconda and quarta for offense; the tempo, or the measure; as well as the posture of the body, with the torso now placed above the left leg for self-defence, now thrown forward and carried on the right leg in order to offend.

I 2

Because without doubt the first offenses were those of the fists, in the doing of them is seen the ordinary pace. It is also seen that many perform the terza, the seconda, and the quarta, punching a lot in tempo and measure.

I 3

Against this offense of the fist, of course was found the art of the stick, and this defence not yet sufficing, iron, and I believe that of this material were made little by little many diverse weapons, but always one more perfect than all others, owing to the multiplicity of its offenses, to wit that the sword was discovered to be the perfect weapon, and



proportioned to the proper distance in which mortals naturally can defend themselves.

I 4

The weapons which are of length exceeding the distance of natural defence and offense are ill suited and abhorrent for use in civic converse, and the excessively short ones are insidious and of danger to life; owing to which, in republics founded upon justice of good laws, and of good customs, it always was, and is, prohibited to carry arms of which can be born treacherous and heedless homicides. On the contrary, in the ancient Roman republic, the true ideal of a good government, the use of arms was entirely prohibited, and to no one, however noble and great that there was, was it licit to carry a sword or other weapon, except in war, and those who in time of peace were discovered with arms, were proceeded against as against murderers.

I 5

And the Roman soldiers, immediately upon arriving home, put down their arms together with their short uniforms, and soldiery, and assumed again their long civil robes, and attended to the studies and the arts of peace, because no Roman exercised the body (as says Salustius) without the mind, each one attending, beyond the studies of war, to every office of peace, and by such longing they endured the burdens of war, and therefore immediately upon the end of war, no more was heard of captain, nor of soldier, nor of military wages.

I 6

In these times soldiers are a greater burden to Princes and to Lords, and more so to the populace in times of peace than in war, and because they are not trained in other studies than those of war, they hate peace, and much of the time they are the authors of turbulence and wretched counsel.

I 7

But turning to our matter, I say that the sword is the most useful and just arm, because it is proportioned to the distance at which offense is naturally performed, and all arms, to the degree that they differ from this distance of natural defence and offense, are to that extent more bestial and adverse to nature, and therefore useless to civic converse; the one is the way of virtue and of true reason, and the other burdensome and coarse, from which nature never departs, keeping company with sin and ignorance, and sliding about by many routes; one is the straight line, which none but the artful knows how to do; the oblique lines are infinite, and anyone can do them. Whence in our times we see offenses and defences multiply themselves and the art unto infinity, human endeavour imitating nature from principles; and while it follows the traces thereof it is useful and advantageous to the human life, but as soon as it departs from the footprints of nature, it begins to degenerate from the nobility of its origin, and hurls itself into the snares of harmful fancy, and plunges human kind into the abyss of ignorance, leading it from the age of gold into the filthiness of mud.

## I 8

From the powers of nature, art, and practice, as causes effecting the defence of which we have treated up to this point, arise every advantage and disadvantage of arms, but they derive principally from the just height of body and from the length of the sword; because a man, large of frame, and that carries a sword proportioned to his body, without doubt will arrive at measure first. In consideration of this, in order to compensate for the natural imperfections of those found to be of inferior size, I believe that it is prohibited in certain lands to make the blade of one sword longer than another, because it seems unjust that one who is superior by nature should take advantage of art, it being necessary that the privilege of nature suffice him, without the manifest indignity (wanting to equalize him with those smaller, being unable to handicap him generally), of bestowing a sword of lesser length to him than to those who are small, who perchance could have other advantages of art and practice, which exceed those of nature, in which cases human judgment is insufficient to provide for such particulars.

## I 9

The art of fencing is most ancient, and was discovered in the times of Nino, King of the Assyrians, who, through use of the advantage of arms, was made monarch and patron of the world; from the Assyrians the monarchy passed to the Persians; the praise of this practice, through the valour of Ciro, from the Persians, came to the Macedonians, from these to the Greeks, from the Greeks it was fixed in the Romans, who (as testifies Vegetius) brought to the field masters of

fencing, whom they named “*Campi ductores, vel doctores*” which is to say, guides, or masters of the field, and these taught the soldiers the strikes of the thrust and the cut against a pole. Nowadays we Italians equally carry the boast in the art of fencing, although more in the schools than in the field, or in the use of the militia, considering that in these times war is made more with artillery, and with the arquebus, than with the sword, which moreover almost does not serve except for carrying out the victory.

## 2 0

This discipline is art, and is not science, taking, however, the word “science” in its strictest sense, because it does not deal with things eternal, and divine, and that surpass the powers of human judgment, but rather it is art, not wrought, nor manual, but rather active, and serves very closely the civil science; because its effects pass together with its operation, in the manner of virtue, and having passed, they do not leave behind any kind of labour or of manufacture, as is common in the performance of the plebeian and mechanical arts, all of which, although some of them are celebrated with the name of nobility, it surpasses and exceeds at great length.

## 2 I

The materials of fencing are the precepts of defending oneself well with the sword; its form and its order are the truth of its rules, always true and infallible.

But it is time at last, that, gathering up all that we have said to this point in brief words, we come to lay the foundation of this discipline, which is its true and proper definition, following the rule from which we will guide and direct the rest of all its precepts.



## CHAPTER II: THE DEFINITION OF FENCING, AND ITS EXPLANATION

2 4

**F**encing is an art of defending oneself well with a sword.

2 5

An art, because it is an assembly of perpetually true and well-ordained precepts, advantageous to civil converse.

2 6

The truth is an arrangement of the precepts of fence; it must not be measured by the ignorance of some, who teach and write based upon their lengthy use of arms and not based upon knowledge; rather more often they make substance out of shadow and reason out of chance, mixing gourds with lanterns<sup>5</sup>, and switching rapidly from one subject to another; but it must be esteemed in and of itself, and restricted to the truth of its nature.

---

<sup>5</sup> John Florio in *A Worlde of Wordes* (1598) states that lanterns were once made from gourds thus a gourd is metaphorically a lantern that cannot illuminate. The expression translated as “switching rapidly from one subject to another” is idiomatic in the original text, and a literal translation would have been unclear.

2 7

Their utility is manifest, because they teach the mode of defence that is very naturally just and honest, and that cannot be doubted to be of the greatest utility that is delivered to human life, because its effects are clearly discerned daily. For as the sword is a weapon well suited for defending oneself in the just distance in which one and the other can naturally offend, we see that the combatants, almost always resting in the defence, rarely come to the offense, which is the last remedy for saving their life, which they would not possess, if their weapons were disproportionate, that is, either greater or lesser than the natural defence requires.

2 8

The aim which separates fencing from all other sciences, is to defend oneself well, with, however, the sword.



### CHAPTER III: THE DIVISION OF FENCING THAT IS POSED IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE SWORD

29

**T**here are two parts to fencing, the understanding of the sword, and its handling. The understanding of the sword is the first part of fencing, which teaches one to understand the sword with the purpose of handling it well.

30

The sword, then, is a pointed arm of iron, and apt for defending oneself at the distance at which one and the other can naturally, and with bodily danger, offend.

31

The material of the sword is the iron material of defence; without doubt it is found that it counters that of wood, which suffices little to beat aside and evade the injury that is customarily done daily by one to another.

32

Its exterior form is that it is pointed; because if it were blunt, it would not serve to hold the adversary at the distance of natural offense.

33

Its purpose is defence, which signifies chiefly to hold the adversary so distant that he cannot offend me, which sort of defence and natural limits enables it to be put into action, without injury from the one near me. And in the Latin tongue, as was already heard said with scholastic certainty, “defend” does not mean other than “avoid”, or to distance oneself from a thing that can harm, if one comes too near thereunto.

34

Hence the words “to defend” signify “to offend”, and strike, which is the final and subsidiary remedy of defence, in case the enemy should pass beyond the boundary of the first defence, and advance himself near to such extent, that I came in danger of coming to harm from him, were I not to provide for myself; because of the fact that the enemy crosses the boundaries of defence, entering into those of offense, I am no longer obligated to carry any respect for the conservation of his life, as he comes toward me with whatever weapon suited to harm me, naturally, as I say, in the distance of being able to reach me as well.

35

From the purpose of the sword, which is to defend oneself in the said distance, is its length to be measured.

### 3 6

Therefore the sword has to be twice as long as the arm, and as much as my extraordinary pace, which length corresponds equally to that which is from my armpit down to the sole of my foot.

### 3 7

There are two parts to the sword: the forte and the debole. The forte begins from the hilt, extending as far as the middle of the blade; and the remainder is called the debole. The forte is for parrying, and the debole for striking.

### 3 8

The edge is false, and true. The true is that which faces downward when the hand rests in its natural position, which, turning itself out, or from inside, outwards from its natural orientation, makes the false edge. The first orientation, that is, of the true edge, is to be recognized in terza, which is the position of the sword in guard, and the other, that is, of the false edge, will appear manifested in the positions of terza<sup>6</sup>, and seconda, which are orientations of the sword, not in guard, but in striking.

### 3 9

I divide only the debole into the true and false edges, and not the forte, because this consideration does not happen to be made in the forte, which serves no other purpose than to parry, and it would not be at all

amiss were it without edge, and dull instead of sharp in the forte and the hilt, not only for gripping the sword, but also for covering oneself, and chiefly the head, while striking.



---

<sup>6</sup> This seems somewhat peculiar, but “terza” is stated here again; perhaps “quarta” was intended.

## CHAPTER IV: ON MEASURE

### 4 0

**U**p until now we have discussed the first part of fencing, which consists of the understanding of the sword; now we commence to treat of the second part, which is that of its handling.

### 4 1

The handling of the sword is the second part of fencing, which shows the way of handling the sword, and is distributed between the preparation of the defence, and defence itself; the preparation, and the first part of the handling of the sword, places the combatants in just distance, and in a convenient posture of body in order to defend themselves in tempo, and it has two parts; in the first is discussed measure and tempo.

### 4 2

In the second is treated of the disposition of the members of the body.

### 4 3

Measure is taken for a certain distance from one end to the other, as for example in the art of fencing is taken for the distance that runs from the point of my sword to the body of the adversary, which is wide or narrow. Accordingly, one takes a thing suitable for measuring the said

distance, which in the use of fencing is the natural braccio<sup>7</sup>, which measures all distances, and which in the exercise of this art has all the qualities and conditions that are expected of an accomplished measure.

### 4 4

The measure is a just distance from the point of my sword to the body of my adversary in which I can strike him, according to which all the actions of my sword and defence are given direction.

### 4 5

The narrow measure is of the foot, or of the right arm; the measure of the foot is of the fixed foot, or of the increased foot.

---

<sup>7</sup> The braccio is literally the arm, but is also a unit of measure, the length of the arm.

#### 4 6

The wide measure is, when with the increase of the right foot, I can strike the adversary, and this measure is the first narrow one<sup>8</sup>.

#### 4 7

The fixed foot narrow measure is that in which, by only pushing my body and legs forward, I can strike the adversary.

#### 4 8

The narrowest measure is when the adversary strikes at wide measure, and I can strike him in his advanced and uncovered arm, either that of the dagger or that of the sword, with my left foot back, followed by the right while striking<sup>9</sup>.

#### 4 9

The first, wide, measure is of a tempo and a half; the second is of a whole tempo; and the third is of a half tempo, with respect to the three distances, which, according to their size, require more or less speed of tempo; and this is enough to have said of measure. Now follows the doctrine of tempo.




---

<sup>8</sup> “...the first narrow one” i.e. “la prima stretta”. This passage is problematic—“wide measure” may thus be taken as “the first narrow measure”, vis-à-vis the second narrow measure, the “fixed foot narrow measure” that is defined immediately following see also line #112 which indicates two narrow measures, one of the fixed foot, and one of the increased pace, and also various references to the need to come to narrow measure before entering the tempo of striking. However, this conflicts with the definition of measure given in the “Definition of some terms”, #4, which identifies narrow measure as that of the fixed foot. Capo Ferro may use “misura stretta” in two senses, both the general sense of “in measure” and the more specific sense of “fixed foot measure”. Alternately, “la prima stretta” may be taken as “the first closure” in the sense of a grasping. Regardless, this conveys that wide measure is the first distance achieved which is “in measure”.

<sup>9</sup> This appears to describe an arrest with reassemblment (the bringing together of both feet, with the body upright, in order to outreach an opponent).



## CHAPTER V: OF TEMPO

### § 0

**T**he word “tempo” in fencing comes to signify three different things; chiefly it signifies a just length of motion or of stillness that I need in order to reach a definite end for some plan of mine, without considering the length or shortness of that tempo, only that I finally arrive at that end. Even as in the art of fencing, in order to come to measure, I need a certain and just tempo of motion and of stillness, it doesn’t matter whether I arrive there either early or late, provided that I reach the desired place. We pose the example that I move myself to seek the measure, and that I go very slowly to find it, and that my adversary is as much fixed of body, so that I find it; although I have arrived somewhat late, nonetheless not at all can it jeopardize my plan because I have arrived in tempo, considering that, as much length of time as I am myself in motion, precisely so much had my adversary fixed himself; thus my motion equals the tempo of the stillness of my adversary, and his stillness measures my motion precisely; and because, in remaining in guard and seeking the measure, only the correspondence of the tempo that the combatants mutually consume in moving and in fixing themselves is to be considered, to the end that they arrive at a certain point of measure, in light of this, in the said actions the speed of the motion and the shortness of the stillness do not come into consideration, but rather through taking the just

measure, it is more useful that they go, as is often said, with a leaden sandal, with the body counterpoised, and placed over the left leg in ordinary pace, a posture of body most well-suited for coming with consideration and respect to apprehend the due measure.

### § I

Next this word “tempo” is taken in the sense of quickness, in respect of the length or brevity of the motion or of the stillness. Thus in the art of fencing there are three distances, and different measures of striking, and through this again are found three distinct tempos, and here it is not wished to consider only that one comes to a certain end, but that one arrives also with a certain quickness and velocity, because the wide measure, that is, of the increased foot, requires a tempo, that is, a persevering of stillness or of movement, of the swords or of the bodies of the combatants, fairly brief, but not so brief as the narrow measure of the fixed foot; and the narrowest measure requires the fastest tempo, because each little bit that I move myself with the point of my sword, and each little bit that my adversary fixes himself, in the distance of narrowest measure, suffices me to effect my plan; because this tempo is briefest, therefore will we call it half a tempo<sup>10</sup>, and consequently the tempo that is spent in striking from the less narrow measure of the fixed

---

<sup>10</sup> “...half a tempo” i.e. “mezzo tempo”.

foot will comprise a whole tempo, and the last tempo, which is employed in striking from wide measure, which is of the increased foot, will be a tempo and a half.

### § 2

In the first tempo, which is that of seeking the wide measure, the quickness of motion and of stillness are not considered, and therefore it is not necessary to measure it by half of a whole tempo, which manners of tempos are only to be regarded in striking. Accordingly, the posture of the body in striking is entirely contrary to that which is observed in seeking the narrow measure, because the first posture is comfortable for going little by little to find the narrow measure, and the other is bold, and with speed one hurls oneself to strike.

### § 3

Tempo is not other than the measure of the stillness and of the motion; the stillness of the point of my sword measures the motion of the body of my adversary, and the motion of my adversary with his body measures the stillness of the point of my sword. Now, so that this tempo may be just, it is necessary that for as much length of tempo as the body of my adversary is fixed, for so much is the point of my sword to be moved, and consequently, I pose this example: I find myself in wide measure, with a will to come to narrow measure; now I move the point of my sword in order to arrive at the said terminus; meanwhile as I move myself it is necessary that my adversary fix his body, and thus the stillness of body of my adversary is the measure of the movement of the point of my sword; and, however, if I moved myself to strike before my

adversary finished fixing himself, because the tempo would be unequal, I would move myself in vain, or not without great danger to myself. We pose the case, that both of us move ourselves to seek measure, and the one and the other set themselves upon intending to have found it; both going to invest themselves thereof intervene so that neither one will hit, because the tempo in which they move themselves to strike won't be just, in respect of the distance to which they must first arrive; in this example it is seen that the motion of my point measures the motion of the body of my adversary, and the motion of the point of my adversary measures the motion of my body. However in the times to come, many strike each other in contra tempo, having come at the same time to narrow measure.

### § 4

The tempo that has to be considered in wide measure requires patience, and that of the narrow measure, quickness in striking and in exiting.

### § 5

The tempo of the narrow measure is lost either through shortcoming of nature, or through defect of art and of practice.

### § 6

Through shortcoming of nature, by too much slowness of the legs, of the arm, and of the body, which derives either from weakness or from too much bodily weight, as we see occur in men who are either too fat or too thin.

### § 7

Through defect of art, when one does not learn to find the narrow measure as is necessary, with the body supported by the left leg, with the ordinary pace, and with the right arm extended, because the things must move in company in order to produce one single effect, yet they have to move in a just distance; but if the point of the sword is very advanced and the leg back, or if the leg is advanced and the arm back, then the sword will never be carried with that promptness, justness, and speed, which is required; by which, those who approach to seek the narrow measure with disproportionately distanced limbs, although they arrive there, nonetheless cannot be in the tempo of striking, because they would lack the best tempo of the narrow measure, which is that of prompt justness, or quickness.

### § 8

Through lack of practice, tempo is lost for the reason that the body is not yet well limber in its limbs, or when the students acquire some wretched habit, going back to the vanities of feints, and disengages, and counter disengages, and similar things done as such.

### § 9

From this, which we have said so far, everyone will easily be able to understand to be falsest that which many say, that tempo is taken solely from the movement that my adversary makes with his body and sword; but it is necessary to have equal regard for my own motion, and not only for my motion and that of my adversary, but as well to our stillnesses;

because tempo is not solely a measure of motion, but of motion and stillness.

### 60

And concluding this matter of tempo, I say that every motion and every stillness of mine and of my adversary together make a tempo, to such extent that one measures the other.



## CHAPTER VI: OF THE BODY, AND CHIEFLY OF THE HEAD

61

**T**he head truly is the chief thing in this practice; it lies indeed in its due place, because it is that which recognizes measures and tempos, hence it is necessary that it comes to be deployed in that place where it can serve as the sentinel, and reveal the land from every side.

62

The placement of the head, when lying in guard, and in seeking measure, is then just and convenient when it makes one straight line together with the sword; because in this manner the eyes will see all the stillnesses and movements of the sword and of the body of the adversary, and will recognize immediately the parts that have to be offended and defended; the head, being posted on the said parts, is therefore able to cast all the visual rays in a straight line, which they could not do if the head were borne higher or lower, so that the rays could not radiate from every side, and thus they would not be quick to seize or flee the tempo.

63

In lying in guard and in seeking measure, the head is rested upon the left shoulder, and in striking it leans upon the right shoulder.

64

In lying in guard and in seeking measure, the head has to be withdrawn as much as is possible, and in striking one wishes to propel it forward as much as one can.

65

In striking, care will be taken that the head will be somewhat more to one side than to the other, according to whether one will strike to the inside or the outside, so that it will be covered by the hilt and the sword arm.

Other placements and movements of the head which are made in passing, in fleeing, and in moving the body out of the way in diverse sorts of guards, and in infinite means of striking, cannot be accepted as good ones, because they deviate from the straight line, which is called by me that which divides my body through the flank together with that of the adversary, as on the contrary the oblique line I name that which runs outside my body or that of my adversary<sup>11</sup>, of one party as of the other, following the rule by which all of the play of fencing has to be that of measuring.




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<sup>11</sup> This is the only place wherein definitions are given of the straight line and the oblique line, critical technical terms employed frequently throughout the text.

## CHAPTER VII: OF THE BODY<sup>1 2</sup>

67

**I**n resting in guard and in seeking measure, the body needs to be bent, and slopes to the rear, such that the angle which it makes with the right thigh is barely visible, and with the left thigh it comes to make an obtuse angle, so that the left shoulder aligns with the line of the left foot, and the right shoulder evenly divides the pace of the guard in half.

68

In striking the body is propelled forward, so that the right thigh forms an obtuse angle with the body, and the point of the shoulder aligns with the point of the right foot, and the left thigh and calf are carried forward through an oblique line, extended to such a degree that the left shoulder divides the pace that is made through the middle.

69

And when one goes to strike, the body needs to be pushed forward in a straight line, so that through the diversity of striking, outside and inside, leaning somewhat more to one than to the other side, it will deviate the least from the straight line.

70

The objective of why the body should be thus angled, and this is of prime importance, is because in this way the parts which can be offended are more distanced, and more covered, and better guarded, and defended; because the more distant a target is, the more difficult it is to strike it; thereby in striking blows are carried longer, faster, and more vigorously, for as much further away as offenses originate, to such degree are they safer and better.

71

In addition to the bending of the body and of its form which it takes in placing oneself in guard, in seeking measure, and in striking, is to be considered similarly its skew<sup>13</sup>, which diminishes its width, as the bend diminishes and contracts its height.

72

The skew of the body needs to be such that no more is shown than the middle of the breast, not only in fixing oneself in guard, and in seeking measure, but also in striking, because as much less of the breast is shown, so much more does one walk and strike in a straight line, and as much more is uncovered, so much more of measure and of tempo is lost.

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<sup>12</sup> Title: "Of the body" ("della vita") refers here to the trunk.

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<sup>13</sup> The "skew" of the body is its profile.

They who like the guards, and counterguards, and stringing here, there, above, and below, the feints, and counter-feints, the diagonal paces, the voids of the legs, and the crossings, necessarily form and move their bodies in many strange ways; which, as things done by chance and that were founded in no reasons that were sound and true, we will leave to their authors.



## CHAPTER VIII: OF THE ARMS

74

**I**n resting in guard and in seeking measure, the right arm must rest somewhat bent, so that the upper arm is extended in an oblique line, so low that the elbow meets the bend of the body, and is in line with the right knee; and the forearm, withdrawn somewhat, forms a straight line together with the sword.

75

In resting in guard and in seeking measure, the left arm together with the left thigh and calf have to serve as the counterweight of the body and the right thigh and calf; and the upper arm needs to be extended, so that it is in line with the left knee, and meets the bend of the left flank; and its forearm needs to be somewhat tucked in to oneself, in order by its motion to help to propel the body forward in striking, which it would not do, if it were neglected.

76

In striking, the right arm needs to be extended in a straight line, turning the hand and forearm upward, sometimes in, sometimes out, depending on the side from which one strikes.

77

In striking, the left arm needs to be so extended that it makes a straight line with the right arm, turning it according to whether one strikes

outside or inside; because each iota that one carries the arm forward, or that one fixes it in an oblique line, would significantly diminish the measure, and the quickness of the tempo.

78

The sword is regarded entirely as one limb with the arm, and it has to form a straight line with the forearm, which is properly aligned with the fold of the right flank, and has to divide the height and width of the body into two equal parts, because in resting in guard and seeking measure, the reason why it will have to return properly to the fold of the flank is this: that every time that it is in this location, it will be quickest to come to the aid of all the parts that can be offended, being that the upper parts, that is, those from the top of the head down to the fold of the flank, are of a measure with the parts beneath from the fold of the flank down to the knee; and it doesn't occur that one has to regard the calf, which cannot be offended in the natural distance of the offense of the increased feet without excessively leading one's body forward into manifest peril.

79

The location and posture of the sword in striking is entirely one with that of its arm, turning the false edge around in striking, according to whether it strikes outside or inside.



## 8 0

Take heed diligently that the point of your sword always is aimed at the uncovered parts of the enemy, which are those of the right flank and right thigh, and do not let anyone divert you from this intention by uncovering their left side, which is fallacious measure and tempo, being that it may be taken away in an instant, which doesn't occur with the parts of the right side, which necessarily are made targets.

## 8 1

It is not good to rest in guard with the arm tucked in, because it does not cover the measure well in which I am found; it is equally not good for seeking measure, because the point of the sword is too far from the body of the adversary. Whence one cannot take the proper measure, lacking thereby the ability to strike in tempo; in addition to this, the arm thus retired does not keep the adversary from the just distance wherein he can strike me, and thus it does not do its duty. Similarly, the sword is chiefly found thereby to not be useful in striking, because it will not be able to strike in the measure of the increased foot, as resting with its point so far from the adversary it cannot properly take the said measure, which is as much more excellent than the narrower measures, as it is to strike the enemy from afar than from nearby. Furthermore it is not good for launching the blow, which together with the arm is discharged by the pressure that makes the body advance, and it is not true that the extension of the arm increases the measure, but rather by the extension of the body, and of the forward pace, because the forward leg and the body, while extending the arm with the sword, is poised

over the left leg, on which is supported the entire body and right leg<sup>14</sup>; which left leg during the launching throws the body and the thigh forward onto the right leg, which in exchange forms a pillar and buttress, sustaining all of the weight of the body, pushed forward to launch the blow<sup>15</sup>.

## 8 2

I cannot approve of having the arm fully extended in guard and seeking measure, because it forces the sword out of its place which is proper and well suited to defend one's own life, and to offend that of the adversary; and in striking it does not aid the body in launching the blow, and carries it with less vigour; other locations, and movements of the arm, are not desired in the play of striking in the straight line.



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<sup>14</sup> i.e. the weight of the body and right leg are carried on the left leg while in guard.

<sup>15</sup> i.e. in the lunge, the weight is on the right leg.

## CHAPTER IX: OF THE THIGHS, CALVES, OF THE FEET, AND OF THE PACE

### 8 3

**I**n resting in guard and in seeking the narrow measure, the right calf with the thigh and its foot point directly forward, and lean back in an oblique line, in the manner of a slope; and the left calf with the thigh and its foot point straight toward your left side, with the knee bent as far as possible, so that the inner side of the heel directly aligns with the point of the right heel.

### 8 4

In striking, the knee of the right leg is bent as far as it can be, so that the calf and the thigh come to make the most acute angle; and on the contrary, the left calf with its thigh is extended forward in an oblique line in the manner of a slope.

### 8 5

The pace is a just distance between the legs, as much in fixing as in moving oneself, well suited for placing oneself in guard to seek measure, and to strike; in regard of distance, the pace is either entirely narrow, or a half pace, or a just pace, or extraordinary.

### 8 6

In the use of fencing, I know of no other pace so good as the ordinary, in which the body rests comfortably and carried well in guard, for

seeking the narrow measure with a little increase of pace; wanting to seek it with smaller paces, the foundation would be overly narrow and weak; it would not support the weight of the body, and one would become disconcerted, if, not little by little, but rather with paces and half paces one sought the measure, and losing the tempo, would not discharge the blow with so much speed; and if they are indeed the said good paces, they will serve outside of the measure for walking, and placing oneself in guard, and for returning into it.

### 8 7

The pace of fencing, we will, for better understanding, name “military”, or “soldierly”, dividing it into the ordinary and the extraordinary. The ordinary is that in which one rests in guard and seeks the narrow measure. And the extraordinary is that into which one moves, lengthening the pace forward to strike.

### 8 8

The pace, regarding its position, can be considered in several ways, forward, back, sideways, and diagonally, and this with the legs crossed or not, equally whether a single leg is moved or both, and whether the legs are moved to make an entire pace, either to diminish it or to change its position in order to allow the body to retreat or void.

## 8 9

It appears to me, that there are not but two main ways of fixing and moving oneself with respect to the legs. The first way is that in which one appears in guard, and seeking the narrow measure, or avoiding it; the other serves for striking.

## 9 0

I do not know that stepping sideways serves other than to make a good show<sup>16</sup>, and display animosity, and to scout out the strength of the adversary; when somebody goes to put himself in guard in this fashion of stepping, you will be able to avail yourself of all the narrow and just paces, although in my judgment in this the ordinary pace still carries the boast.

## 9 1

Nonetheless there are those that avail themselves of this stepping to the side when the adversary is poised on an oblique line with the sword in order to stringer him on the outside, but to me it seems that a more expeditious way would be to seek the narrow measure immediately by the straight line, rather than to follow a play outside of the rule. As well, there are those who avail themselves thereof through fading back of the body, while their adversary comes to strike them encountering him in quarta or in seconda, either outside or inside, according to the occasion, but they would be equally able to encounter him, having in

consideration the tempo and the measure of quarta and of seconda in the straight line, without traversing their legs.

## 9 2

The crossing of the left foot toward the right side in performing an inquantata is worthless; it can make of itself a shortcoming, because it hinders the body and shortens the motion of the right arm in striking, with loss of tempo; the void of the right leg toward the left side of the adversary in order to perform an inquantata is equally a thing done by chance, and sooner serves for an amicable assault than for the trial or dispute.

## 9 3

The passatas are not good, because they lose measure and tempo, because while one is moving the left leg, at the same time the torso, and the right leg, and the sword arm, cannot move to strike with due speed, nor without danger of response.

## 9 4

Retreats are necessary principally in striking, because in the act of striking I necessarily uncover my body, and yet if I fixed myself too much it could easily occur that my adversary could make a response to me.



<sup>16</sup> i.e. to pretend, to perform a pretence or feint.

## CHAPTER X: OF DEFENCE, OF THE GUARD

95

**U**p until now we have dealt with the first part of the handling of the sword, which has taught us the just distance, and the true position of all the members of the body, which are required for defence; now we will speak of that very same defence.

96

Defence is the second part of handling of the sword, which trains us to employ the sword for our defence, and has two parts, of which the first is the defensive, or guard, as we wish to call it, and the other is the offensive.

97

The guard is a position of the arm and of the sword extended in a straight line in the middle of the offendable parts, with the body well accommodated in its ordinary pace in order to hold the enemy at a distance, from any offense, and in order to offend him in case he approaches to endanger you.

98

Terza then is exclusively a guard, not indeed posed with the hilt outside the knee, but so that it properly divides the body though the middle, neither high nor low, but properly in the middle of the parts that cannot be covered, in order to be equally prompt and near to all of their offenses and defences.

99

Prima and seconda are not guards, because they are not well suited for seeking measure, and uncover too much of the body, and are not equally near to all the parts of the body that can be offended and defended; quarta equally shows too much of the body; it is a way of striking, and not of guarding oneself.

100

There are three reasons which make it difficult to hit the mark, namely: the distance to the target; because it is concealed, so that one is at pains to see through the impediment of the things that veil it; and even if it is uncovered, as the danger of the blow approaches, in an instant it can be covered.

I O I

All of these virtues are contained in our guard; because it greatly distances the target and removes as much of it as can be, by means of the fold and skew of the body; moreover, it excellently covers the parts that cannot be placed out of the way, and if some remain yet uncovered, one is quick to succour them if need be, being in equal distance; and thus one walks safely to take well the tempo and measure, which thing is the ultimate perfection of the guard.

I O 2

To me it is not legitimate to speak of changing from guard to guard, one not making a good guard, if not a single one.

I O 3

Offense is a defence in which I seek measure and strike my adversary.



## CHAPTER XI: ON THE WAY OF SEEKING MEASURE

I ○ 4

**T**here are two parts to offense: seeking measure, and striking.

I ○ 5

Seeking measure is an offense in which, in the said guard, I seek the narrow measure in order to strike.

I ○ 6

There are three ways of seeking measure; because I seek it either while I move and the adversary fixes himself, or when I fix myself and the adversary moves, or when I move and the adversary moves.

I ○ 7

The tempo of these actions needs to be just, and equal to the outer boundaries of the wide measure, upon which the tempo of seeking measure expires, and gives rise to the tempo of another action, which is that of striking.

I ○ 8

In order that this tempo may be just, it is necessary that you have patience up until you arrive at the said distance, and not move yourself earlier to strike.

I ○ 9

For example: I fix myself in guard to seek measure, my adversary already being entered into the boundaries of offense; meanwhile, as he walks with his sword, either seeking the measure or pretending to strike me, it is necessary that I fix myself as much with the point of my sword, so that he arrives at the edge of the wide measure, and I not move myself to strike earlier. Because in this action his motion has to measure my stillness, and my stillness his motion, and if I had moved myself from my stillness before he had come to the edge of the wide measure, the tempo would not be just, and therefore I would not have sought the measure well; and in conclusion this motion and stillness are equal; as it takes one tempo to arrive at the beginning of the narrow measure, and it does not matter how quick it may be, only that it be equal and equivalent to the outer boundary of the wide measure, and thus the end of the tempo of wide measure is of seeking the narrow measure, and the beginning of the tempo of striking.

# I I O

Many in seeking the narrow measure disengage and counter-disengage, perform feints and counter-feints, stringer a palmo<sup>17</sup> and more of the sword, and step from every side, and twist their bodies and stretch them, and retreat in many whimsical fashions, which are things done outside of true reason, and found to deceive the foolish, and make the play difficult; nonetheless stringering of the sword, when I cannot do otherwise, seeking measure in my guard, it is only necessary that I stringer the debole of my enemy's sword in a straight line, with the forte of mine, and this straddling it without touching<sup>18</sup>, but only in striking to hit the debole of the enemy's sword with my forte, on the inside or the outside according to the circumstances of the striking.

# I I I

Disengaging, if it is to be good, is good in the situation in which the adversary has me stringered and removed from the straight line; it would be licit then, indeed necessary, to retreat, disengaging with a little ceding of my body or feet, replacing myself immediately into the straight line in order to seek measure; because disengaging is done against stringering, and even as stringering is done while moving the sword forward, thus must the disengage be done while withdrawing it.




<sup>17</sup> A unit of measure variously from a palm's width up to 10 inches.

<sup>18</sup> The phrase "straddling it without touching" is, in the original, "cavalcandola senza toccare". To select a single English equivalent may obscure Capo Ferro's meaning. The verb "cavalcare" means to ride (a horse), to straddle, or to span (e.g. as a bridge spans a stream). This phrase may thus be understood to imply that, in stringering, my sword extends past the point of "intersection" with my enemy's (i.e. spans, or straddles it) while staying close to and exerting (or more properly, enabling) control over it (i.e. riding it), but without touching (toccare) it until the moment of attack.

## CHAPTER XII: OF STRIKING

### I I 2

triking is the final offensive action of fencing, in which, having arrived at narrow measure, I move myself, with my body, with my legs, and with my arms, thrown forward all in one tempo to be better able to strike my adversary, and this is done with the feet fixed or with the increase of the pace, according to the magnitude of the narrow measure, according to whether it comes to be better suited for me to take more of one than of the other measure; because if through my tardiness, or through the fury of my adversary, the first measure vanishes, then I will be able to avail myself of the second, striking with fixed feet, so in this case it doesn't happen that I greatly hurry the pace, as with only bending my right knee, it does not behove me to seek a narrower measure, whence I would have had to increase the pace.

### I I 3

Striking is done in three ways; because I can strike my adversary while I am fixed and he moves to seek measure or to strike me; or while he is fixed and I move in order to seek measure; or because both of us move ourselves to seek measure and to strike; only this is the difference: that when he moves to strike me, I strike him with fixed feet, because when he moves in order to enact the said effect, I can poorly take the just measure to strike him with the increase of pace; on the contrary it is

necessary that I cling to the narrower measure; and when he moves to seek measure I strike him with the increase of pace.

### I I 4

In consideration of the parts of the body with respect to the sword, I strike either from the inside or outside; from inside from quarta, and from outside from seconda, high or low according to the exposed parts of the body of the adversary, that give me measure, with respect to the point of my sword.

### I I 5

While I strike, I necessarily parry together, inasmuch as I strike in the straight line, and with my body in its due disposition, because when I strike in this manner, in tempo, and at measure, the adversary will never hit me, neither with thrust nor cut, because the forte of my sword goes in a straight line, and comes to cover all of my body.

### I I 6

The edge is of little moment, because I cannot strike with the edge in the said distance of the narrow measure without entirely uncovering myself and giving the measure and tempo to my adversary to strike me, because of the compass of the arm and of the sword which I make, and although some usefulness is found in the cut, nonetheless at the same measure in the very same tempo more can be shown in the thrust.



I I 7

But without a trace of doubt, on horseback it is better to strike with the cut than the thrust, because my legs are carried by another's, and thus I am not well suited to seek measure and tempo, which befit propelling the body and the arm forward, but it is indeed true that I can wheel my arm about to my satisfaction, which is a proper motion to strike with the edge.



### CHAPTER XIII: OF THE DAGGER

**O**f the dagger it will suffice us in this brief chapter to record only that it has been found better for saving oneself, in case, while I throw a blow without attending to parrying, my adversary threw one at me where it seemed to him best suited, than for one to be unable to employ the dagger in order to avert the response. And even as all advantages deliver and carry some disadvantage, so did it

happen in the play of the dagger, which one cannot employ without uncovering somewhat more of the body, and shortening the line a little while striking. This is the end of the dagger, but the art was deviated thence from its chief goal given to it, even as it did as well to the sword in various techniques that would be better put into effect with the unaccompanied sword, without following such lengths.



# NOW FOLLOWS THE GREAT REPRESENTATION OF THE USE OF FENCING

## AND FIRST THE DIFFERENCE THAT IS FOUND BETWEEN THE ART AND THE USE IS EXPLAINED

**T**here is the greatest difference between the art and the use<sup>19</sup>, and perchance not less than between reason and luck, between confusion and good order, between knowledge and opinion. Which thing, in order that it be more plainly understood, it is necessary that we will briefly consider and explain the definitions of the art, which, as I remember having already heard treated of by several people of intelligence, is not other than a multitude of precepts, useful and well-ordered for civil converse. Because one flower does not make Spring, nor a single precept suffice to make the art, likewise with whatsoever number of precepts, is it so with the art; but these former finally confirm themselves to be useful, and not useless; and they are not those that are submerged in the abyss of the dark shadows of falsities and witless opinions. For the art is not governed according to its

own whim, but directs all of its precepts in accordance with the rule that the law of truth gives to it. Truth commands the art, that it does not build on air, nor teach, if not of those things which are infallible and of perpetual truth. And those precepts that do not stand as paragons of their laws are not recognized as theirs. The use of the art encompasses much more, and considers not only the true things, but cautions us also of the false and of the many other particular details that variously occur; and in order to show its effects, takes advantage of the aid of many disciplines. For inasmuch as we see occur daily in civil converse, that a man is insufficient to put into practice the office or the art that he does, if help does not come from those in whom civility resides, likewise are all the arts, all the sciences, and all the professions among each other conjoined and connected, so that one has need of the mutual aid of the other, wishing to put his training into execution; nonetheless, even as in the civil practice each man has his own office, his separate dwelling, and his good partitions, likewise the arts and the sciences have their distinct boundaries and their own precepts, which it is illicit for them to trespass. Because some who teach do not observe this difference between the art and the use, it makes them fall into

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<sup>19</sup> The distinction between the art and the use is explained here. The art is, in a sense, the ideal of fencing, derived solely from its guiding precepts, and was discussed up until this point. The use, however, which follows, includes a variety of effects (body evasions, passatas, feints, the use of the dagger, and so on) that may deviate from the pure art of the straight line. Thus apparent contradictions between advice given by Capo Ferro up to this point regarding tactics to be eschewed, and the same tactics that he subsequently demonstrates, are better understood as being not contradictory per se, but rather to pertain to the use but not the art.

many very grave errors. Thence it occurs that when teaching, likewise with the pen as with the sword in hand, they are long-winded and so confused and self-contradictory most of the time. And because they do not first lay the stable foundation of the infallible and well-ordered precepts of the art, with very great ease and in the briefest time would they <attempt to> lead their scholars to that degree of perfection which one can desire in this science. In consideration of this, in order to facilitate the art of fencing, I have managed to break down all the difficulty, and to extract it from the dark shadows of confusion, condensing it in the fewest demonstrations, separated from its use, and

now to you I offer and put forward to your eyes a very few figures, the greater part of which explain our art, leaving to others the care of devoting their studies to the uncertainty and infinity of particular things, which without fixing oneself in one same state, we see occur daily in the use of arms, and if they have indeed to teach this instability and variety of things, it seems much better to me, in the school of “hand to hand”, that they remember that they do not teach with knowledge. But it is time at last that we come to the explanation of some admonitions and advice, as well as some terms of fencing, which pertain to the use, and to our figures as well.

## SOME ADMONITIONS, OR ADVICE, OF FENCING

### I

**F**irst, if one finds himself at blows with his adversary, he must always have his eye on the other's sword hand, more so than on any other place, all others being fallacious; because paying attention to the hand, he sees the stillness and all of the movements that it makes, and from this (according to his judgment) he will be able to resolve how much he will have to do.

### 2

#### OF PARRYING AND STRIKING, AND VOIDING THE BODY

The good player, when he plays, must never parry without responding with striking; neither less must he go to strike if he is not secure to parry the response; nor fail to void his body if he does not strike; and if it occurs to him to parry with the dagger, when the dagger goes out to parry, the sword must go out to strike.

### 3

#### THE VIRTUE OF THE UNACCOMPANIED SWORD

You must know that the unaccompanied sword is the queen and foundation of all other weapons, yea, that to delight therein is as, and more useful than to do so in others; because more securely does one learn to parry, strike, and void the body, disengage the sword, counter-

disengage, gain the sword of the adversary in all the guards; and during all the aforesaid effects, you will be careful to hold your arm well extended, because you will come to deflect all your adversary's blows at a distance from your body.

### 4

#### METHOD THAT ONE MUST EMPLOY AGAINST A BESTIAL MAN

If you have an encounter with a bestial man, that is, one without measure and tempo, who throws many blows at you with great impetus, there are two things that you can do: first, adopting the play of mezzo tempo, as I teach you in its place, you will strike him during his throwing of a thrust or a cut, in his sword-hand or arm; alternately allow him to go into empty space, evading somewhat backwards with your body, then immediately give him a thrust in the face or chest<sup>20</sup>.

### 5

#### WAY OF BECOMING A PERFECT PLAYER

To one who would become a perfect player, it does not suffice only to take lessons from the master, but it is necessary that he seek daily to play with diverse players, and being able to do so, he must always

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<sup>20</sup> These recommendations appear to be taken from Antonio Manciolino's *Opera Nova*, p. 3 recto.

practice with those who know more than he, because the player with such practiced wits will become most perfect in this virtue.

## 6

### OF THE MOST SECURE GUARD

You know that in my book on the art, that I do not hold to be good other than one single guard, which is the low guard called terza, with the sword level in a straight line that divides the right flank through the middle; and the point thereof must always point towards the middle of the adversary's body, that is, of the nearer side; and it is more secure than other, high, guards, because in the said high guards one can more easily be struck with a thrust or cut to the leg than in the low ones; as I say, this danger is not there, and its virtue is that only the throwing of the thrust is the natural strike.

## 7

### OF THE VANITY OF THE FEINTS

The feints are not good, because they lose tempo and measure; in addition it is so that the feint will be done either in measure or out of measure; if it will be done out of measure, I do not happen to move myself, but if it will be done to me in measure, while he feints, I will strike.

## 8

### FROM WHOM ONE MUST LEARN

You have to know that there are some who, immediately after they have learned a little, and having as well a bit of practice, put themselves to

teach others, and they teach without the foundation of the rule which is true, not knowing that knowing is quite different from teaching, and this method of teaching is acquired with length of time, because even as much time is required in order to recognize measure and tempo, thus is it so that he who does not well understand measure nor tempo, and does not have a method of teaching, can be called an imperfect player, and one must be wary of learning from these.

## 9

### OF GAINING THE SWORD

It is of no small profit nor of little beauty to know how to gain the sword of the adversary in all the guards, and it is as well of no small importance, should the adversary have gained yours, to know how to recover it; so that in this occasion, in case he gained it, there are three things that you can do: first, you must never disengage in order to throw a completed blow<sup>21</sup>; nor disengage in order to parry and then

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<sup>21</sup> The term "completed blow" ("colpo finito" in the original) refers to a full cut, as opposed to a half cut, e.g. a full mandritto as opposed to a mezzo mandritto. The term "colpo finito" is clearly used in this fashion by dall'Agocchie in his *Opera Necessaria*, pg. 28 recto: "You know that the mandritto squalibro begins at the left shoulder, and finishes at the right knee of the enemy, and for this was named 'colpo finito'. The mezzo mandritto is of the same nature; nonetheless through not being a 'colpo finito', and also through being of less tempo, it comes to be called 'mezzo mandritto'." The term is used by Manciolino as well, on pg. 4 verso: "If one finds himself close to the enemy, he must never throw a 'colpo finito', because the sword must not distance itself from the presence for the safety of him who holds it, and this throwing of an imperfect blow is called 'mezzo tempo'". The term is thus equivalent to Angelo Viggiani's "colpo intiero" ("full blow"), as he describes it in similar terms to Manciolino's (i.e. a perfect blow of a full tempo, vis-à-vis the imperfect half blow that requires a half tempo; see Viggiani's *Lo Schermo*, pg. 64 recto: "Thus a full tempo is a full perfect blow, because that would be a perfect motion and tempo; and a mezzo tempo would then be (as you said) a mezzo rovescio, a mezzo mandritto." A completed blow is thrown so as to cut the full length of the opponent's body, while a half

strike; another, retreating back, with somewhat of a ceding of the body, and lowering your sword, and your adversary wanting to follow you, in the same tempo in which he comes forward to approach and gain the sword anew, you will be able to strike him during the movement of his right foot, either below or above his sword as it happens to be more convenient; and furthermore, it must be advised that by “to stringer” the sword, we mean as much as “to gain it”.

## I O

### OF STRIKING IN CONTRA TEMPO

In more manners can one strike in contratempo, but I do not approve of other than two, which will be: finding yourself with your sword in quarta, with its point facing toward your right side, and your adversary coming to gain it, in the same tempo in which he moves his right foot in order to lay his sword upon yours, you will push a thrust from the said quarta, passing forward with your left foot, or with your right instead; alternately, finding yourself in terza, and he coming to gain it from the outside, you will thrust him in seconda while passing as above.

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blow is thrown so as to stop short of this. The completed blow therefore takes longer (a full tempo), and leaves one more open, both at the beginning (because of the windup to generate power) and at the end (because the sword finishes in a location that is outside a good guard). These reasons are probably why Capo Ferro advises against disengaging to throw a completed blow when the enemy has gained your sword to willing give up both tempo and defensive positioning when one has already lost the sword is foolhardy in the extreme.

## I I

### OF WALKING

Many and varied are the opinions of masters regarding this action of walking with weapons in hand; I say (following my judgment) that walking from the right side, as from the left of the adversary, chiefly one must take care to always move the left foot accompanied by the right, and having to walk in a straight line, one foot must follow the other, forward as back; but the true walking will be stepping naturally, always doing so, so that the point of your right shoulder will face forward, and carrying your left foot crosswise, so that its point will point toward your left side.

## I 2

### METHOD OF STRIKING THE HAND

You must know that every time that your adversary has the point of his sword outside your presence, either high or low, or that it faces outside your left or right side, you will put the point of your sword opposite his hand in a straight line; leaning your body somewhat to the rear, you will approach to measure, and, having arrived, you will push a thrust in mezzo tempo into the said hand; just by propelling the body forward and bending the right knee will one strike; but you will take care that in such striking you must carry the left foot back, accompanied by the right; and furthermore, the enemy having his dagger arm advanced forward, you, wanting to strike it in the hand, will follow the same directions as above.

## METHOD OF RETIRING,

## HAVING STRUCK

Having struck your adversary with the extraordinary pace, with the right foot forward, likewise in single sword as with sword and dagger or sword and cape, you will retire an ordinary pace, according however to the space that you have behind you; because if you have little space, you will carry back only your right leg, following your enemy's sword with your sword; but if you have room, you will retire two ordinary paces, so that finally you will carry yourself in guard, and this is the true retiring, although in the schools they practice otherwise.





## EXPLANATION OF SOME TERMS OF FENCING, WHICH PERTAIN TO THE USE

**B**ecause it is necessary to the scholars to understand the terms that the Masters of fence use in teaching, we have proposed to explain them in the following briefest words.

### I

#### OF THE SWORD

In the sword are to be considered the forte, the debole, the false edge, and the true edge; some like to make three equal divisions of the sword, namely the debole, and the forte, which are its extreme parts, and that of the middle; since one and the other participates and is well suited to parry and to strike; it is also found that four parts are made of it, yet without any evident utility. The said terms are easy, and intelligible in and of themselves.

### 2

#### OF THE GUARDS

“Guard” we call a certain orientation of the hilt of the sword, which each time that it comes to be posted over the shoulder, forms prima; when it descends to be even with the shoulder, makes seconda; when it is further lowered to outside the knee, on the right side, it comes to form terza; quarta is made when the hilt is inside the thigh; it is agreed; and these four guards are called principal, and up to this point all are in

accord<sup>22</sup>; as for the pace, the arm, the body, the legs, and the line of the sword, they are of diverse opinions; because some praise the narrow pace, and some the wide, some the mediocre; some extend the arm, others restrain it more or less; some bend the body, some keep it erect; others form the guard putting forward the right leg, or now the left; there are those who hold the sword in a straight line, some high, and some low, and now on one, now on the other side, now forward, now back, in as many lines as are found in the world; others according to the diverse circumstances indifferently avail themselves of all the previously mentioned manners of guards, which according to their differences are named high, and low, narrow, and wide, and other names acquired according to the caprices of masters.

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<sup>22</sup> Capo Ferro appears to be defining “guard” here in the restricted sense of the rotational orientation of the sword, that is, the degree to which the wrist of the sword hand is turned. These definitions are almost certainly taken directly from Camillo Agrippa’s *Trattato di Scientia d’Arme*, Part I, Ch. I, pp. 1 verso to 2 recto. Clearly the positions of the hand with respect to the body (e.g. “even with the shoulder”) are not to be taken literally, at least not in all cases, in Capo Ferro’s system. Note moreover that the plates often show, and biomechanics dictate, that his terza at times partakes of second in third, and similarly his quarta at times partakes of third in fourth; there is a certain amount of play in the hand positions actually employed.

Terza and quarta are called “counterguards”, that<sup>23</sup> for stringering on the outside, and this<sup>24</sup> for stringering on the inside, although all the guards are counterguards, which are chosen according to the diversity of the lines of the sword.

### 3

#### O F T E M P O

Four sorts of tempos are heard named in the schools: the primo, the dui tempi, the mezzo, and the contra tempo; the primo tempo is that when, finding myself at measure, either narrow or wide, I can strike the adversary with just one movement of my sword; from which one equally recognizes that striking of dui tempi requires at least two movements of the sword. Mezzo tempo is when at wide measure I strike the adversary in his advanced and uncovered arm, either that of the dagger or of the sword, with a thrust or cut, or alternately when I strike the adversary at narrow measure, as he moves himself to strike me or perform some other action; redoubling of blows is usually done in mezzo tempo. Contra tempo is when at the very same time that the adversary wants to strike me, I encounter him in shorter tempo and measure; and one needs to know that all the movements and all the repose of the adversary are tempos, although at measure<sup>25</sup>.

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<sup>23</sup> i.e. terza

<sup>24</sup> i.e. quarta

<sup>25</sup> Only when in measure are all the movements and repose to be regarded as tempos, since the entirety of coming to measure is a single tempo, regardless of length.

### 4

#### O F M E A S U R E

The measure is wide or narrow; wide, when the adversary can be struck only through the extraordinary pace; the narrow is when I can strike the adversary in just pace with fixed foot.

### 5

#### I N H O W M A N Y T E M P O S

#### O N E K N O W S T O S T R I K E

The first is when the enemy is fixed in guard, and he lifts or moves his foot that he has forward, that is one tempo in which to accost him; another is when you have parried a blow, then there is a tempo; the third, as he moves himself without judgment from one guard in order to go into another, before he has fixed himself in it, it is a tempo to offend him; and moreover it is tempo when he raises his sword, as he raises his hand, that is a tempo to strike him; and the last is that, when a blow will have travelled past your body, that is a tempo to follow it with a response<sup>26</sup>.

### 6

#### O F T H E P A C E A N D O F W A L K I N G

The pace is called ordinary, extraordinary, just, half pace, narrow, and wide; it increases or diminishes itself in accordance with the diversity of these paces; one steps now forward and now back, now to the side, now

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<sup>26</sup> These five tempos in which to strike are almost identical to those listed by dall’Agocchie, pg. 29 recto.

on the diagonal with one leg or with both; there are those as well who, retiring the forward leg in order to void a blow, hold it suspended in the air in order to respond with greater speed.

## 7

### OF THE PARRIES

One parries with the true edge, and, although rarely, with the false edge, in a straight line as in an oblique line; now with the point high, now low, now up, now down; depending on whether one is struck with a thrust or a cut, it is with one or the other of the weapons, or with both; taking care that all the parries require an extended arm, and need to be accompanied with the right leg, followed by the left, and when it occurs to parry with *dui tempi*, during the tempo in which one parries, one will draw the left foot near to the right, and then while striking, will pass forward with the right.

## 8

### OF THE FEINTS AND

#### OF COVERING THE SWORD

“Feints” we call those deceitful gestures of the sword that are made as much of the cut as the thrust, outside and inside of the sword, up and down, forward and back, and circularly as well as in a straight or oblique line, with the one and the other weapon, and these feints strike directly at the opposite of that at which they gesture; the counter-feints are done as the counter to the feints. “Covering the sword” is a kind of feint, and it is done by covering the point of the adversary’s sword with

the *debole* of your sword, when one happens to be in low *quarta*, and needs to be done in a straight line.

## 9

### OF CHANGING FROM

#### GUARD TO GUARD

Changing from guard to guard can be done in three ways: directly, in reverse, or in exchange; for the direct, when from *prima* I change myself into *seconda*, and from *seconda* into *terza*, or from *terza* into *quarta*; in reverse, when I go from *quarta* into *terza*, from *terza* into *seconda*, and from *seconda* into *prima*; in exchange, when I change myself from *prima* into *quarta*, or from *quarta* into *prima*, and from *prima* into *terza*, or from *terza* into *prima*, or from *seconda* into *quarta*, or from *quarta* into *seconda*. Taking care nonetheless that changing yourself from one guard to another, being at measure, you will go back with the left leg, accompanied by the right; thus will you be safe from the adversary.

## 10

### AGAINST THOSE WHO CIRCLE

Because your adversary could easily succeed in gaining the sword against you from the inside by circling, in such case you will immediately disengage your sword through to the outside, carrying your left leg diagonally accompanied by your right, toward the right side of your adversary, putting the point of your sword in a straight line which is pointed at the enemy’s right shoulder, and he coming from

outside in order to gain it anew, in that coming you will disengage under his blade, and will strike him with a thrust in quarta, advancing your right leg forward into extraordinary pace.

## I I

### A G A I N S T   T H E   G U A R D

#### O F   T H E   L E F T   F O O T

Finding the adversary in low terza with his left leg forward, you will put yourself against him similarly in terza, but with your right leg forward, and with the point of your sword crossing toward your left side, and this in order to achieve two effects: the first of which is that he will be unable to dominate your sword, which he will go seeking with his dagger; the other is that thereby uncovering more of your body, you invite him to pass, and as he passes you will parry with your sword, and with the same terza, with the point high, and passing, you will give him a stab in the chest. Moreover, if you wish to be the first to strike against the said guard of the left foot, you will put yourself to him in the encounter similarly in terza with the sword in a straight line, making your point aim at your enemy's dagger hand, in order to enable you at your ease to give him a stoccata in mezzo tempo in the said hand; alternately you can make a feint over his dagger, and he wanting to parry, you will disengage your sword under his dagger, passing forward with your left foot, and finding your enemy's sword with your dagger in the same tempo, you will strike him with a thrust under the arm; furthermore one can feint under the dagger, and he wanting again to parry, you will disengage and will strike him in seconda over his dagger,

passing and parrying as above; taking note that one can also feint and strike without passing, but by only waiting for the adversary, in response to you having feinted, to pass to strike, and then you, only with ceding your body back during his passing, and parrying the enemy's sword with your dagger, will strike him above or below his dagger, according to the opportunity that will come to you. Moreover, you must be careful that, having to deal with a left handed person, and he standing with his right foot forward, you will have to put yourself to him at the encounter with your left foot forward with your sword low and refused/withdrawn, weapons on the same side, so that doing such, you will put it into your adversary's mind that he will be unable to throw any blow which will not give itself to be defended.

## I 2

### O F   S T R I N G E R I N G   T H E   S W O R D

The sword is stringered for the purpose of coming to measure, or to uncover the adversary from outside and from inside, high and low, but always in a straight line, while the adversary is fixed or moves himself, and most often it is done in dui tempi; in the first the debole of the enemy's sword is acquired with a palmo of the debole of yours; in the second tempo the beginning of the adversary's forte is acquired; as much as he disengages, you counter-disengage or not, but you will take care to do so in a straight line, and that your forte always accompanies your debole, together with the motion of your leg.

## I 3

MOST USEFUL ADMONITION  
REGARDING DOMINATING THE  
SWORD

One dominates the sword in two manners: in the first, when having acquired the adversary's sword, I never quit the domination while striking. In the second, having beaten the sword in whatever manner, so that he exits outside of my presence, in that tempo in which it travels by force, it is understood to be in my domination, in which I have to strike before he redeems himself. The domination of the unaccompanied sword is either of stillness or of motion, the one of the thrust, and the other of the cut. One dominates with the forte during parrying, or one beats with the debole in order to seek the tempo and the measure. With the unaccompanied sword, having dominated the enemy's sword with the forte, you must never respond with a cut, but indeed with a thrust; the one and the other you will be able to do, having dominated the enemy's sword with your sword and dagger together, the dagger remaining in the guard of domination; nonetheless I exhort you to always strike with a thrust because it is more mortal, and thereby the sword is not removed from the presence, the opposite of which is done by the cut.

## I 4

OF THE DISENGAGE AND  
COUNTER - DISENGAGE

The disengage, as well as the counter-disengage, is done in order to exit the measure in tempo, or in order to acquire it, and they are done either forward or back, according to the said goals; the necessary way of counter-disengaging is to follow the adversary's sword, replacing your sword back into its previous site, and this one can do on one or the other side. One must know as well that in disengaging the sword one can disengage over as well as under the enemy's sword in order to gain it, but the difference between the one and the other in disengaging is this, that disengaging under in order to stringer is done with the arm extended, and with a small increase of the foot; and the disengage over is done with a ceding of the body with the arm, and with the sword in an oblique line to the rear, so that your sword will have cleared the point of the enemy's sword and then replacing immediately the forte of your sword so as to be over his, and this method of disengaging must be done in order to strike as well as in order to stringer.

## I 5

OF STRIKING

Striking is of two sorts: of the cut and of the thrust, but each of these are of more types, according to their blows, because the mandritto will be either ordinary, or fendente, or tondo, or montante, or stramazzone, or ridoppio; and from the reversed side, they will be as above; and the thrusts are converted into four types. The mandritto is that which

begins from the right side; and that is named ordinary which crosses through an oblique line, namely from the left shoulder to the right knee of the enemy. But the fendente is named that which goes to strike in a straight line from up to down; the tondo is called that which turns crosswise. And the montante is that which departs with the true edge of the sword from beneath and goes to strike to the point of the adversary's right shoulder. Stramazzone is that which is done in the manner of a wheel using the wrist; ridoppio they call it when with a mezzo mandritto which knocked down the enemy's sword, you will go returning to him another ordinary mandritto. The falso, then, is designated in two manners, namely dritto and manco; you can avail yourself of the falso dritto in order to hit the enemy's sword to the outside, that is, toward his right side; and with the falso manco you will hit toward his left side; however it seems to me, if it occurs to you to parry with a falso dritto, I say that it will be far better to turn well your wrist and parry with the true edge for more safety, and the true edge will turn more quickly; but when you will hit the blow with the falso manco, you will be able to strike them with a thrust as well as a cut, taking care that when you parry with the falso, you parry from the middle of your sword up to the point, and when you parry with the true edge, you must parry with the forte, from the middle of your sword down to the hilt; remember that the mandritti and riversi are done with the motion of the elbow, and in such cases when the measure and tempo support it, with the upper part of the arm.

## I 6

### OF THE CUT

The cuts need to be done as if slicing, because in this manner one comes to strike with all of the *debole*, indeed also because little by little one comes to cut with the sharpest part of the edge, and for this reason the cuts that descend are more vigorous than those that stop above the waist, to such extent that the said upper and lower parts are found to be more or less at apt measure to be offended by slicing.

## I 7

### OF THE THRUST

In the thrust are noted the *stoccata*, the *imbroccata*, and the *punta riversa*; the *imbroccata* is sent from the guard of *prima*, and goes to strike from the adversary's left shoulder down to his right knee, with the false edge down, so that one does not turn the hand until the point of the attack arrives, and needs to fall. The *stoccata* needs to be sent from the guard of *terza*, and goes to strike the adversary toward his right shoulder; the *punta riversa* is sent from *quarta*, and goes to strike from outside the enemy's shoulder, reversing well your hand to the inside, somewhat joining the point in falsehood, in that it comes from low, upwards, toward the adversary's breast, you finding your sword in low guard.



## WAY OF LAYING THE HAND ON THE SWORD

**B**ecause customs are not the same in all lands, and often times enmities are expressed with little sincerity, in order to be provided against all occasions, it will not, perhaps, be out of place to teach the way of laying the hand on the sword, before we come to deal with its handling. Therefore, if by chance you have your right leg forward when laying your hand on the sword, as one of these figures shows, you will draw back the said leg, extending your right arm at the same time into high prima; and if perchance you find yourself with the left leg forward, as the other figure shows, it will not happen if you do not draw your sword in the aforesaid manner, without changing your

pace; and if you should wish to avail yourself of the sword and cape, or sword and dagger, as well as the single sword, the true way is, that first you will take a step forward with your right foot in order to present yourself in quarta, or alternately, the adversary being near you, you will draw your left foot back, presenting yourself as above, and then at your ease you will be able to wind your cape or extend your hand to your dagger with more safety, being that the point of your sword will make it such that your adversary remains distant while you accommodate yourself to your weapons; and this is as much as it occurs to me to say about this particular topic.



PLATE I

## OF THE GUARDS

**E**ven as one cannot make some composition of beautiful and judicious writings without employing the letters of the alphabet, so does it occur in this, our art of fencing, that without the following guards<sup>27</sup>, and some voids and retreats of the body which come to be the foundation of this practice, one could not in any way demonstrate this, our use; therefore the following six figures are designated alphabetically. “A” demonstrates prima to you, and seconda is presented to you as “B”, and terza as “C”. Quarta is named as “D”, quinta as “E”, and sesta as “F”.

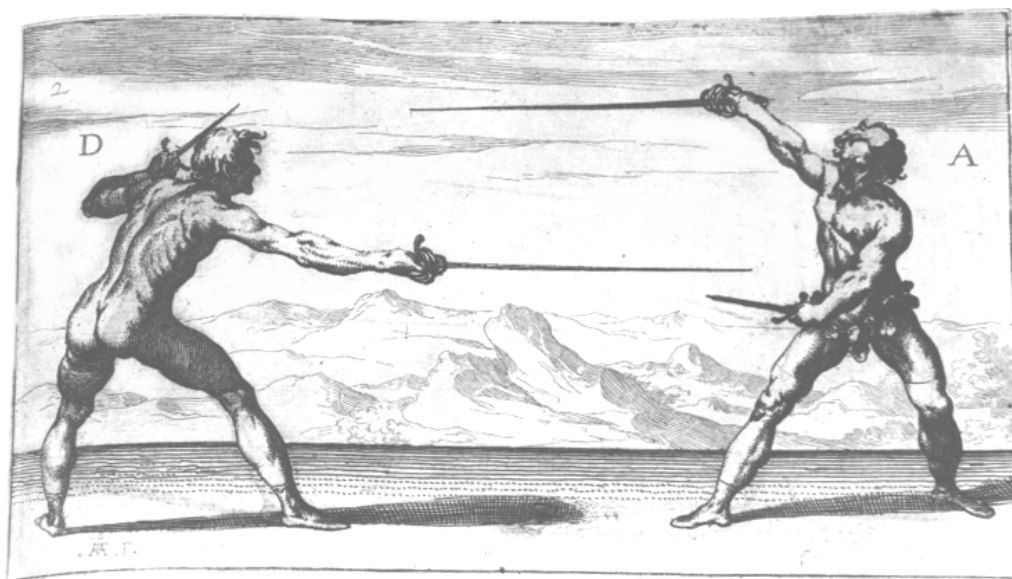


PLATE 2: QUARTA AND PRIMA

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<sup>27</sup> Note that in the plates that follow, figures continue to be labeled as A through F, generally representing the starting position of each figure. Quinta and sesta are not otherwise explained as prima through quarta were, but as judged by these plates and the occurrences of these two guards in the sections on dagger and rotella, they apparently describe guards involving an auxiliary arm, where the sword is low, usually in terza or less often in quarta, while the left hand is held either low for quinta, or high for sesta.



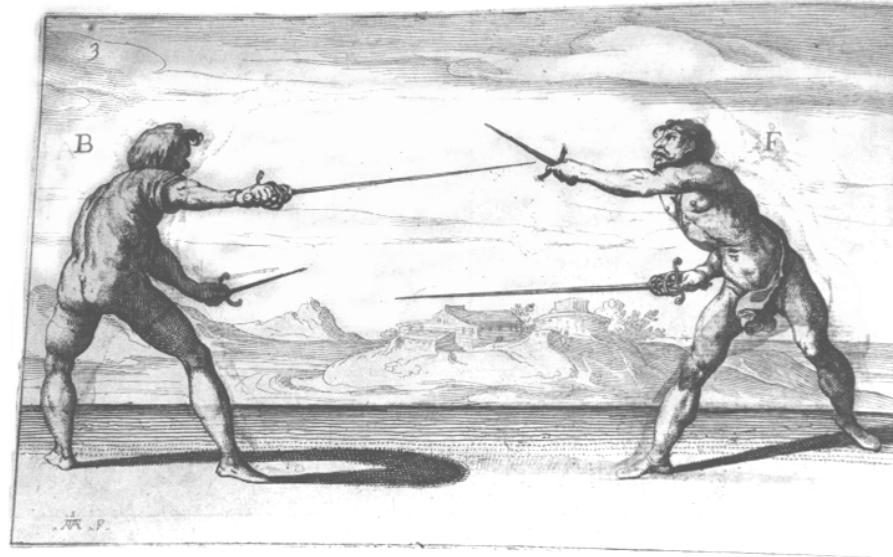


PLATE 3: SECONDA AND SESTA

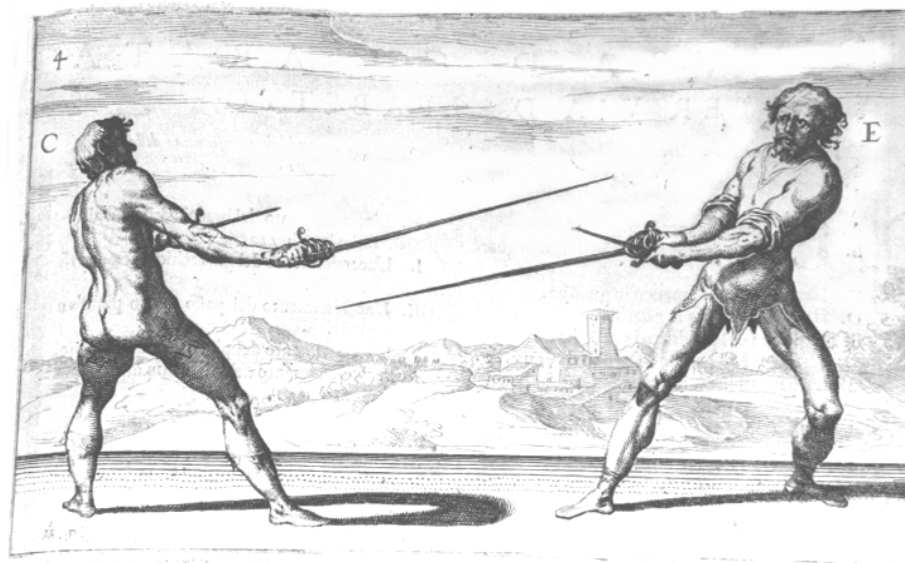


PLATE 4: TERZA AND QUINTA

## FIGURE EXPLAINED BY WAY OF THE ALPHABET

Figure that demonstrates resting in guard, as is shown in our art, and the incredible increase of the long blow, in regard of the members that are all moved to strike<sup>28</sup>.

- A - The left shoulder in guard;
- B - The leg of the left knee in guard;
- C - The planting of the left foot in guard;
- D - The ordinary pace in guard
- E - The placement of the right foot in guard;
- F - The thigh and the calf at a slope in guard;
- G - The hand of the right arm in guard;
- H - The increase of the right arm, of the same length;
- I - The increase of the right knee, almost a pace;
- K - The increase of the pace, a little more than a foot;
- L - The increase of the left foot with its turn;
- M - The increase of the left knee of a half pace;

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<sup>28</sup> A through G indicate the positions of bodily members while in guard, as, for example, while seeking measure. H through M indicate the positions of bodily members upon the completion of the lunge.



PLATE 5

## WAY OF GAINING THE SWORD ON THE INSIDE IN THE STRAIGHT LINE AND STRIKING ACCORDING TO THE POINT THAT THE ENEMY WILL GIVE

There are two reasons (it seems to me) for which it is necessary to draw close to the adversary<sup>29</sup>: the first is to stringer the sword in order to seek measure and tempo; the other is to draw close to the body of the adversary in order to seek only measure; which closings are best considered in the straight line; and because there are two causes of closing there must also be two occasions: the first occasion, of stringering the sword in order to seek measure and tempo, is when the said adversary lies in an oblique line, because the adversary lying with the sword in quarta which is aimed on an oblique line at your left side, you lying with your sword on the outside, will disengage with an increase of pace in order to stringer it on the inside with the said straight line, as the figures show you; nor must this cause you any sort of difficulty, seeing as how only the said straight line suffices to stringer the sword when finding the adversary's sword lying in an oblique line. The second occasion, that of drawing close to the body in order to seek only measure, is when the adversary lies in the straight line, or with his

body uncovered; then without stringering the sword in order to seek the tempo, it will suffice to only draw close to the body with the straight line in order to find the measure, and then to strike according to the point; although the use of the art requires that one stringer the sword in all the lines without any utility. Striking according to the point, one must understand, that every time that the point of the opposing sword is in your presence then you will be able to strike in the straight line where the height of the point of the enemy's sword will give its direction, taking a palmo from the point of your enemy's sword, however, with the forte of your sword, and you will strike safely, taking heed that if it is as high as the middle of your head you will strike him in the face, and were it even with the middle of your body you will be able to strike him in the face or the chest. This is called "to strike according to the point that the enemy's sword will give"; moreover in this way you will be able to safely disengage the sword from all sides in order to attack; however, when disengaging you will carry the forte of your sword in primo tempo to the point of the adversary's sword, and do not do as some masters do, who disengage, and do so in order to strike in primo tempo, arriving with the point of their sword on the forte of the enemy's sword, not perceiving that they give the point to the enemy, and most of the time they are offended, as is seen in our figures.

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<sup>29</sup> Note that the term "stringere" is used in this passage for both drawing close to the body of the enemy ("stringere la vita"), and in the sense of stringering of the sword ("stringere la spada"). This has made the translation somewhat awkward; I have translated "stringere" as "draw close" or "stringer", and rendered "stringimenti" as "closings" in this passage, to reflect these different meanings, although the verb is identical in the original.

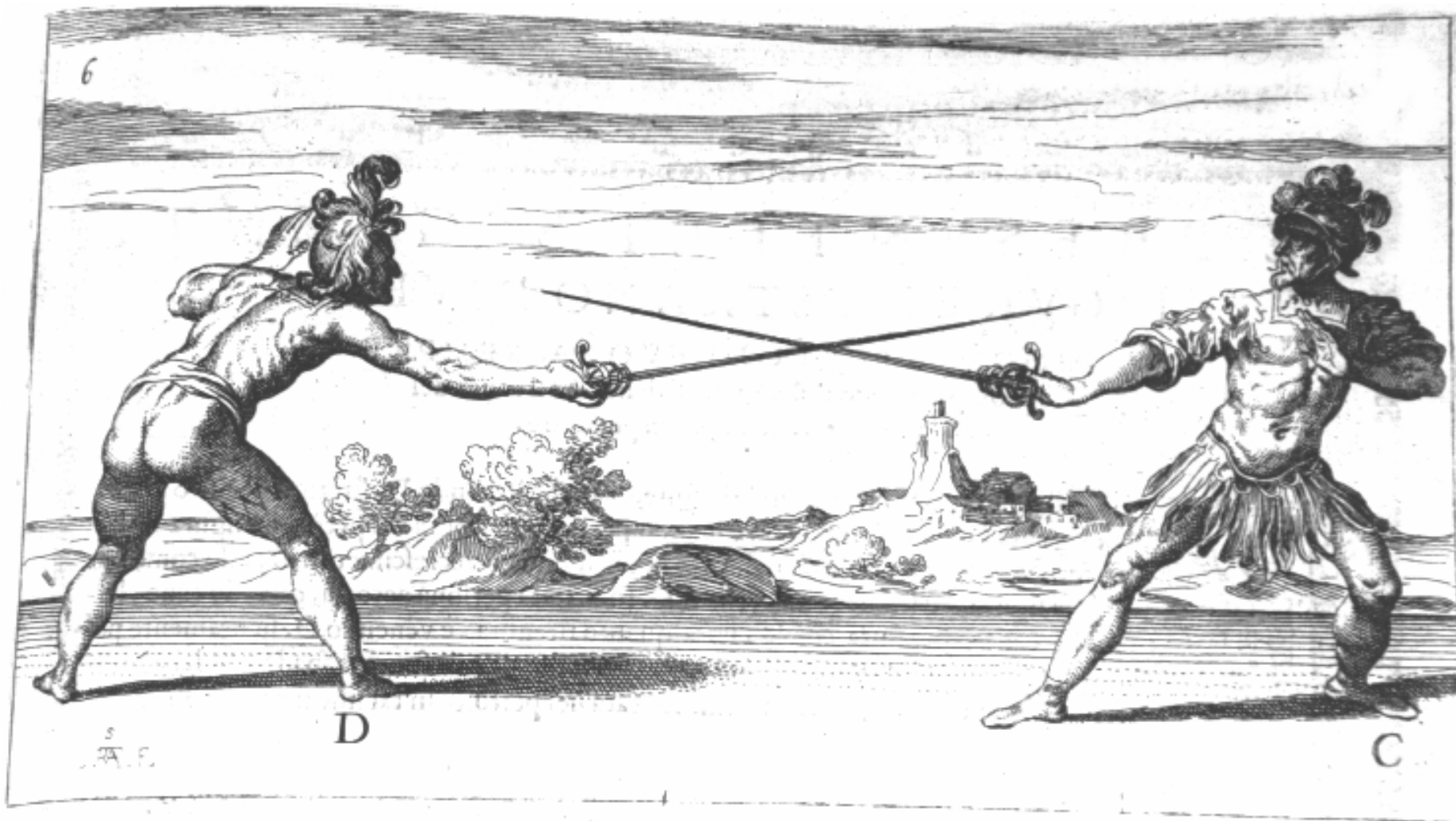


PLATE 6

THE PRESENT AND SUBSEQUENT FIGURES DEMONSTRATE  
DIVERSE MANNERS OF STRIKING ON THE OUTSIDE, ALWAYS

Presupposing A Stringering On The Inside And A Disengage  
OF THE POINT BY YOUR ADVERSARY IN ORDER TO STRIKE

**B**y way of clarification of the following figures, I say that D having the figure marked C stringered on the inside, the same C disengages in order to give a thrust to the chest of figure D. D strikes him with a thrust in the left eye with a fixed foot or an increase of pace as the figure shows.

But yet I say that if C had been a shrewd person, when he disengaged he would have disengaged by way of a feint, with his body somewhat held back, and D approaching confidently in order to attack C, C would have parried the enemy's sword to the outside with the false or the true edge, giving him a mandritto to the face or an imbroccata to the chest, and in such a conclusion would retire into a low quarta.



PLATE 7

## FIGURES THAT DEMONSTRATE HOW MUCH MEASURE IS LOST BY ATTACKING THE LEGS

**T**he sword of the figure C being gained by the figure D, this same figure C turns a riverso to the leg of the figure marked as D. D is able to strike him during the turning of the riverso, with a stramazzone to the arm or a thrust to the face, as a consequence of his leaning too far forward; as the figure shows, the said figure D moreover draws his right leg back during the attack.

Always, I say, that when D was stringering the sword of C, had C been a shrewd person, he would have given a riverso to the face followed by a mandritto fendente to the head and thus he would have been safer.



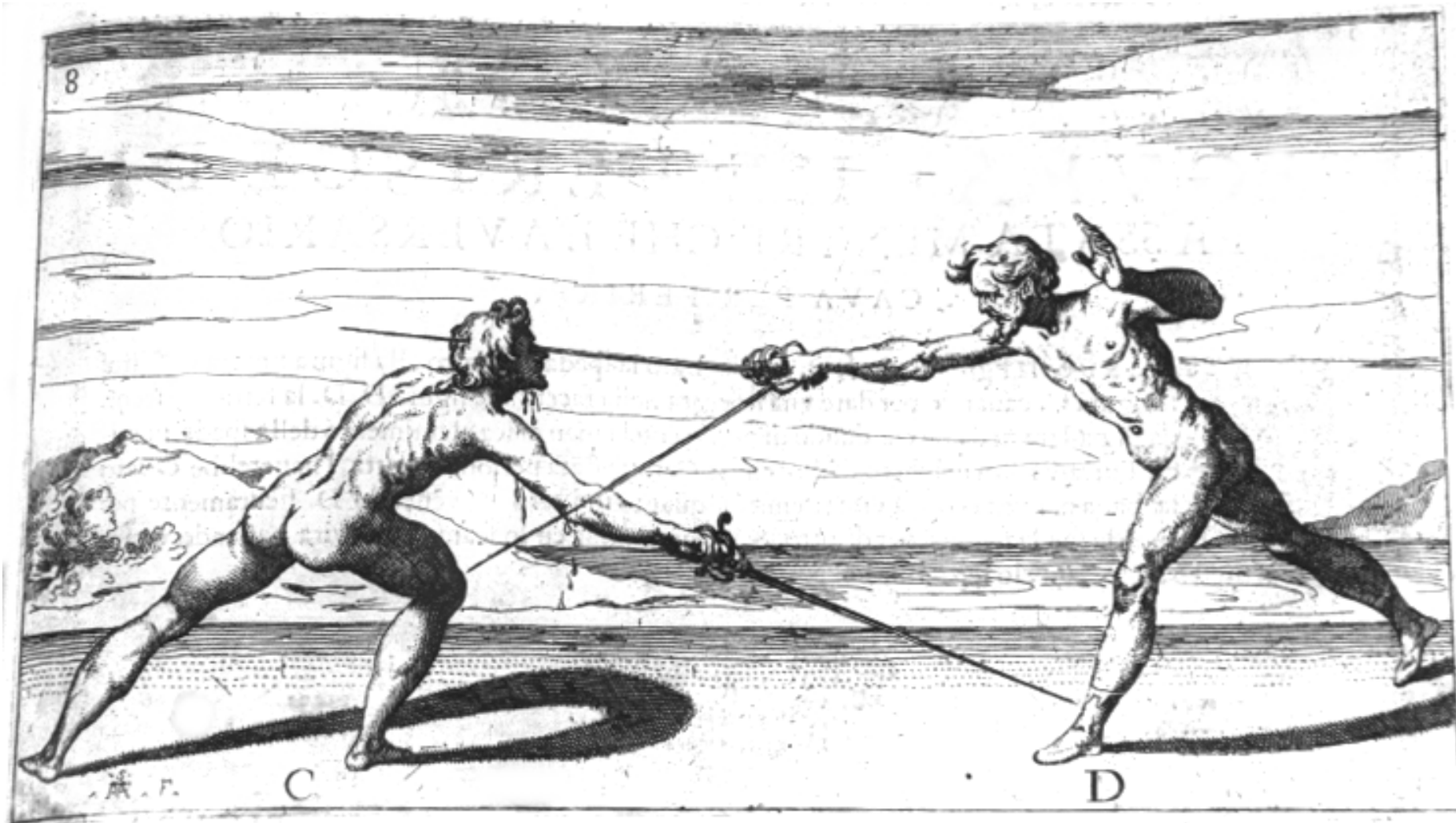



PLATE 8

## A FIGURE THAT STRIKES IN A PASSATA WHILE THE ADVERSARY DISENGAGES IN ORDER TO STRIKE

 igure D having gained the sword on the inside of the figure marked as C, the same C disengages to give a stoccata to the face of D. D strikes him in the face in seconda with a passata, giving a grip with the left hand to the hilt of the enemy's sword.

I will never fail to say that if C had been a shrewd person, he would have disengaged the sword as a feint with his body held back somewhat to the rear, and D approaching confidently to pass, C falsing underneath the enemy's sword and turning an inquartata with a void of the body, passing his leg crossed behind, would strike him in the chest.

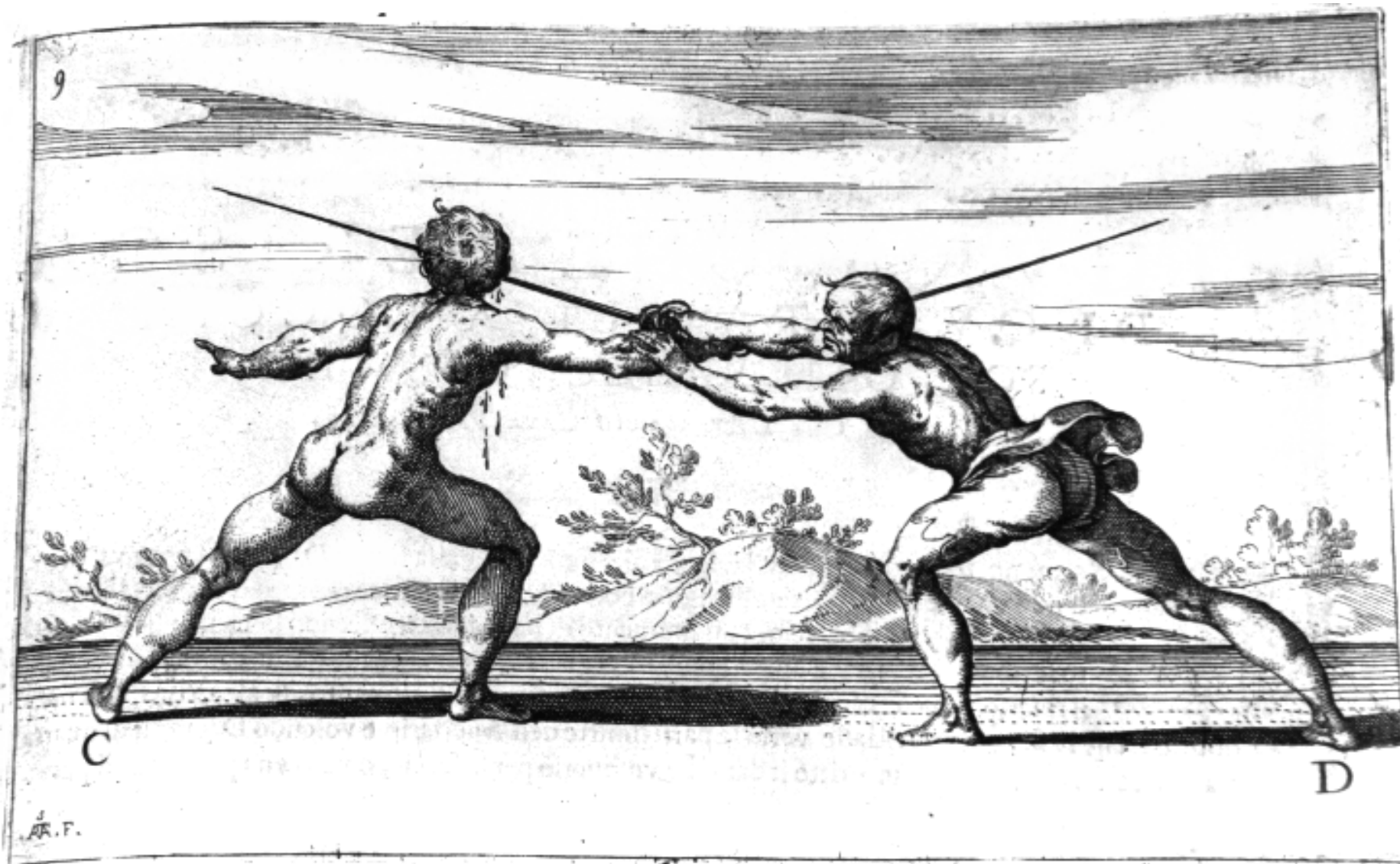


PLATE 9

A FIGURE THAT STRIKES IN QUARTA UNDER  
THE RIGHT ARM TO THE PECTORAL<sup>3°</sup> WHILE THE  
ADVERSARY DISENGAGES IN ORDER TO STRIKE

**T**he sword of the figure C being gained by the figure D, the same C turns a riverso to the face of the figure marked as D. D strikes him in quarta in the chest under the sword arm during the turning of the riverso, raising his arm and the hilt of his sword well, increasing his pace well, as you see.

However, I say that if C, instead of turning the riverso, had drawn back his sword while retiring back somewhat, and lifted his sword in an oblique line so that its point faced toward the adversary's left side, and D had wanted to enter in quarta, C, parrying with a mezzo mandritto, would have given him a riverso to the face or a thrust to the chest.

---

<sup>3°</sup> "Pectoral" i.e. "poccia"— properly, a breast or nipple. I use "pectoral" to distinguish between "a breast" (one side of the chest) and "the breast" (the chest in general), on the assumption that Capo Ferro is not being so specific as to recommend aiming precisely for the nipple.

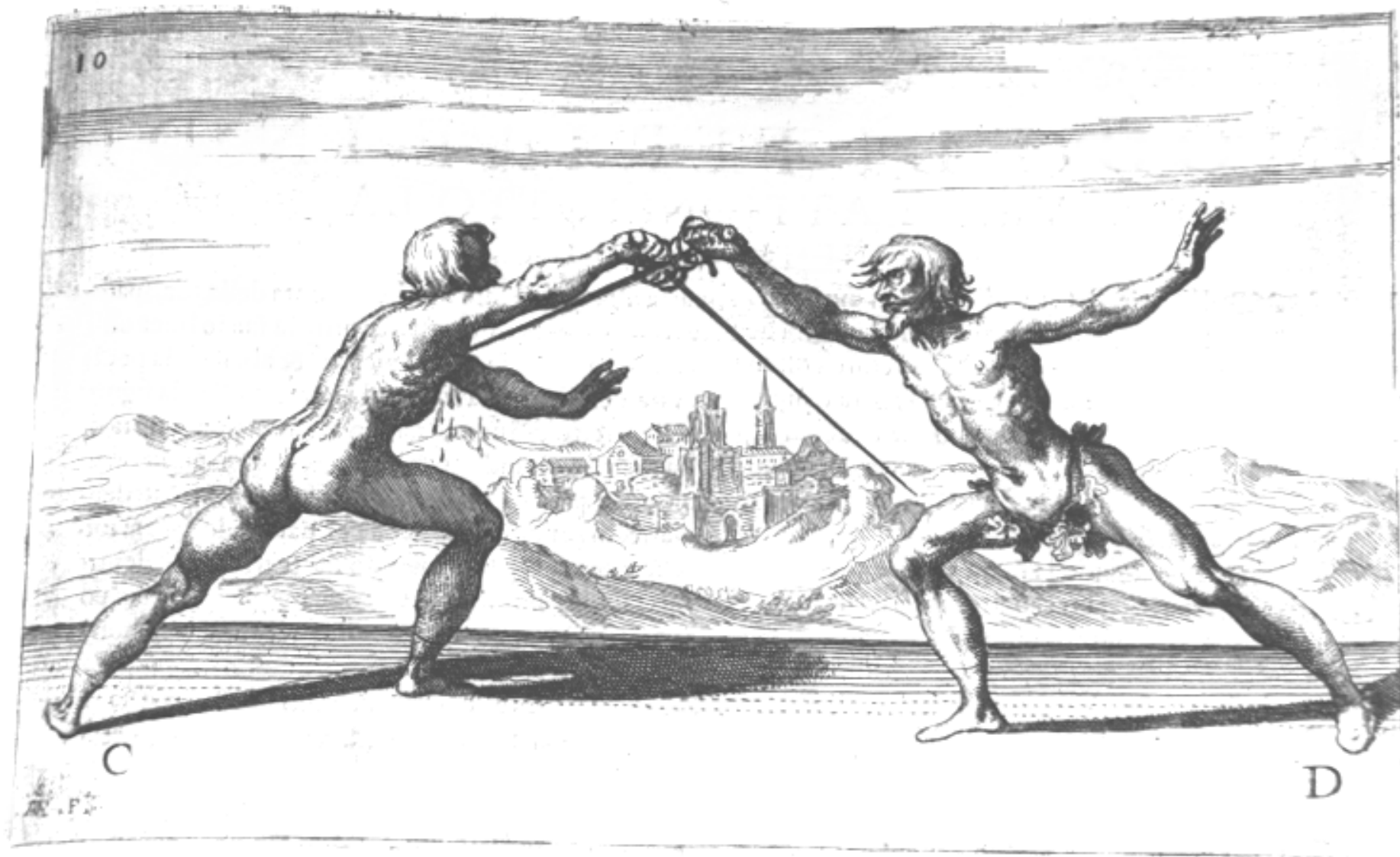


PLATE 10

## THE MANNER OF STRIKING BY DIVERSE ACTIONS UNDER THE ENEMY'S SWORD

**B**eginning in terza, you will put yourself in a high transverse quarta so that the point of your sword is aimed at the left shoulder of your adversary, and he coming to cover yours in an oblique line, you turning your hand into seconda during his approach, with a bending and lowering of your body, will strike him in contra tempo in the body under his sword as the figure shows. Second, if your adversary had you stringered on the outside, disengage a feinted thrust in quarta to the face, and he wishing to parry, turning your hand with the same bending, you will strike him under the sword, as above. Third, if you had been stringered on the inside, you will be able to disengage with a feinted thrust in terza to the face, and he raising his sword to parry you will strike him under the sword turning your hand into

seconda in the manner as above. Fourth, your adversary being stringered on the inside of you, and he disengaging in order to strike you in the face with a thrust, you will be able to strike him in two manners: first, you will be able to strike him in contra tempo during his approach, lowering, however your body, and your sword in terza; and also you will be able to strike him by parrying in terza with the point high, turning your hand into seconda during striking in the fashion as above. Fifth, and last, if your adversary were stringered on the outside of you and he disengaged in order to stringer your sword on the inside, at the same time turning your hand with a lowering and bending of your body you will strike him in terza under his sword in the same manner as above.

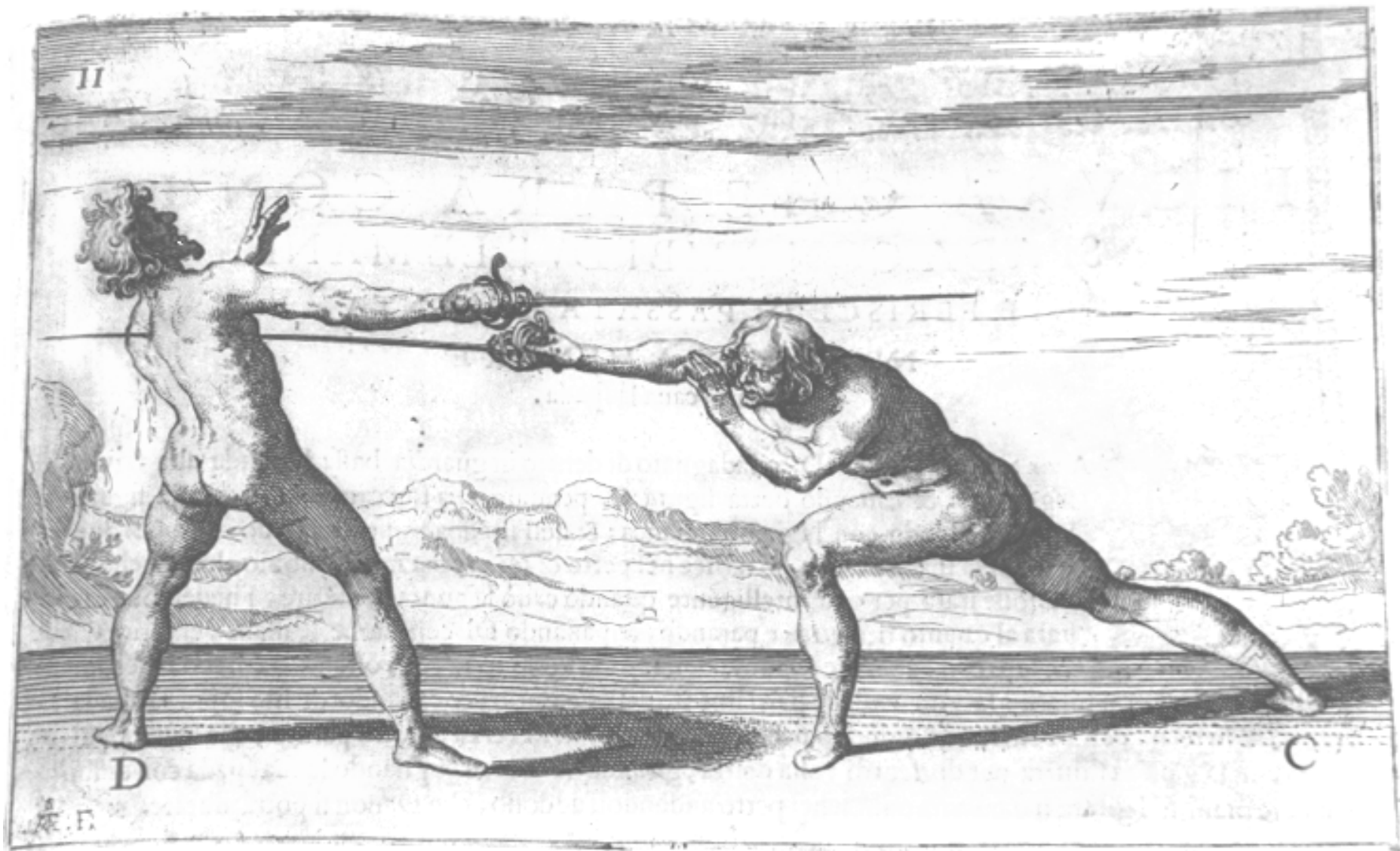


PLATE II

FIGURE THAT PARRIES WITH THE SWORD WITH BOTH HANDS  
AND STRIKES WITH A THRUST TO THE THROAT WITH A PASSATA  
WHILE THE ADVERSARY DISENGAGES THE SWORD

**F**igure D having gained the sword of the figure marked as C on the inside in low guard, and the said C disengaging to give a stoccata to the chest of figure D, D passes with the left leg and at the same time, pressing the enemy's sword down with both hands, strikes him in the chest in terza.

But without any doubt, if C had been an intelligent person, when he disengaged the point to attack he would have disengaged somewhat retired, and D, parrying and passing with both hands to strike C, C only with a lowering of the point of the sword toward the earth and turning his hand to seconda, somewhat voiding his body toward the left side of the adversary and disengaging the edge over the enemy's sword, will strike him on the inside with a riverso to the face, retiring into terza; or having parried<sup>31</sup>, he will pass to the inside with the left leg; turning the body to the right, and holding his sword with both hands, while turning he will give him a thrust to the chest, going to him so that D cannot be saved.

---

<sup>31</sup> This final manoeuvre is difficult to interpret; the subjects of the actions are not specified. It is possible that the meaning is that once D has parried, then C (being somewhat retired) may pass to the right with his left leg while holding his own sword in two hands, thereby turning his body somewhat and consequently freeing his sword out from under D's, and then strike D in the chest.



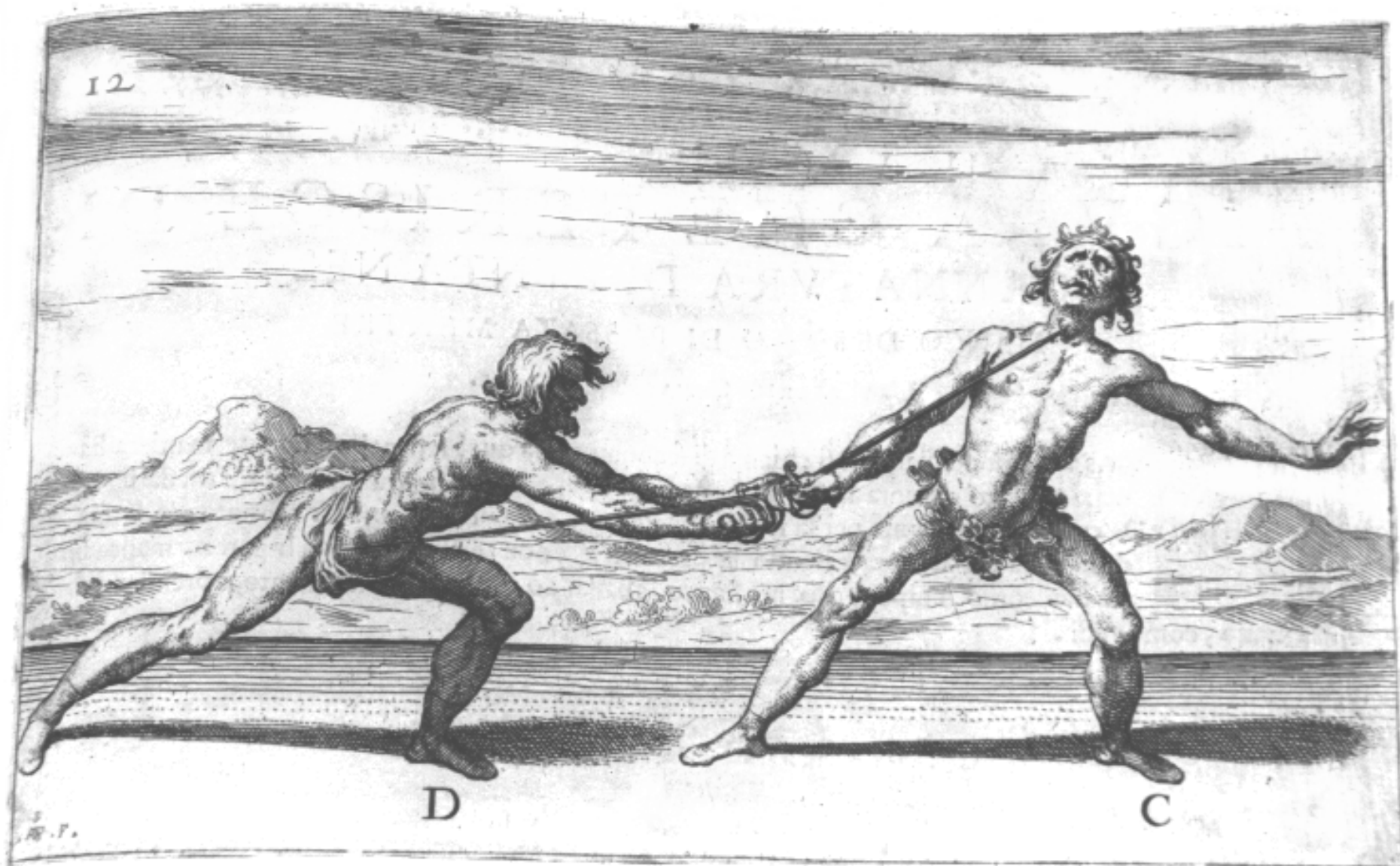


PLATE 12

FIGURE THAT STRIKES WITH A SCANNATURA BY A THRUST  
TO THE RIGHT FLANK WITH A PASSATA WHILE THE ADVERSARY  
DISENGAGES TO STRIKE

**T**his manner of attack is called the scannatura<sup>32</sup>, which is done in the following manner, the figure designated as C having the sword of the figure marked as D stringered on the outside. The same figure D disengages a thrust at the face of C, and the same C,

meeting the enemy's sword on the outside<sup>33</sup>, lowering the point to seconda, and passing with the left leg in one same tempo strikes him in the flank, lowering the hilt with the body and seizing his hand as you see.

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<sup>32</sup> "Scannatura": literally, "butchering".

---

<sup>33</sup> While it is not explicitly stated, C must disengage in some fashion in order to parry D's attempted thrust to C's face on the outside. It is likely that C disengages under to parry the high thrust with his own point high, then abandons the engagement by lowering his point in seconda to strike the flank. A less likely possibility given the order in which events are described is that he disengages over and parries outward and low by lowering his point in seconda, essentially as a transport.

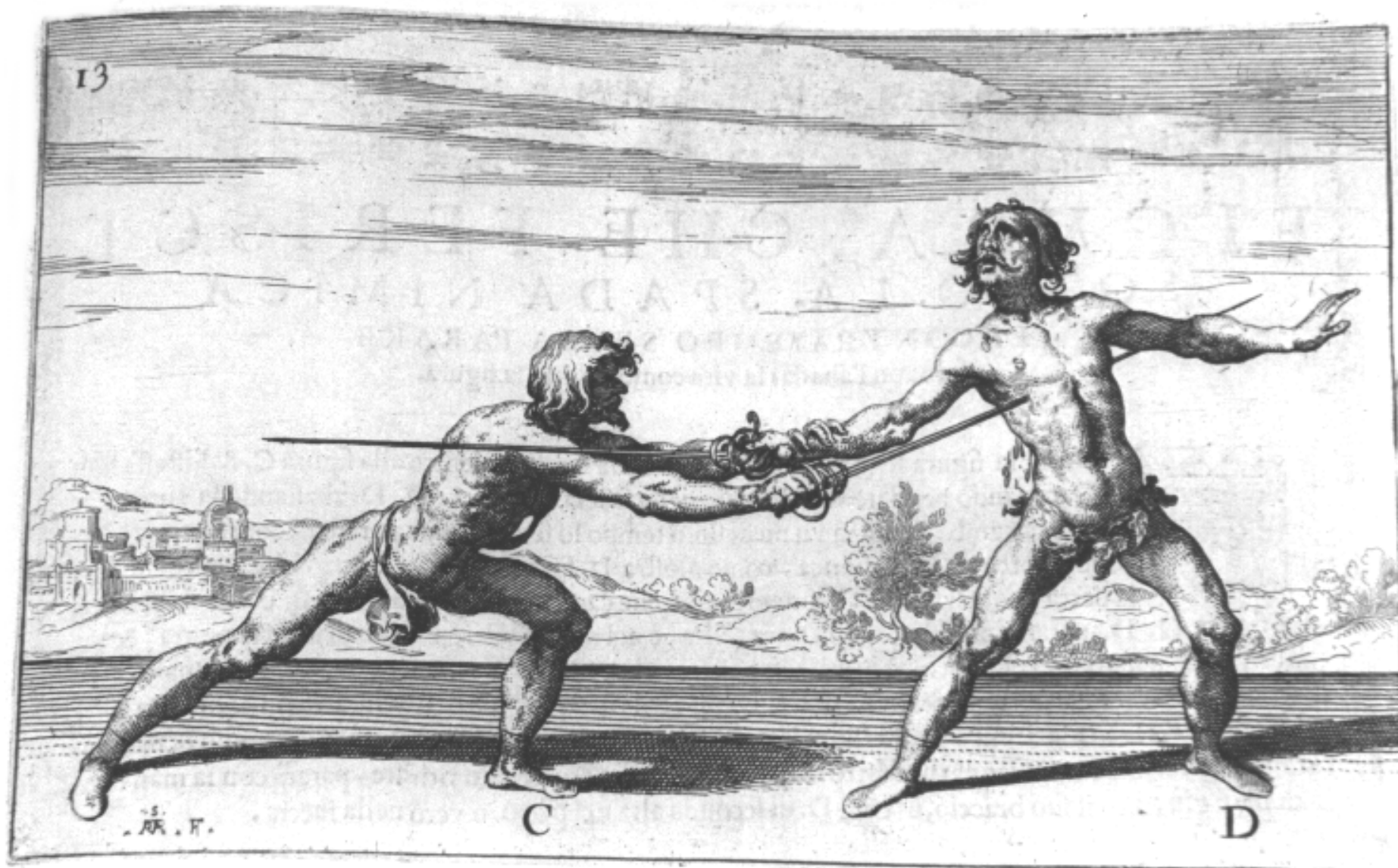



PLATE 13

FIGURE THAT STRIKES UNDER THE SWORD OF THE ENEMY  
IN CONTRA TEMPO WITHOUT PARRYING, ONLY WITH A LOWERING  
OF THE BODY AS THE FIGURE DEMONSTRATES

 igure D having gained the sword of the figure C on the inside, and the same figure C disengaging to give a stoccata to the face of figure D, D lowering his body and stepping forward with his right leg in one same tempo strikes him in seconda below the enemy's sword in contra tempo without parrying as the picture shows. And moreover he could succeed were the said thrust done differently, that is, that C disengaging to give a stoccata to figure D in the face, D parries in terza with the point high and in the same tempo lowering the point and turning the sword to seconda he could strike him in the chest with a passata while also giving him a grip on his sword hand.

But if C was an experienced person he could have only withdrawn his right foot to the rear and in his<sup>34</sup> approach, meeting the enemy's sword on the outside and in the same tempo lowering the point and turning the hand to seconda he would strike him with a scannatura below the enemy's sword; alternately, in his withdrawing, he will parry with his left hand from above downwards under his arm and will strike D with a high seconda to the chest or to the face.

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<sup>34</sup> "In his approach" refers to D's approach with a passata; C's counter is to slip measure by withdrawing the leg, then execute the parry and scannatura described.

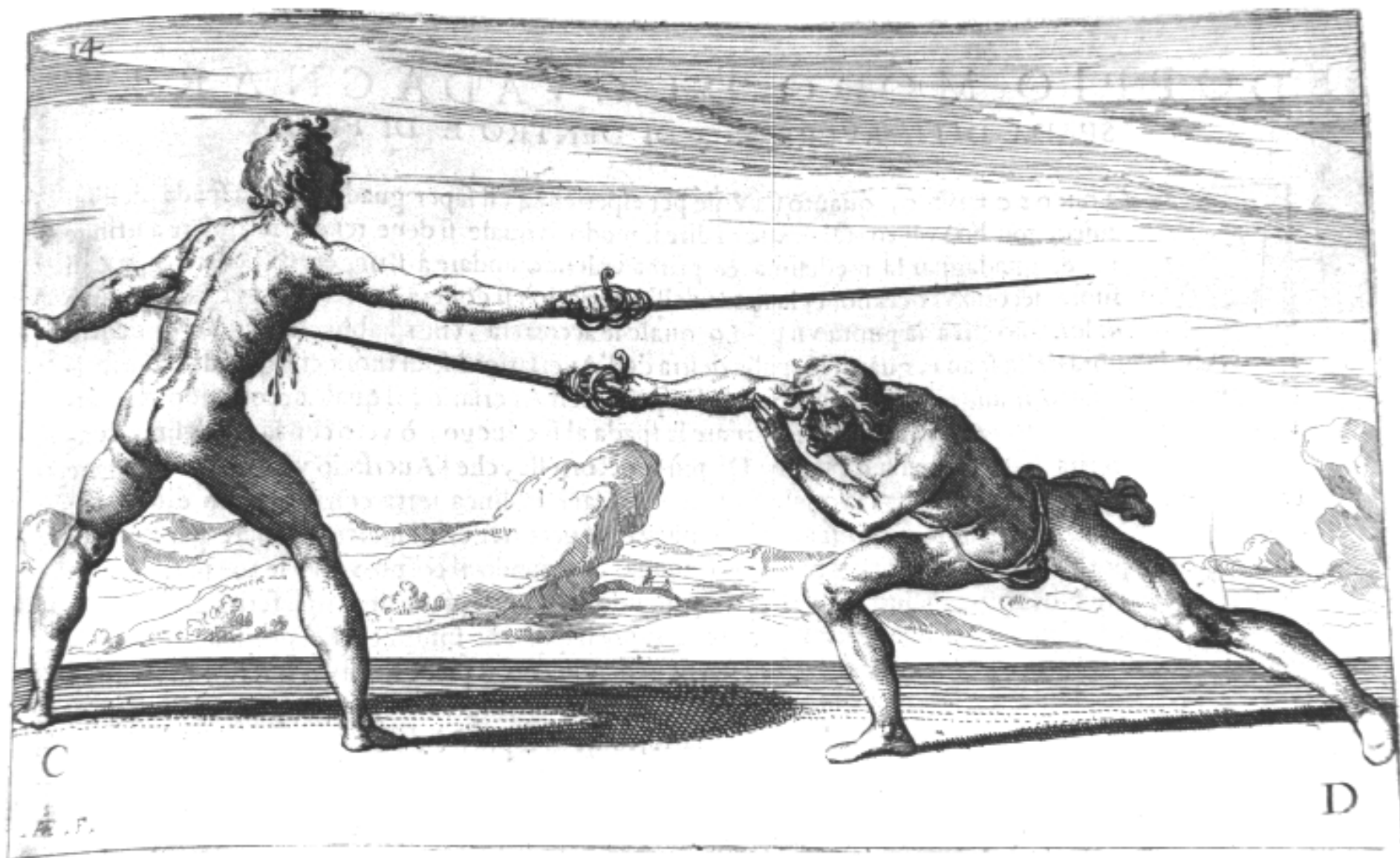


PLATE 14

## DOUBLE MODE OF GAINING THE ENEMY'S SWORD ON THE INSIDE AND THE OUTSIDE

**N**owing through experience how useful it is to know how to gain the enemy's sword, I have not wanted to fail to describe the manner which one must adopt in going to stringer and gain the same, and first, wanting to go to stringer the adversary's sword, on the inside as on the outside, according to the occasion, you will first have to stringer the same at a distance of about one palmo from the point; if it occurs that you have to stringer on the inside, you will make the point of the sword aim at the adversary's right shoulder; and if on the outside, at the left shoulder. Having done so, you will go walking towards the adversary's sword; if it occurs that he disengages, in that instant you will counter-disengage with a return of your sword to its place, or with the same counter-disengage you will strike him in the tempo of his disengage. Moreover, if it occurs that the adversary approaches in order to stringer your sword, on the inside as well as the

outside, which is lying level in the straight line with your arm extended, in that instant you will disengage and stringer, walking forward; and if it occurs that you have to disengage in order to stringer on the inside, you will carry your right foot forward during the disengage, bending your body toward your right side, holding your left hand near your right, and then passing with your left foot, you will strike him with a thrust in the breast in quarta; and if you have to disengage in order to stringer on the outside, you will in a similar manner carry your right foot forward with a bending of your body to your left side, and passing with the left foot, strike the chest in seconda. Moreover, be aware that the following figures demonstrate stringering the sword on the outside in terza; however you must follow the rule of gaining the sword of the adversary as stated above.

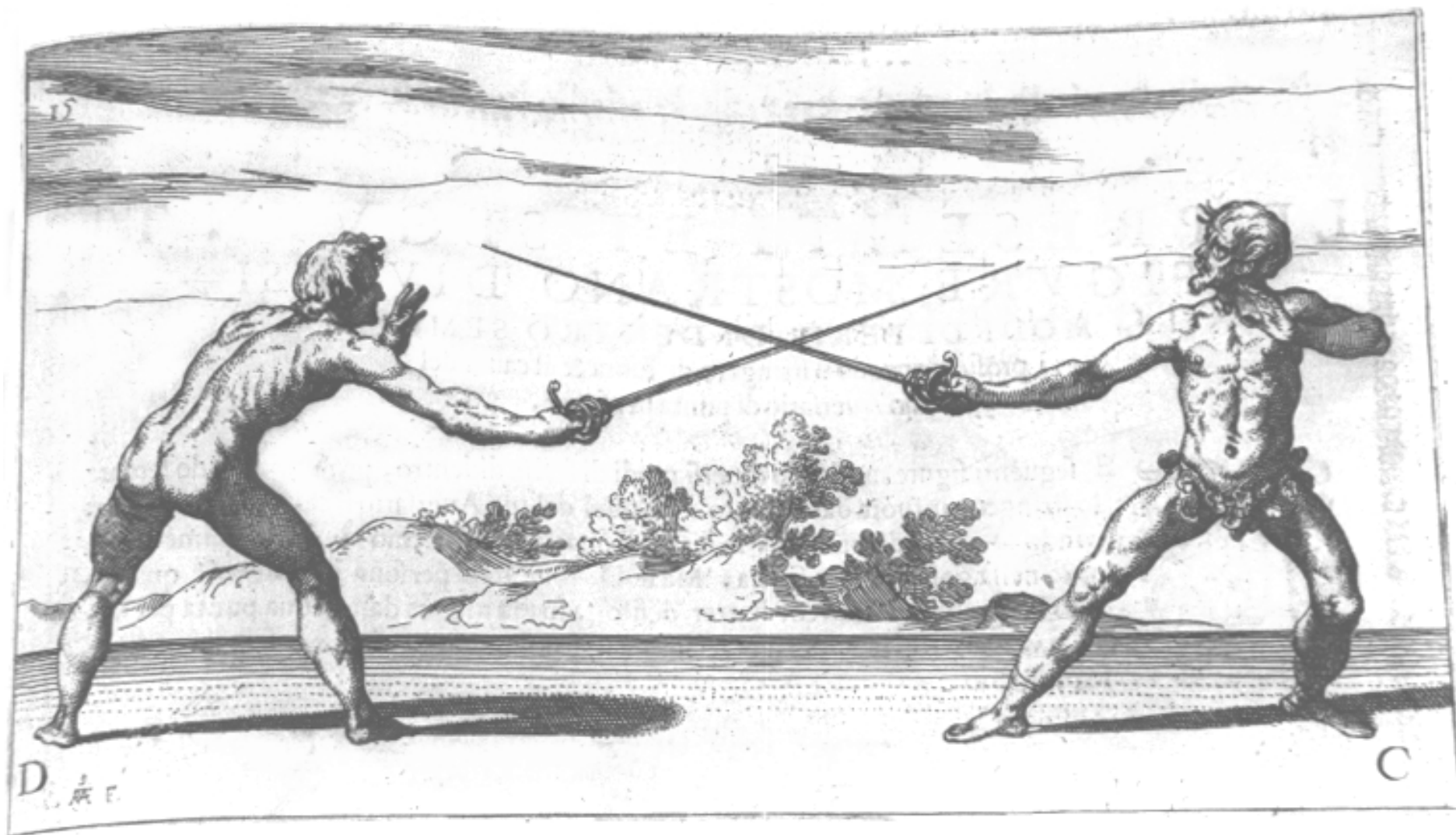


PLATE 15

THE PRESENT AND SUBSEQUENT FIGURES DEMONSTRATE  
DIVERSE WAYS OF STRIKING TO THE INSIDE ALWAYS PRESUPPOSING A  
STRINGERING ON THE OUTSIDE AND A DISENGAGING OF THE POINT BY YOUR  
ADVERSARY IN ORDER TO STRIKE

**T**he following figures demonstrate diverse ways of striking on the inside, always presupposing on your side a stringering on the outside, and on that of your adversary, a disengage in order to strike you. D disengaging as above, C will strike him in quarta with a fixed foot, or with an increase of pace, in the throat or face.

But if D had been an intelligent person, when he disengaged he would have disengaged with a beating of his enemy's sword with his edge, giving him a thrust to the face or a riverso to the arm of the figure designated as C, withdrawing into terza in ordinary pace.



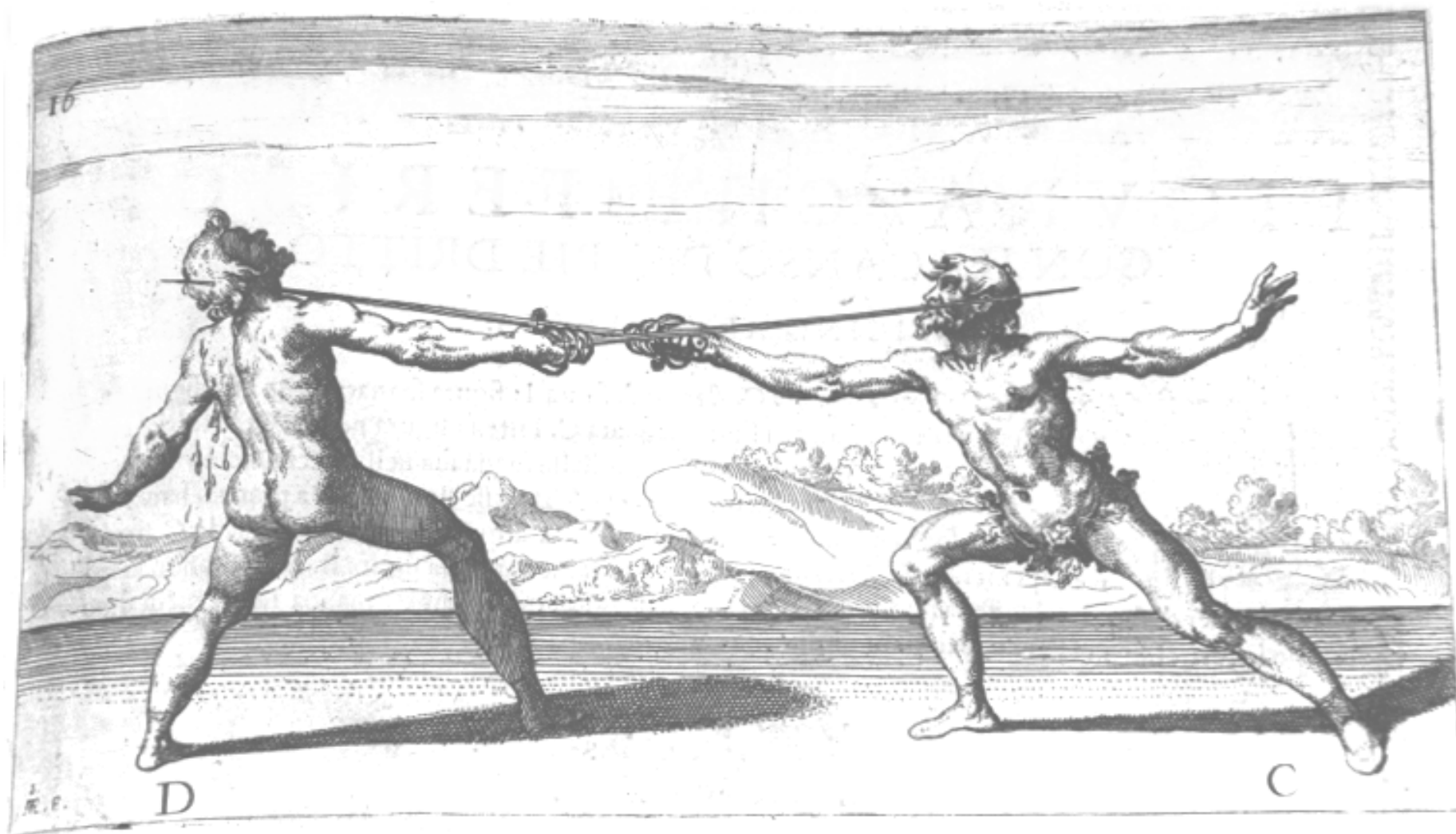


PLATE 16

## FIGURE THAT STRIKES NEAR THE EAR WITH A VOID OF THE RIGHT FOOT

**T**he figure designated as C having the figure marked as B stringered on the outside, and this figure disengaging to strike the figure designated as C in quarta, the same figure marked as C strikes him in the face near the ear outside of his sword with a void of the traversed right foot.

I will never fail to say that if B had been an experienced person he would have disengaged the sword by way of a feint with his body held back somewhat to the rear, and C approaching confidently in order to strike figure B with the void of the traversed right foot, B, meeting the enemy's sword on the outside, lowering his point in seconda and passing with the left leg in one same tempo, would strike him in the flank, giving him a grip to his sword hand<sup>35</sup>.

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<sup>35</sup> This final counter by B appears simply to be the scannatura once more.

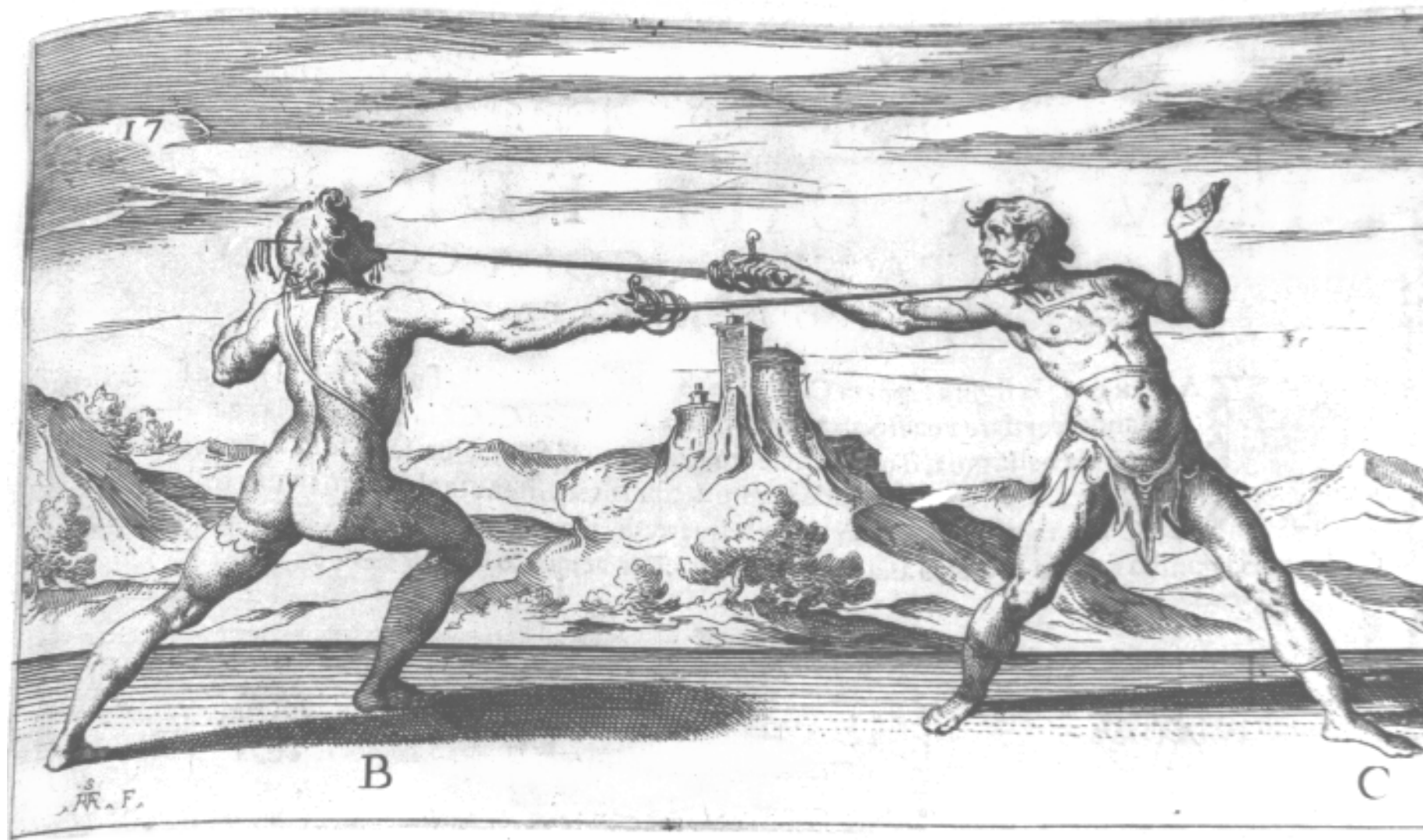


PLATE 17

## FIGURE THAT STRIKES THE THROAT IN QUARTA ON A PASSATA OF THE LEFT FOOT

**T**he figure designated as C having the sword of the figure B stringered on the outside, and the same figure B disengaging to give a stoccata to the face of figure C, C strikes him in quarta in the throat or the face during the disengage on a pass as the picture shows.

But if B had been an experienced person he would have disengaged his sword by way of a feint, with his body held back somewhat to the rear, and C approaching confidently to pass with the quarta, B executing an inquartata with a void of his body, passing with his left leg behind his right, would strike him in the chest.

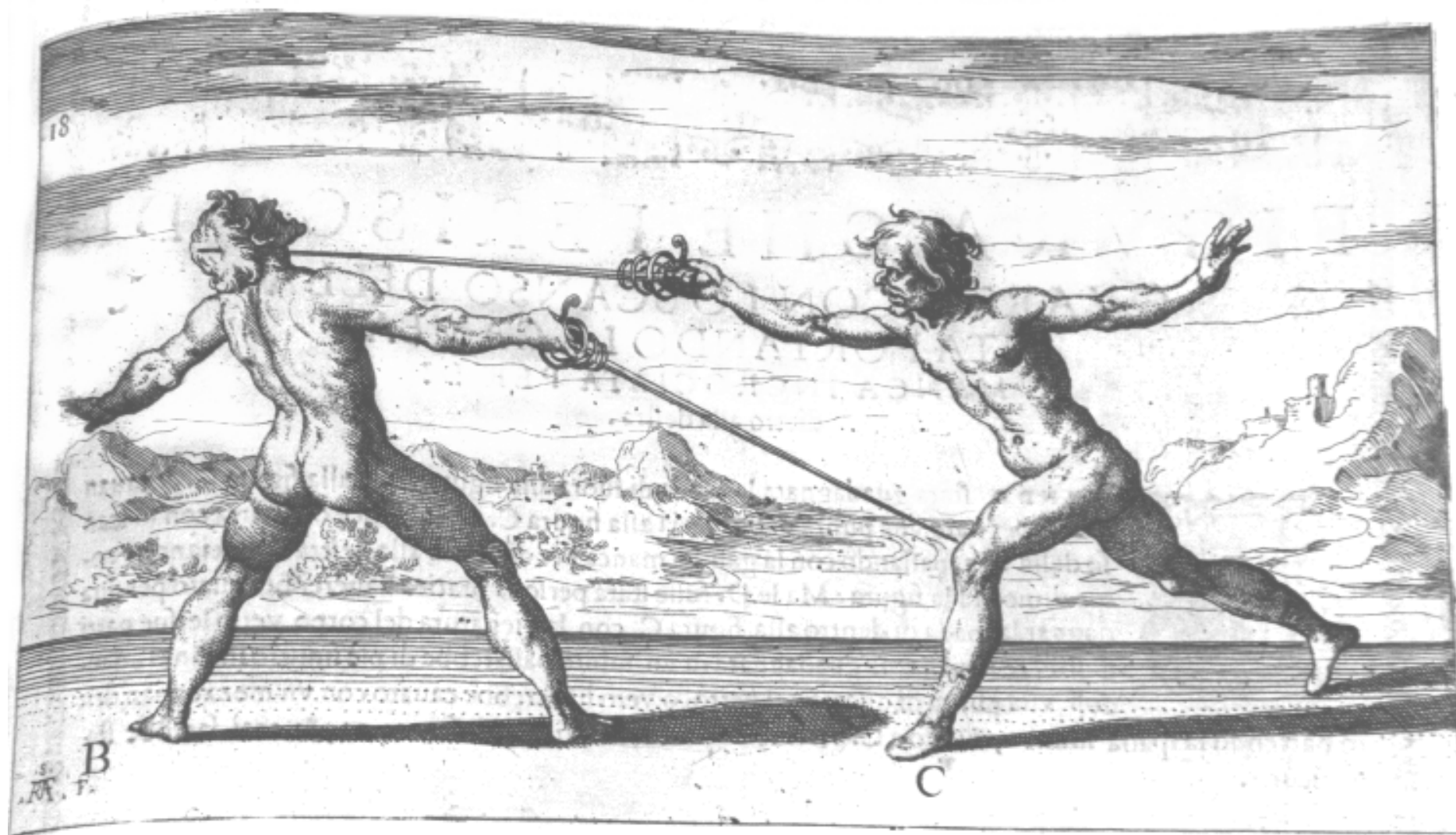


PLATE 18

## FIGURE THAT STRIKES IN QUARTA WITH A VOID OF THE BODY, CARRYING THE LEFT LEG CROSSED BEHIND THE RIGHT

**T**he sword of figure D being gained on the outside by figure C, and D disengaging in order to give a thrust to the face of figure C, C strikes him in quarta with a void of the body, stepping with the left leg crossing behind the right as the figure demonstrates.

But if D had been an experienced person he would have disengaged in order to gain the sword of figure C on the inside, with a bending of his body toward his right side, and having gained it, would have passed forward immediately with his left foot, giving him a thrust in quarta to the chest; alternately he would have disengaged with a mezzo mandritto, beating the enemy's sword, giving C a riverso to the face, withdrawing into terza, and thus he would have been secure.

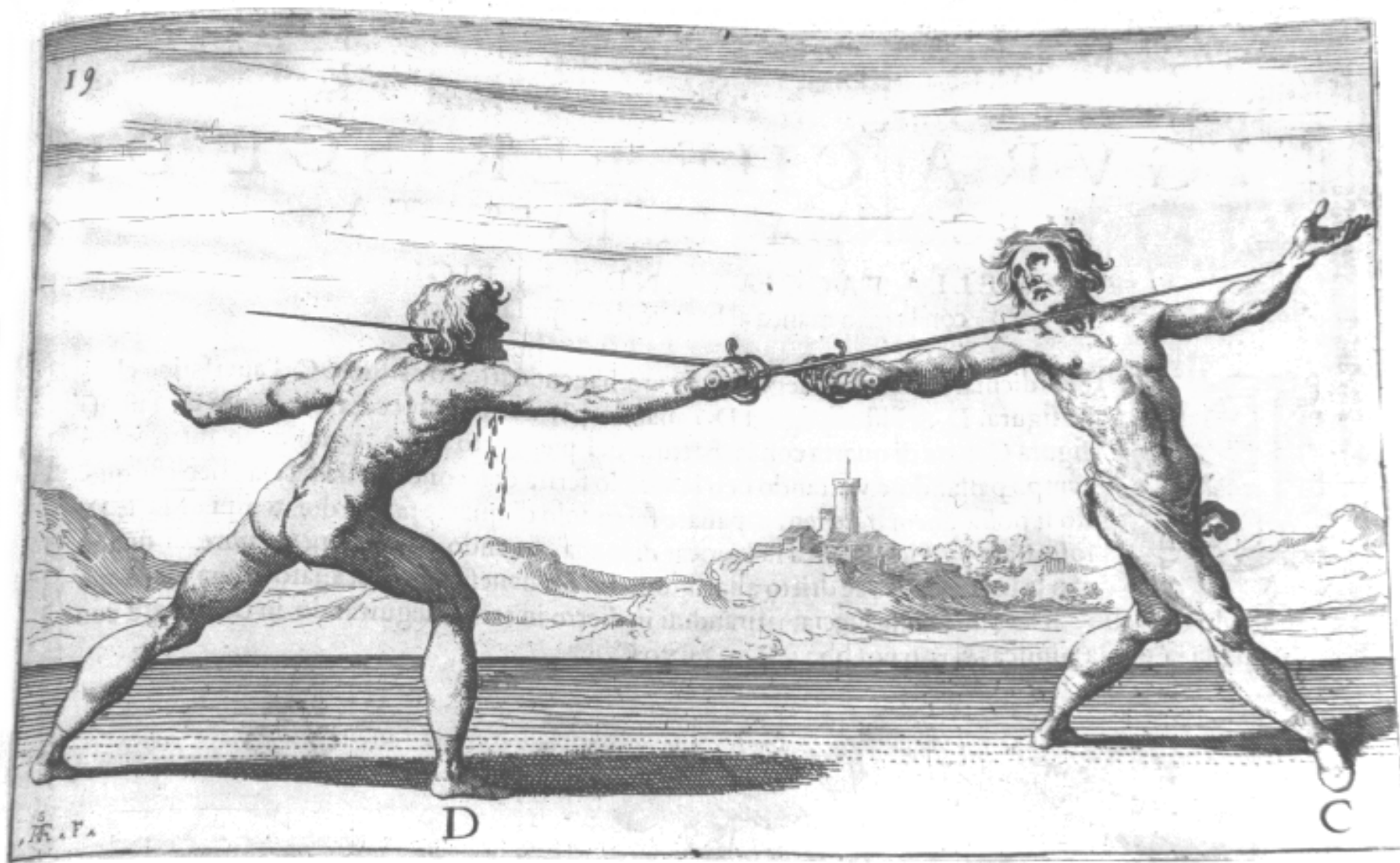


PLATE 19

## FIGURE THAT STRIKES THE FACE IN SECONDA ON A PASSATA GIVING A GRIP TO THE SWORD ARM OF THE ENEMY WITH THE LEFT HAND

**B**y clarification of the following figures, C, having his adversary, that is, the figure D, stringered to the outside, and the same D disengaging to give a stoccata to figure C, the same C parries the enemy's sword in quarta with a beat of the right foot, and all in one tempo, passing and turning the body well, he will strike him in seconda in the face, although this can also be done without passing, striking him in quarta although in dui tempi<sup>36</sup>.

But if D had been a person experienced in swordplay, when C disengaged to parry figure D in quarta<sup>37</sup> with a beating of his right foot, D would have counter-disengaged his sword to the outside and would have struck him in the face in seconda, withdrawing to the rear into terza, following the enemy's sword with his sword in said withdrawing, and thus would C be struck.

---

<sup>36</sup> For clarification of the footwork accompanying primo tempo vis-à-vis dui tempi parries, see "Explanation of some terms of fencing" #7, "Of the parries".

---

<sup>37</sup> This passage presents some difficulty. C is not described as disengaging in the beginning of this plate, only as having parried in fourth (which would not require a disengage since D was described as having begun on the outside and then disengaged to attack). It is possible that the subsequent "counter-disengage" by D is D's own return to outside stringimento following an initial disengage to the inside by way of a feint.



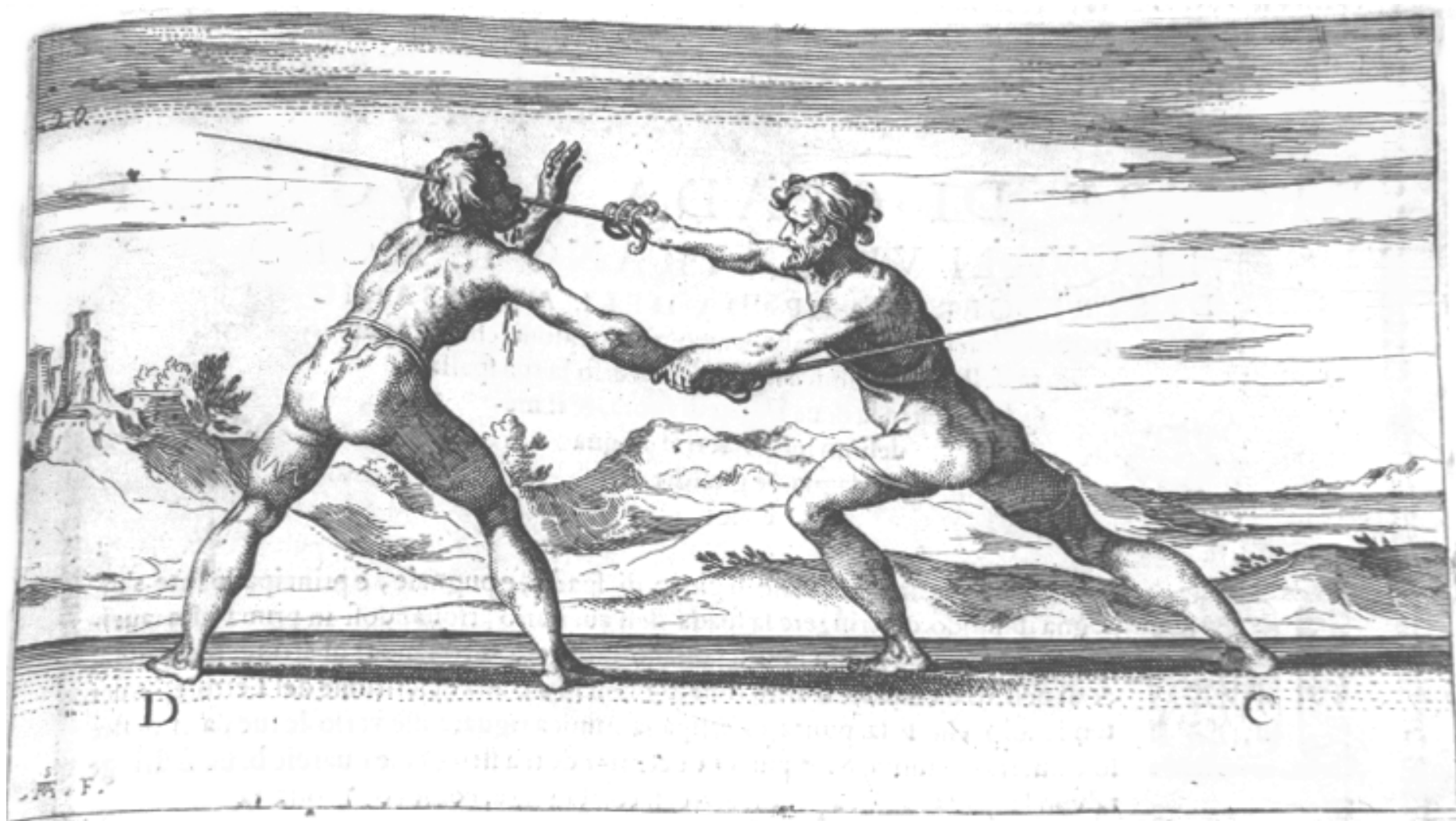


PLATE 20

FIGURES OF THE SWORD AND DAGGER WHICH  
DEMONSTRATE THE MANNER OF STRINGERING THE ADVERSARY'S SWORD,  
HE BEING FOUND IN A HIGH PRIMA ON THE INSIDE, NOTING THAT IF THE POINT  
OF THE ENEMY'S SWORD IS AIMED AT YOUR RIGHT SHOULDER THEN IT MUST BE  
FOUND ON THE OUTSIDE; AND YOU WILL ADOPT THE SAME  
MANNER IN GAINING THE LOW GUARDS

The following figures demonstrate the play of sword and dagger, and principally is taught the manner of stringering the sword of the adversary, he being found in a high prima, noting that it is not possible in one figure to demonstrate all of the manners of stringering on the outside and on the inside, from low and from high,

deferring in this to the discretion of the reader, noting only that if the point of the enemy's sword is aimed towards your right side you will find him on the outside, and moreover that if it occurs to you to stringe the low guards, you will stringer with the sword in the sloping line<sup>38</sup>, with the terza as with the quarta.

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<sup>38</sup> "Sloping line" i.e. "linea pendiculare", a downwardly angled, that is hanging or sloping line. Thus when the adversary's sword is high, one must point one's sword upwards, and similarly when the adversary's sword is low, one must point one's sword downwards in order to stringer it. In these cases it is apparently necessary to depart from the straight line in order to stringer.

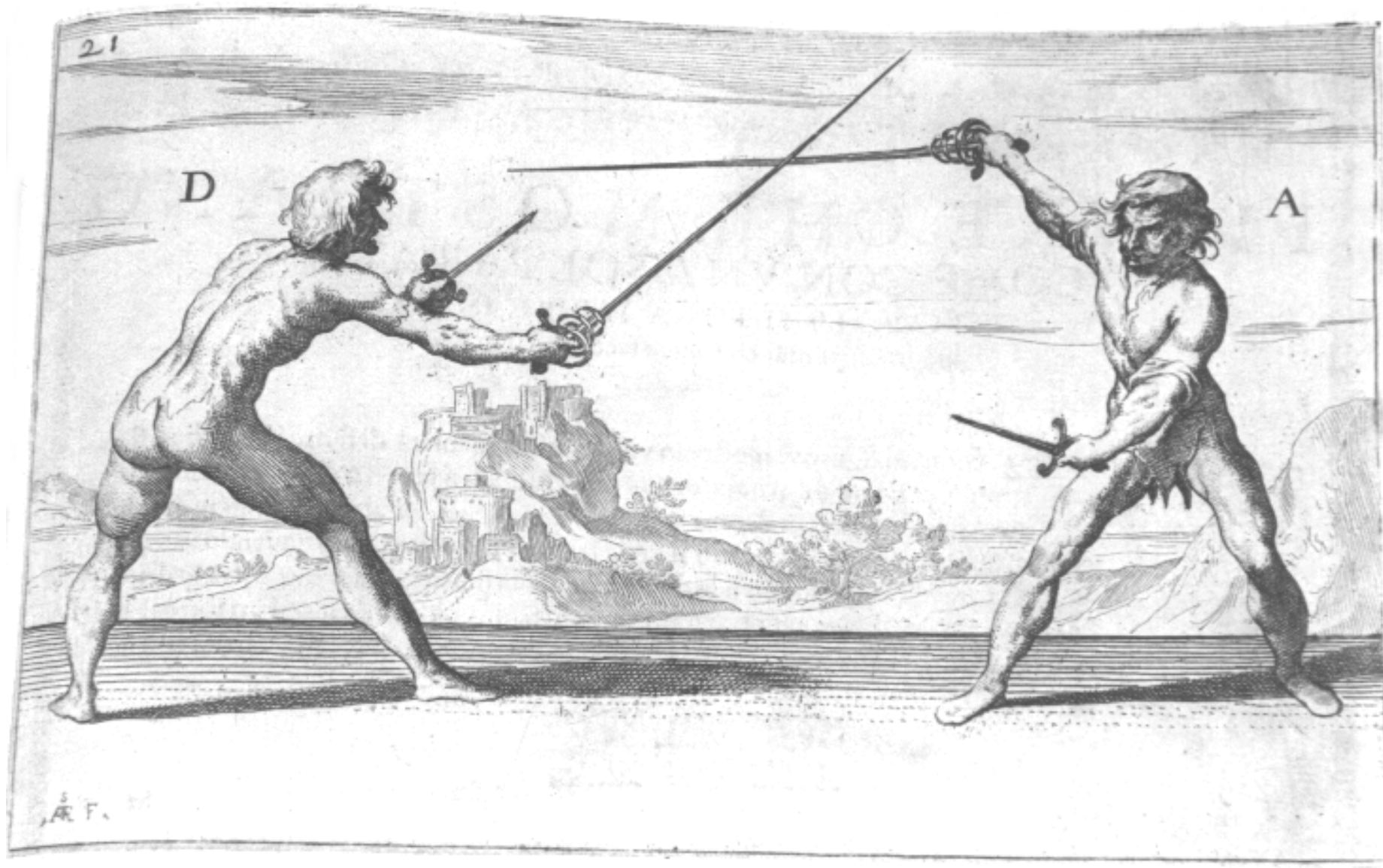


PLATE 21

FIGURES THAT DEMONSTRATE HOW WITH A SINGLE PARRY  
WITH THE DAGGER IT IS POSSIBLE TO STRIKE IN THREE PLACES  
WITH A THRUST, NAMELY IN THE FACE, IN THE CHEST, OR IN THE THIGH

**T**hese following figures demonstrate an artful manner of striking in three different ways with a thrust with a single parry of the dagger, which are done thus: that, in quarta, having the adversary stringered on the inside in whatsoever guard apt for stringering on the inside, he will be able to disengage to give you a

thrust in two ways: to the face or chest; however, he having disengaged to strike you, you will parry his sword to the inside with your dagger over your right arm, and in the first occasion you will be able to strike him high or low, that is, to the face, or under the arm in the chest or in the thigh; and in the second only to the face or thigh.

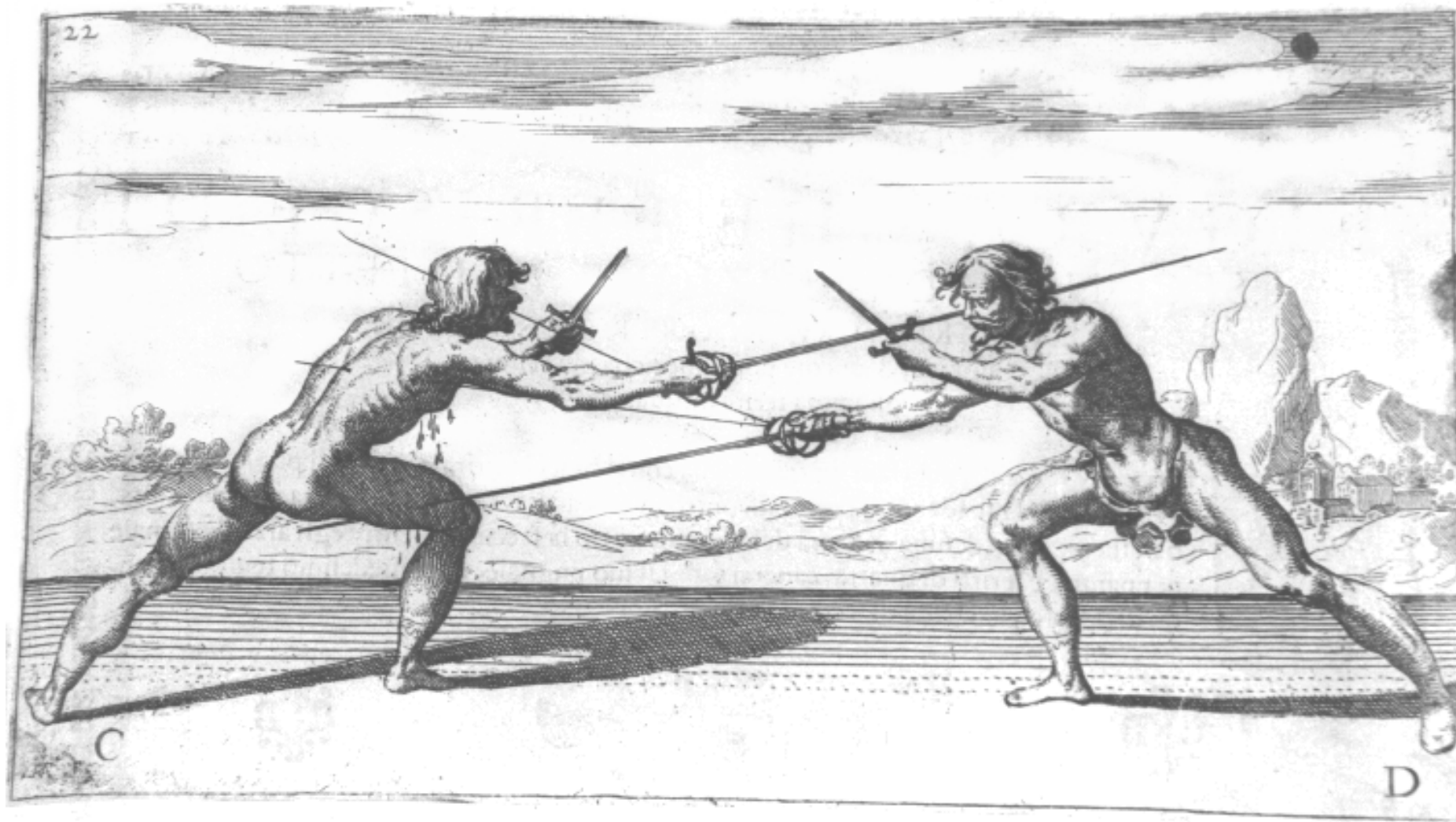


PLATE 22

A FIGURE THAT STRIKES IN SECONDA IN THE CHEST  
BETWEEN THE WEAPONS BY A PRETENSE, DISENGAGING OVER THE  
DAGGER, AND ALSO IN THE SAME MANNER COULD HAVE STRUCK IN QUARTA

**T**he adversary lying in a low terza with the arm withdrawn, and with the dagger forward and united with the sword, you will place yourself opposite him in a high terza, making a feint outside of the dagger to the face in a high quarta or a similar terza, and

while he raises his dagger to parry and attack you in quarta, you will disengage over his dagger and, in the same tempo, parrying to the inside you will strike him in seconda in the chest.

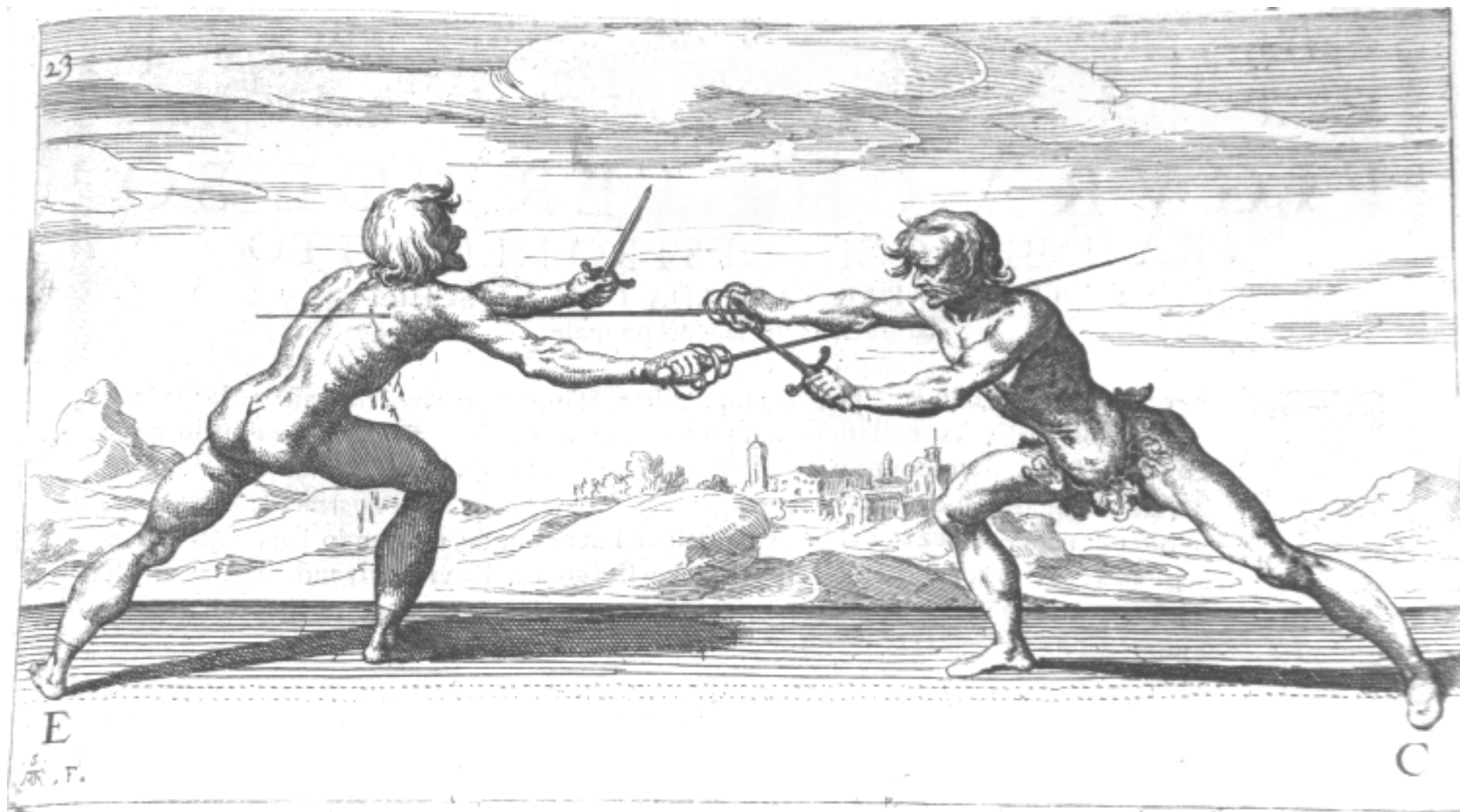


PLATE 23

A FIGURE THAT STRIKES ABOVE THE RIGHT ARM IN THE  
CHEST AND MAKES THE SWORD FALL WITH THE UNFASTENING<sup>39</sup>  
OF THE SWORD AND THE DAGGER

**F**rom this figure you will easily be able to comprehend and learn the manner of casting<sup>39</sup> down the sword from the hand and giving as well in the same tempo a thrust to the chest; that is, finding yourself in terza with your arm withdrawn and uniting your dagger with your sword, the adversary being in the same guard, or in quarta, you will commence to stringer his sword on the inside in quarta,

and you will lower your dagger to the middle of your right arm in an oblique line; and your adversary disengaging to strike you in the chest in quarta, you will strike him from the outside with a punta riversa to the body, raising the hilt of your sword somewhat and in the same tempo parrying downward with the flat of your dagger to the outside you will force him to abandon his weapon<sup>40</sup>.

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<sup>39</sup> “Unfastening” i.e. “schiodatura”, from “schiodare”, “to loosen or unnail”. A prying action may be implied by the name.

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<sup>40</sup> In practice, actually disarming the enemy has proven difficult unless some forward motion (toward the opponent) with the flat of the dagger accompanies the parry to the outside.



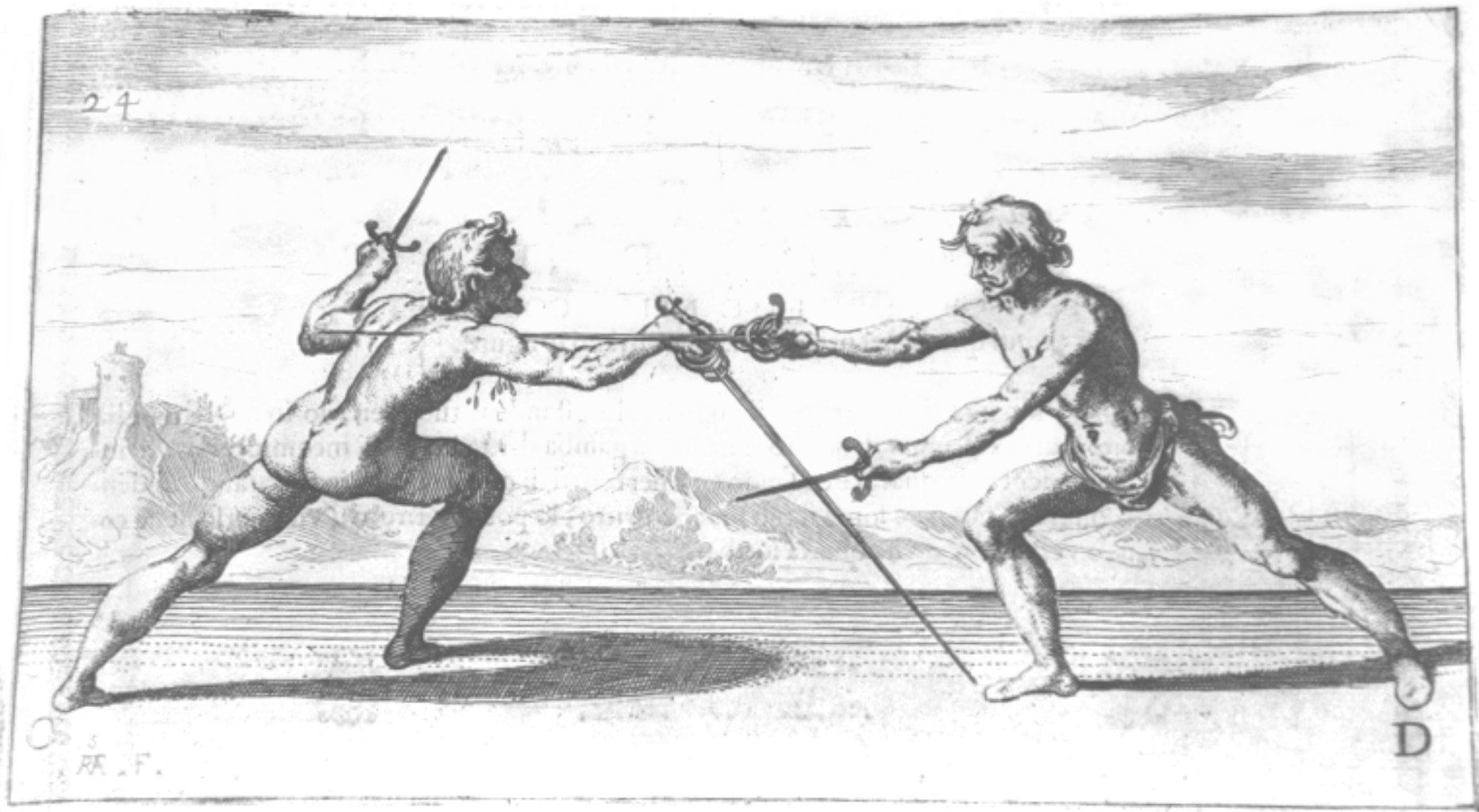


PLATE 24

A FIGURE THAT PARRIES WITH THE DAGGER HIGH TO THE  
INSIDE AND STRIKES WITH A RIVERSO TO THE THIGH, AND IN  
QUARTA TO THE CHEST AS THE FIGURE DEMONSTRATES

**F**inding yourself in quarta with the dagger high and your adversary in whatsoever guard apt for stringering on the inside, with the right leg forward, you will commence to stringer him on the inside in quarta, and he disengaging to strike you in the face in

quarta, you, parrying to the inside with your dagger, over your right arm, will be able to strike him either with a riverso to the thigh or with a quarta below the arm.

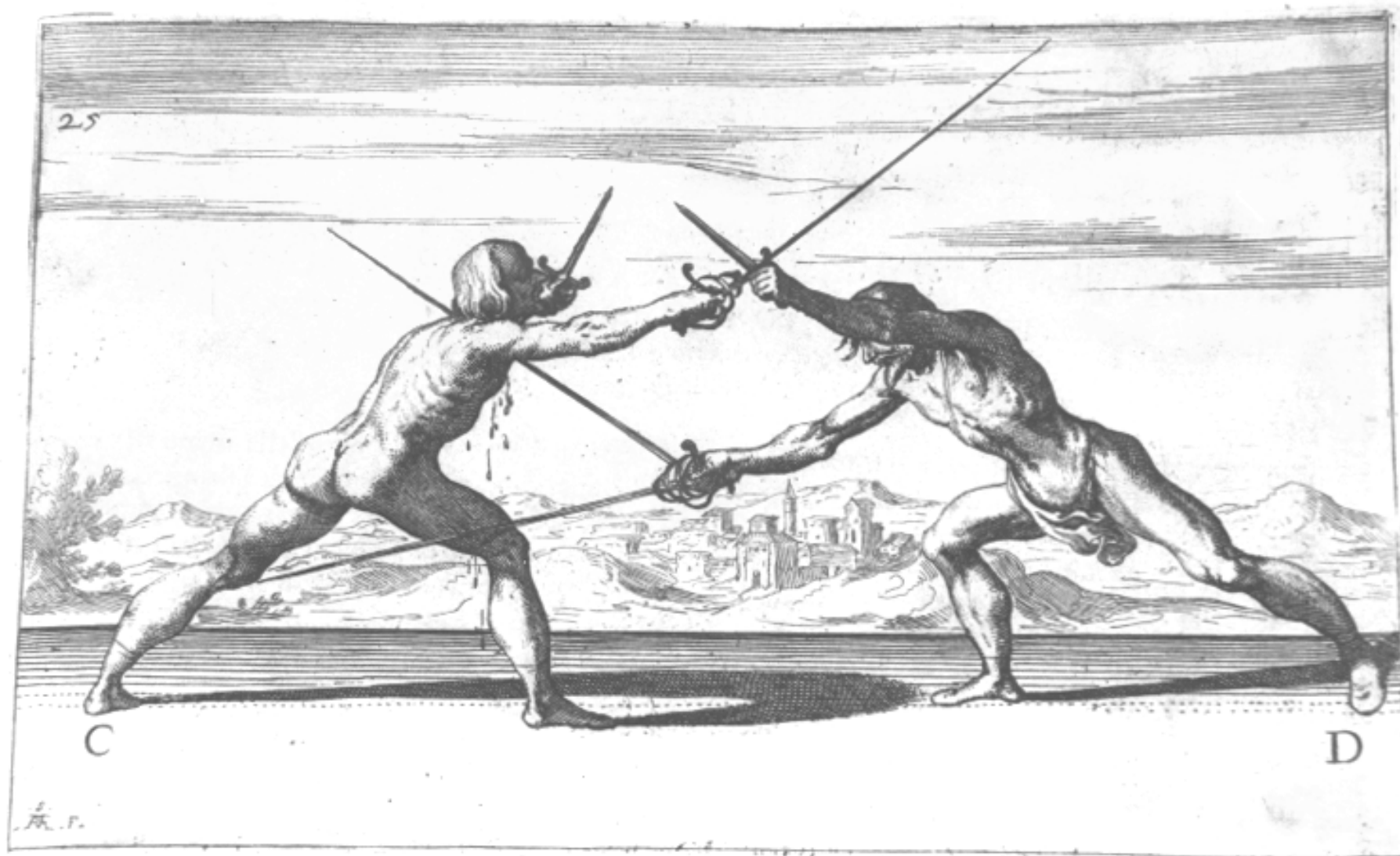


PLATE 25

A FIGURE THAT PARRIES WITH THE SWORD IN QUARTA  
ACCOMPANIED WITH THE DAGGER AND STRIKES IN QUARTA TO  
THE FACE OR WITH A RIVERSO TO THE ARM AS THE FIGURE SHOWS

If it so happens that you find yourself in an extended terza with the dagger at your wrist, your adversary being in whatsoever guard apt for stringering on the outside, you will commence to stringer him with the same terza, now high, now low, according to the occasion,

however without moving the dagger from its place, and your adversary disengaging to strike you in quarta or seconda, parrying in quarta with your sword accompanied with your dagger you will be able to strike him, as you see, either with a riverso to the arm or a quarta to the face.

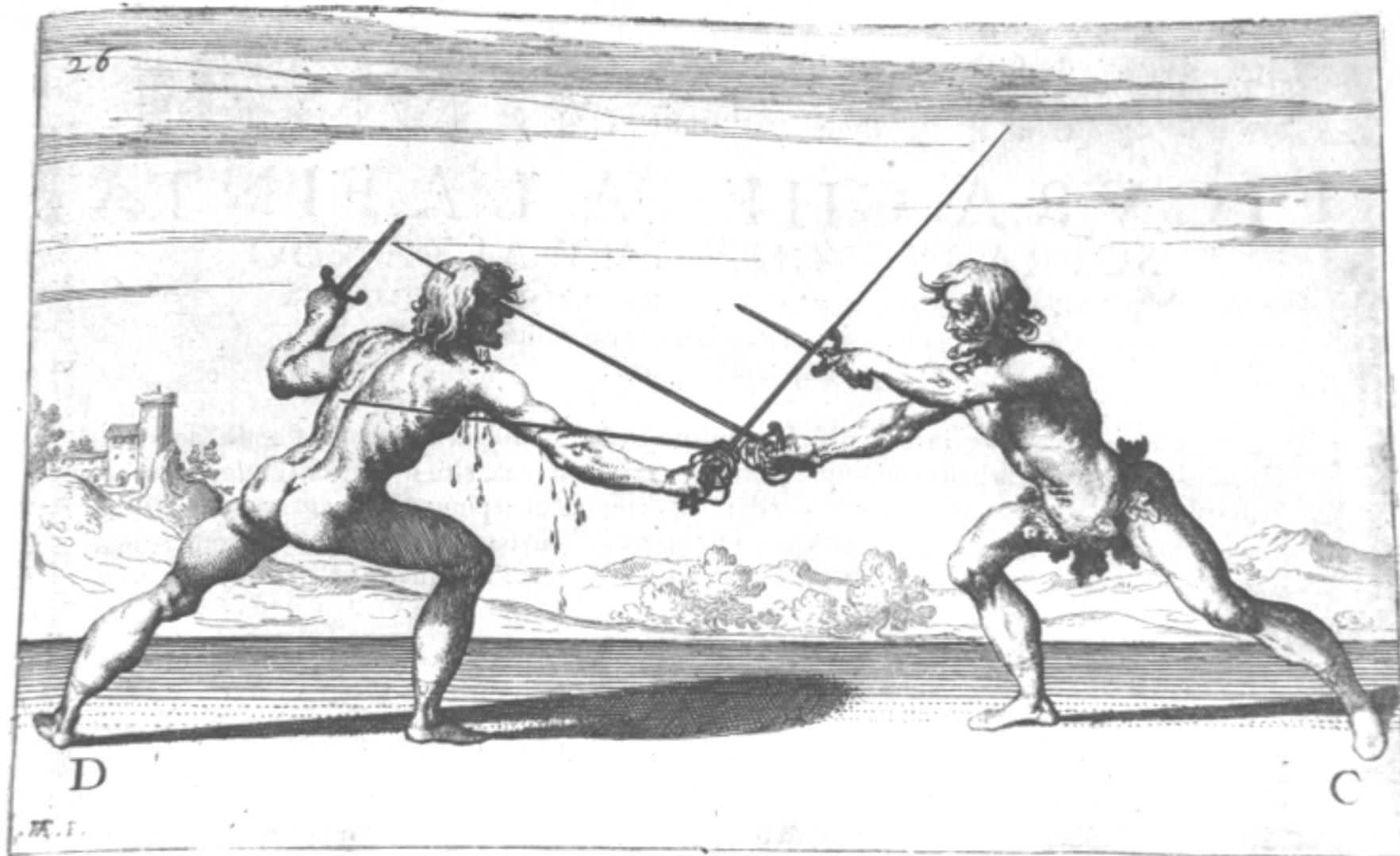


PLATE 26

A FIGURE THAT MAKES A FEINT ABOVE THE DAGGER, AND,  
THE ADVERSARY RAISING TO PARRY THE SAME, STRIKES HIM IN  
THE CHEST IN QUARTA, DISENGAGING THE SWORD UNDER

**F**inding yourself in an extended terza with the dagger at the wrist, and the adversary being in a low quarta with his sword withdrawn and his dagger high and extended, you will commence to make a feint above his dagger in terza; maintaining your

dagger in its place, he parrying upwards with his dagger, wanting to strike you in the same tempo in quarta or seconda, you will disengage under, and parrying his attack therewith<sup>41</sup> you will strike him in quarta in the chest.

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<sup>41</sup> “Parrying his attack therewith” i.e. at the same time. Note that the picture shows the parry being accomplished with the dagger.

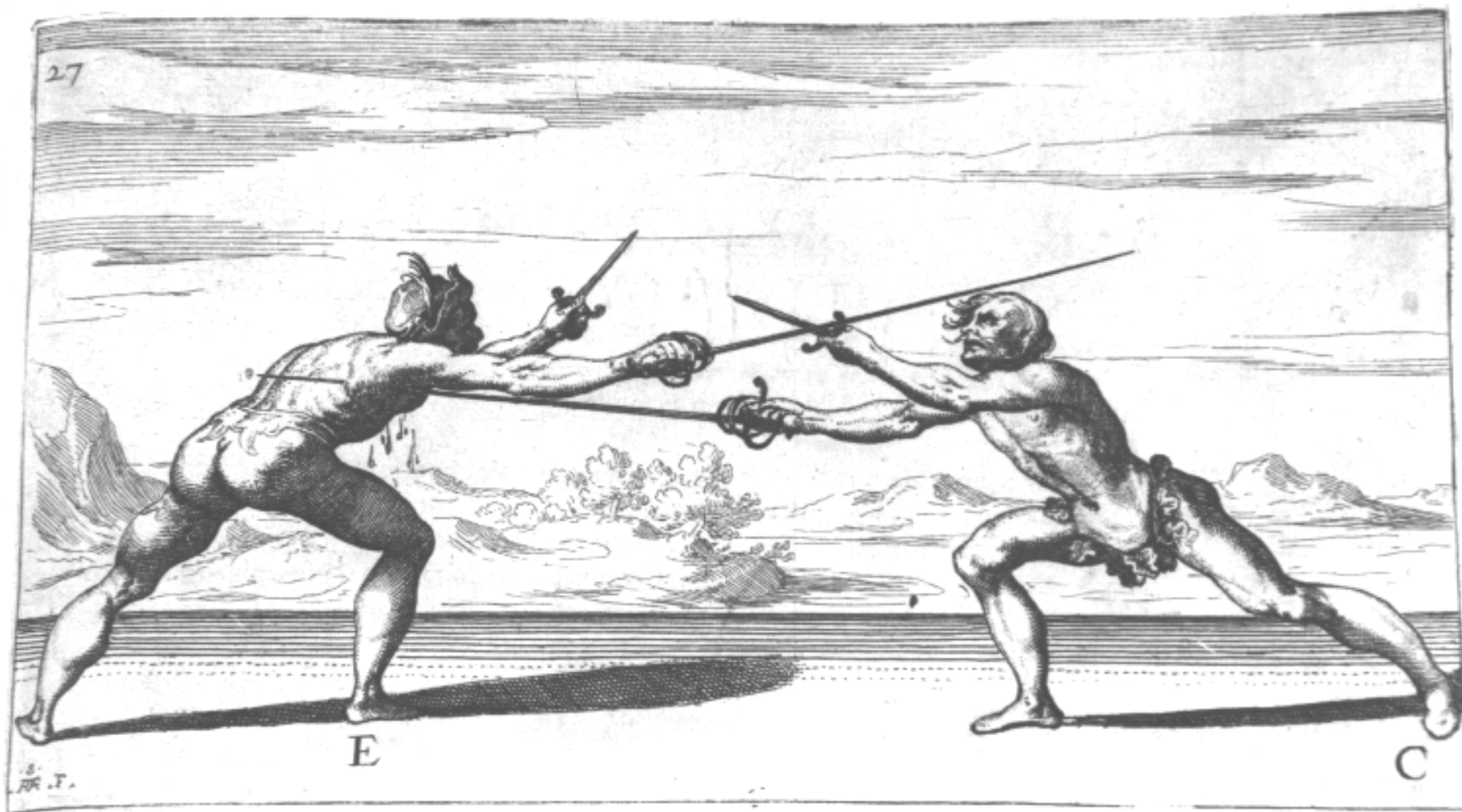


PLATE 27

FIGURE THAT PARRIES UNDER HIS RIGHT ARM WITH  
THE DAGGER, AND STRIKES IN SECONDA INTO THE FACE  
OR WITH A STRAMAZZONE RIVERSO IN THE SWORD ARM

**B**ying in a low or high terza, with your dagger at your wrist, your adversary being in whatsoever guard convenient to stringer on the outside, you will begin to stringer on the outside in high or low terza, according to the occasion, elevating your

dagger, and he wanting to disengage to the inside, and throw in quarta or seconda, you, parrying down with the dagger under your sword arm, will throw at him a stramazzone to his arm or you will strike him in seconda in the face, as is shown.



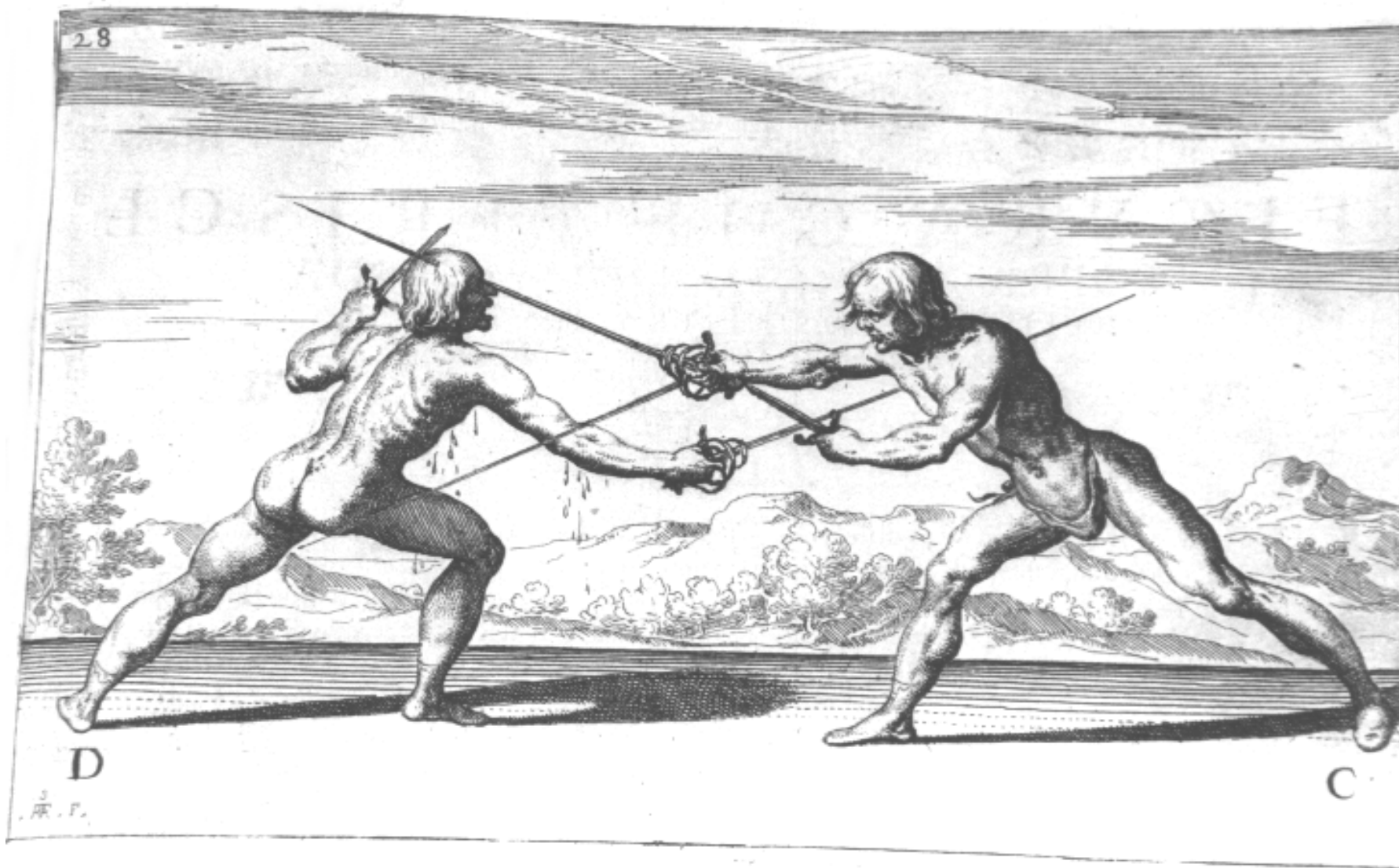


PLATE 28

FIGURE THAT STRIKES OVER THE DAGGER IN SECONDA  
INTO THE LEFT SHOULDER WHILE THE ADVERSARY  
SEEKS TO GAIN THE SWORD AGAINST HIM ON THE OUTSIDE

**I**f you lie in extended terza with your dagger in an oblique line over the beginning of the forte of your sword, your adversary being in the same guard, he coming to stringer on the outside also in terza, you will disengage and beat his sword with yours in quarta all in one

tempo, and immediately parrying his already pressed sword with your dagger, you will strike him in the same tempo over his dagger in the left shoulder.

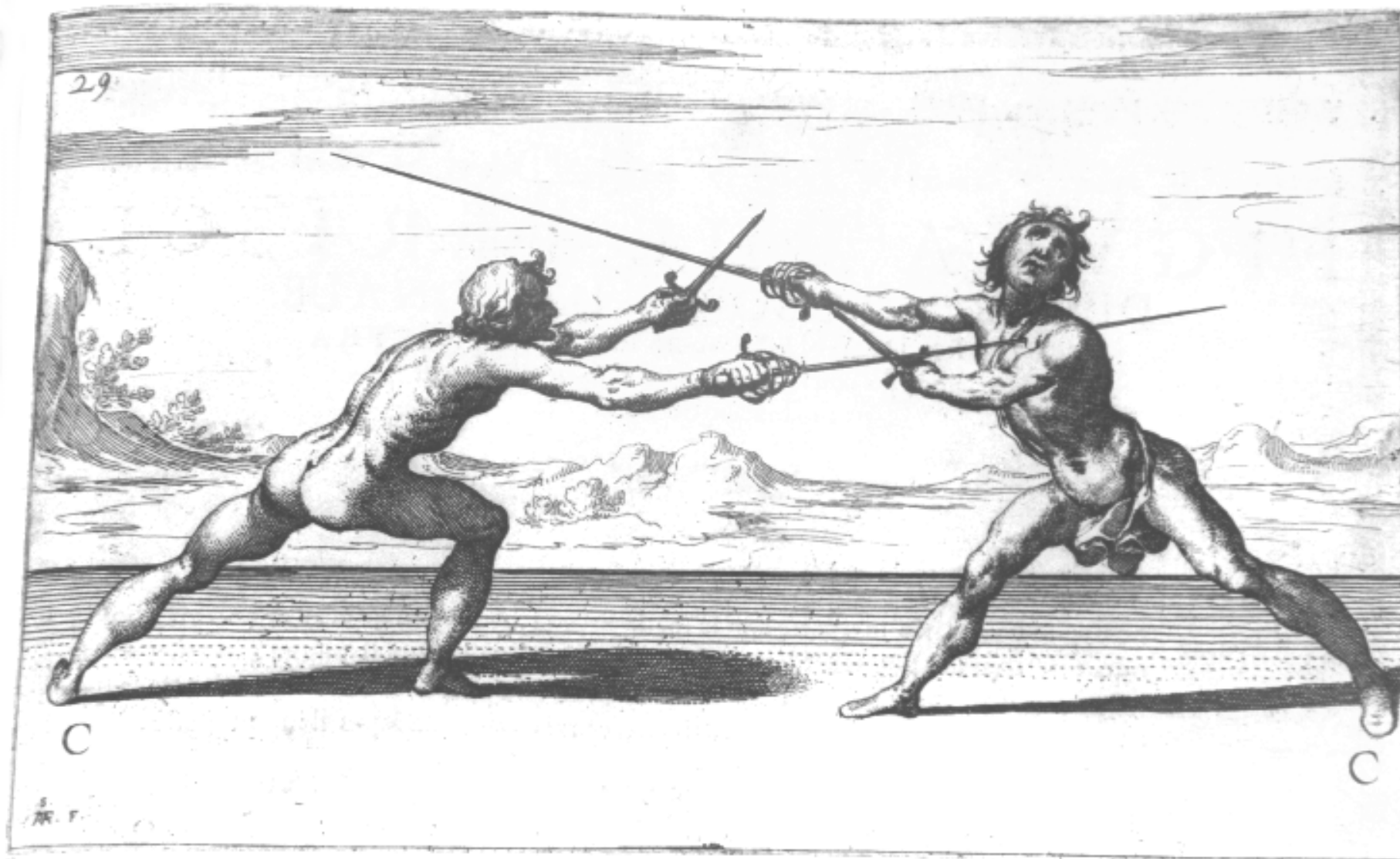



PLATE 29

FIGURE THAT STRIKES IN SECONDA OVER THE DAGGER  
INTO THE LEFT SHOULDER FROM A FEINT, PARRYING WITH HIS  
DAGGER FROM ABOVE TO BELOW UNDER HIS RIGHT ARM

ou being in terza or quarta with your arm withdrawn, with your dagger at your wrist, your adversary being in quarta with his sword withdrawn and dagger high and extended, you will make a feint at him from under his dagger, raising yours, and he

parrying down with his dagger toward his left side, you will disengage in the same tempo over his dagger, parrying the enemy's sword to the inside under your right arm, and you will strike him in seconda over his dagger.

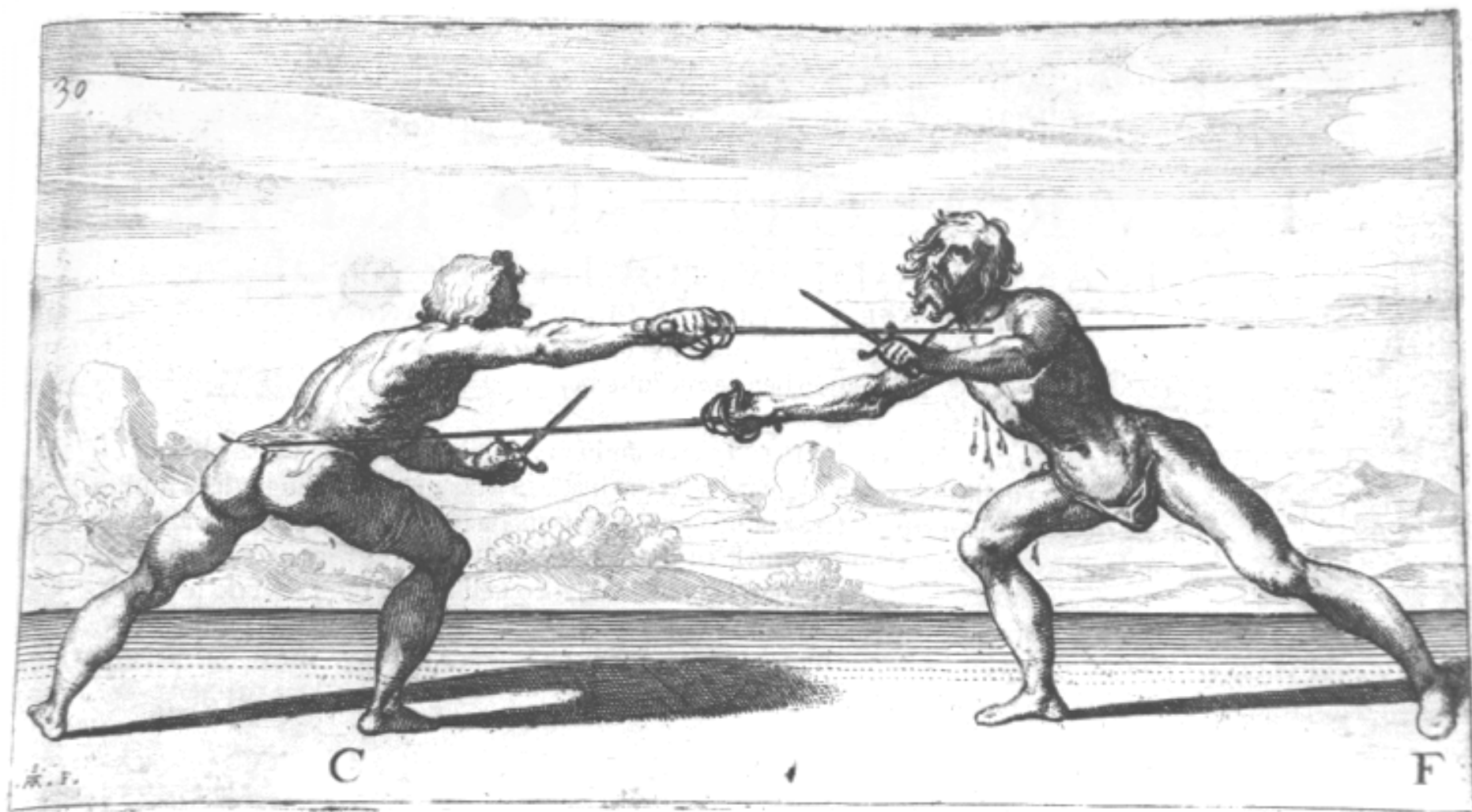


PLATE 30

FIGURE THAT STRIKES ON A PASSATA WITH A THRUST IN  
FALSO FROM BENEATH UPWARDS, BETWEEN THE WEAPONS INTO THE  
CHEST, PARRYING OVER HIS RIGHT ARM WITH HIS DAGGER,  
PRESSING THE WEAPONS TOGETHER WELL

**T**he adversary lying in terza with both weapons extended in an oblique line, so that the point of the enemy's sword is aimed at your right shoulder and that of his dagger at your left, you will put yourself opposite him in terza with the point of your sword low and with your dagger high, with your body bent as much as possible toward your left side; and he wanting to approach in order to stringer you, or

for some other aim of his, you will pass with your left foot in the same tempo toward his right side, and parrying with your dagger toward the inside over your right arm you will extend to him a thrust in falso from beneath upwards between his weapons, or alternately, disengaging over with the sword you will press his sword with both weapons, striking him in terza in the very same tempo.

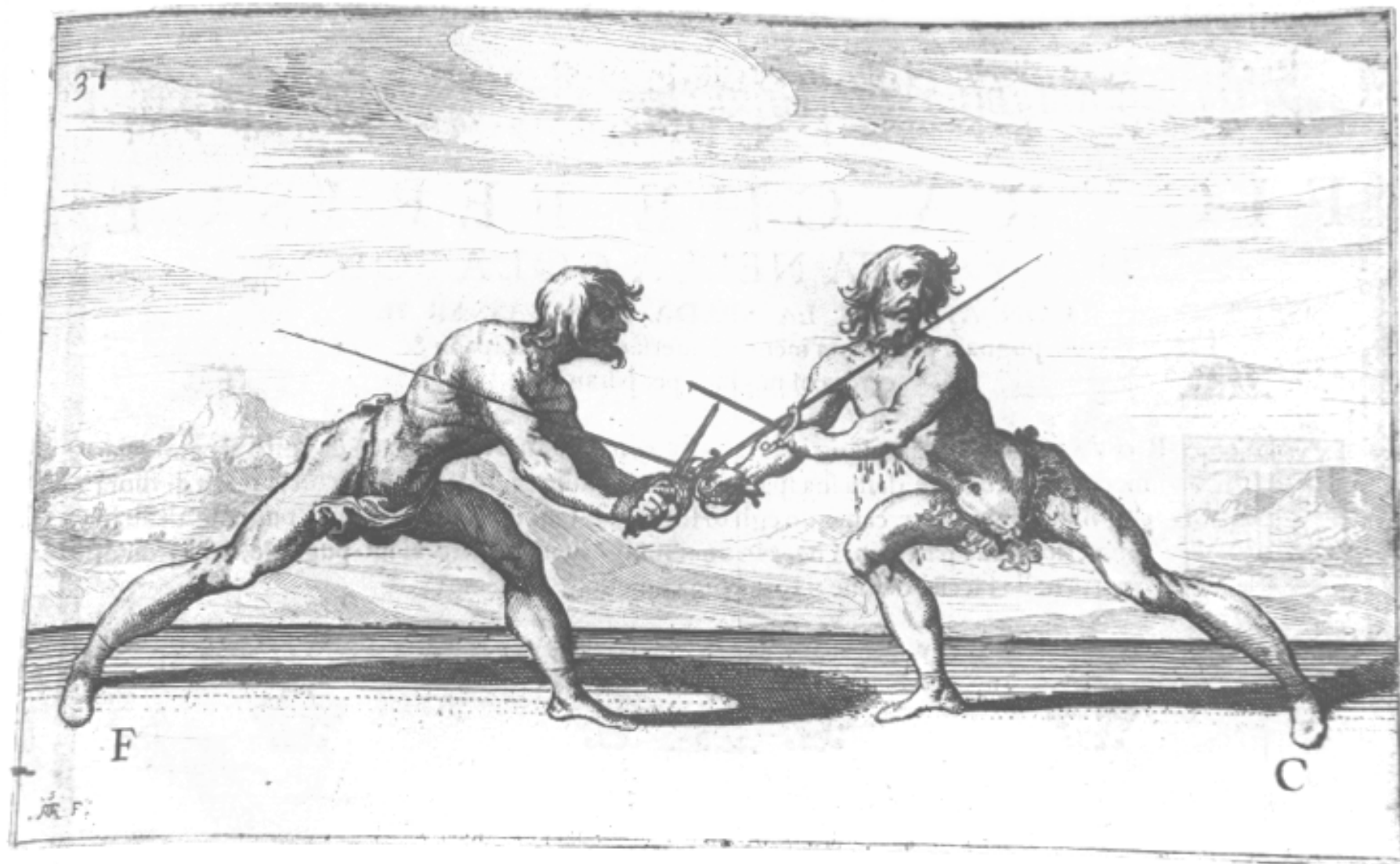


PLATE 31

FIGURE THAT STRIKES IN QUARTA INTO THE THROAT ONLY  
WITH FALSING THE SWORD AND LOWERING THE DAGGER IN ORDER TO  
PARRY WHILE THE ADVERSARY DISENGAGES FROM THE SWORD  
AND SEEKS TO PARRY WITH THE DAGGER

**T**he adversary lying in high terza with his dagger crossed and joined at the beginning of the forte of his sword, somewhat oblique, you will stringer it in terza on the outside, with the dagger high, and he disengaging under, assisting himself by parrying

with his dagger in order to strike you in quarta, you will parry with your dagger from high downwards, toward your left side, and in one tempo disengaging under his dagger, you will strike him in quarta in the face, or wherever it happens to be more convenient.



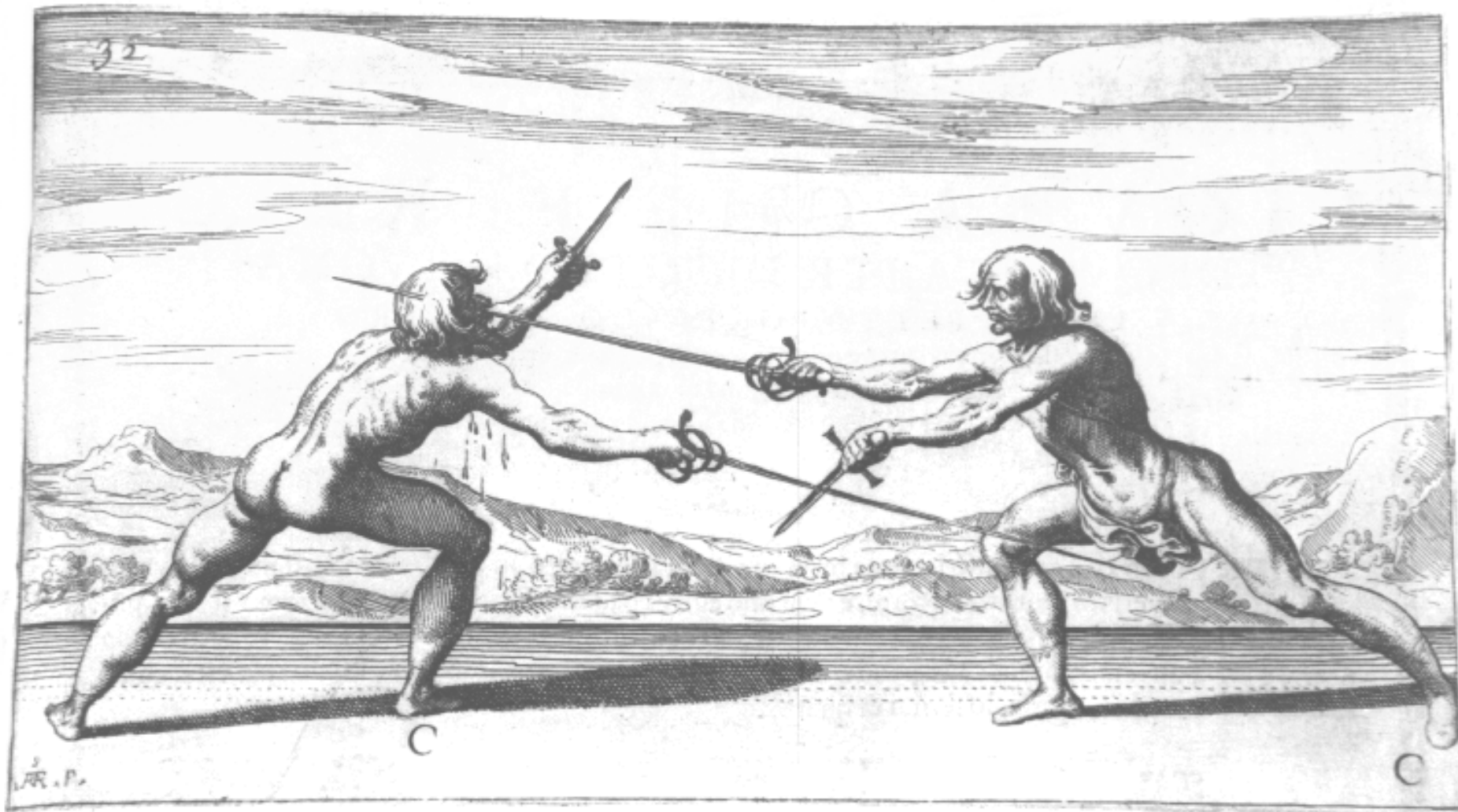


PLATE 32

FIGURE THAT STRIKES IN QUARTA UNDER THE DAGGER  
INTO THE CHEST, CARRYING HIS RIGHT LEG BACK AND PARRYING  
HIGH WITH THE DAGGER, WHILE THE ADVERSARY PASSES FORWARD WITH  
HIS LEG IN ORDER TO STRIKE IN SECONDA OVER THE DAGGER

**T**he adversary lying in low terza, you will place yourself opposite him in high terza with your dagger joined crossed over your forte, and he approaching by a passata to strike you in seconda over your dagger, and parrying wide with his, you only drawing back

your right leg, and he raising his dagger to parry, you will disengage under his, carrying your body well forward, as the figure shows, and you will strike him in quarta.

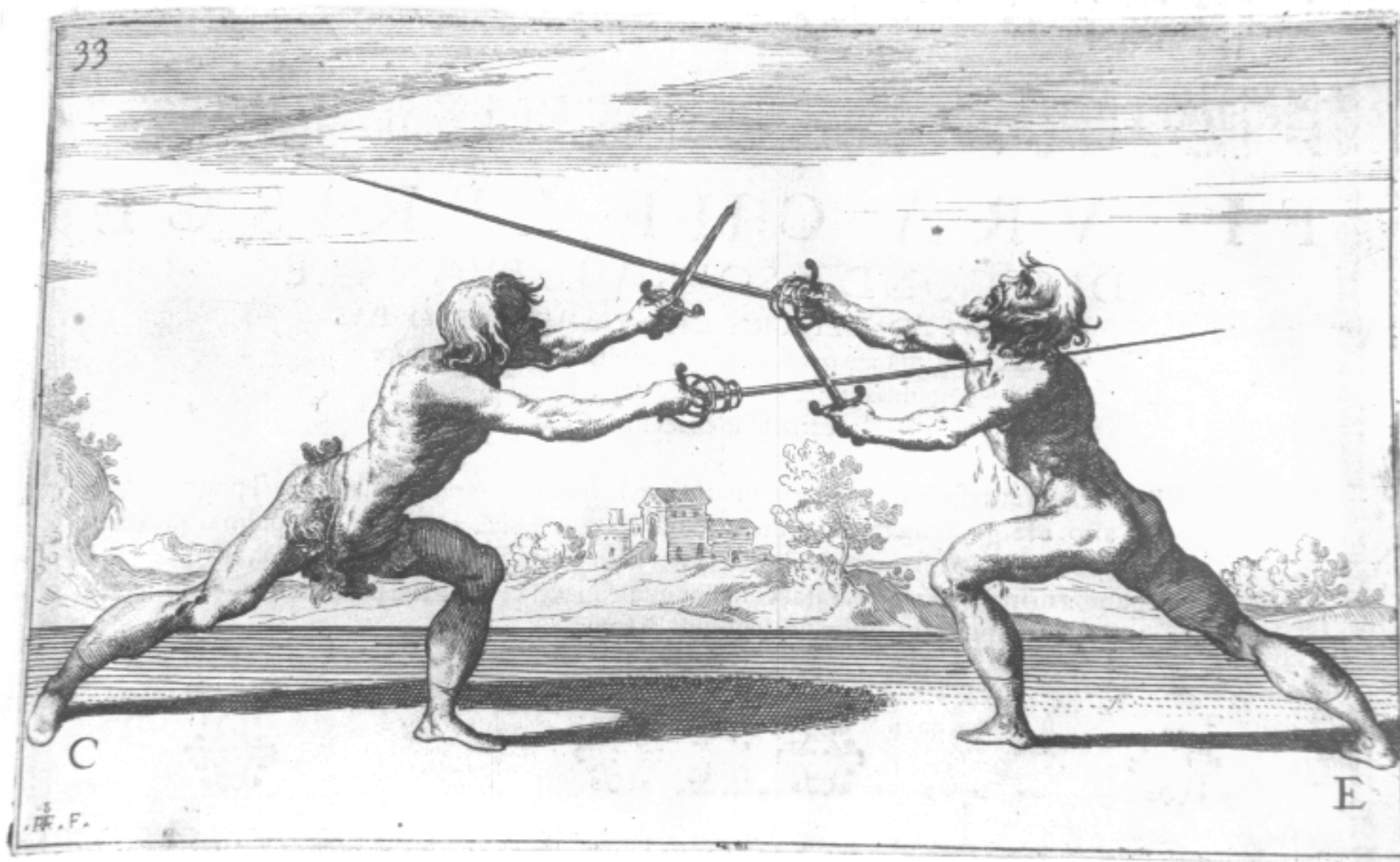



PLATE 33

FIGURE THAT STRIKES IN SECONDA OVER THE DAGGER  
INTO THE CHEST WHILE THE ADVERSARY PASSES WITH HIS LEFT  
FOOT IN ORDER TO STRIKE, ONLY WITH DRAWING BACK THE RIGHT  
LEG DURING HIS APPROACH, AND PARRYING WITH THE  
DAGGER UNDER HIS RIGHT ARM

 Although the adversary lies in quarta with his sword withdrawn and low, and with his dagger extended high and wide, you will put yourself opposite him in quarta with your arm extended and dagger high, and he moving by a passata to parry your sword

downward from high in order to strike you in seconda, drawing your right leg back, you will parry him downward with your dagger toward your right side, and you will disengage your sword over his dagger, and will strike him in seconda.

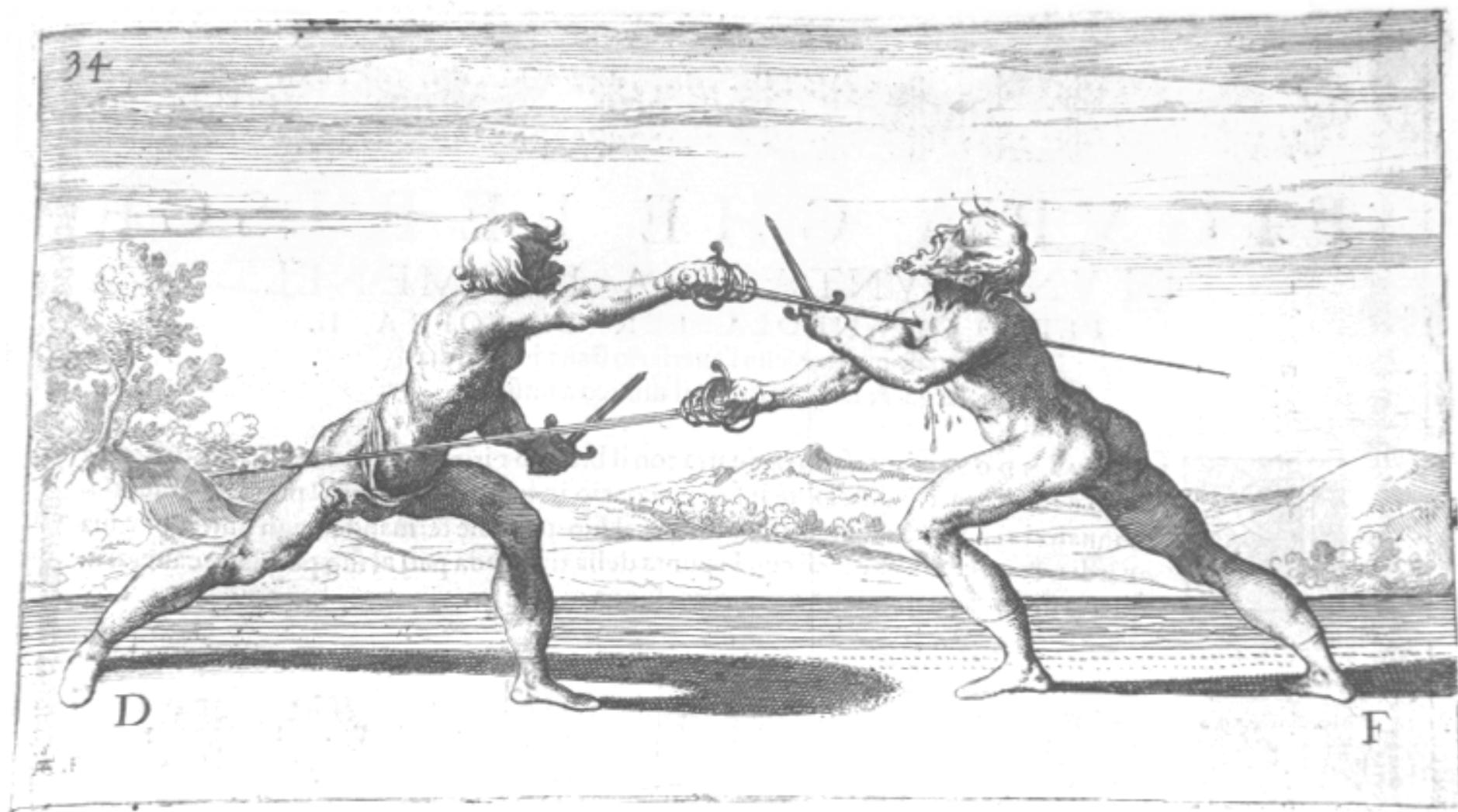


PLATE 34

FIGURE THAT STRIKES WITH A THRUST BETWEEN THE  
WEAPONS INTO THE CHEST DISENGAGING IT OVER THE DAGGER  
WHILE THE ADVERSARY WAS LYING IN WIDE GUARD,  
AND LETS THE ENEMY ARRIVE TO MEASURE

**T**he adversary lying in quarta with his arm withdrawn, and with his dagger straight high and wide and with his arm extended, you will oppose him in extended terza with your dagger crossed in front of your breast, and you will approach his dagger from

the outside, he still remaining in his guard; and once arrived, you will make the point of your sword even with his dagger, and will disengage over in quarta, delivering to him a long stoccata into his chest.

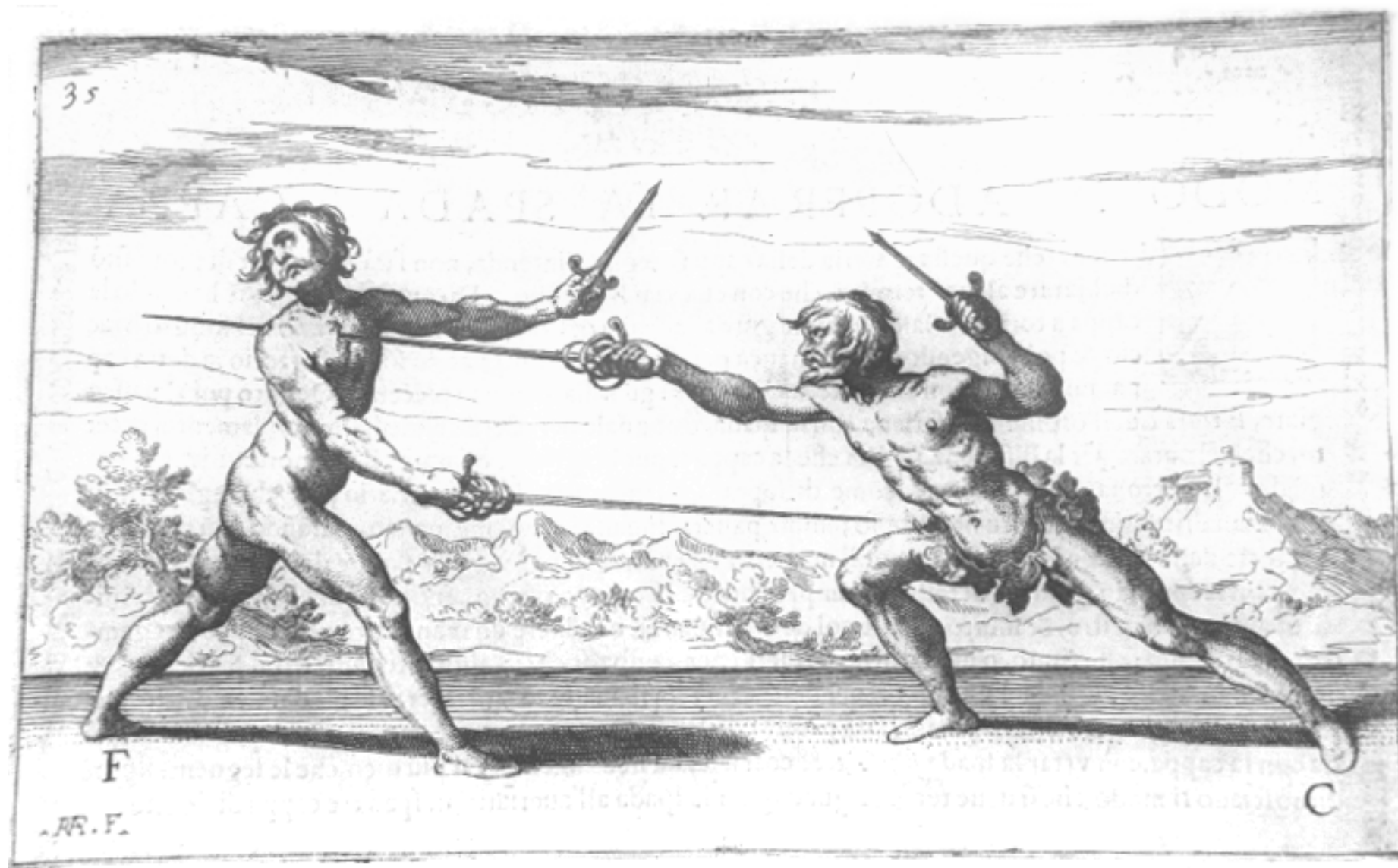


PLATE 35

## METHOD OF EMPLOYING THE SWORD AND CAPE

**T**o the end that this matter of the cape be better understood, it will perhaps not be out of place to explain some terms that must be used therewith. I tell you therefore that having the cape thereabout, it will be allowed to fall down off the right shoulder, to as far as the middle of the left arm, and then wrapping the left hand to the outside, enveloping the arm in the said cape, putting oneself with it into terza, or in some other guard as you like. So much, then, when stepping, will that order be obtained as is held with the sword and dagger, as to be an identical progress, except that in parrying there is a difference. In that then, the cape can be cut, and punctured, which cannot occur to the dagger. And finding yourself in terza, as above, at the encounter with your adversary, and he throws a mandritto at your head, you at the same time will step forward with your left foot, parrying against the forte of the enemy's sword with your cape,

extending to him a thrust into his chest; one can also parry the said blow in prima with the sword in guardia di testa<sup>42</sup> accompanied by the cape, gathering in that tempo your left foot near to your right, and immediately advance with the right, and turn a mandritto to his head or leg; but when he throws either a mandritto or riverso to your leg, you will draw back your right foot somewhat, and if it be a mandritto, then give him a riverso to his sword arm; and if it be a riverso, then give him a dritto likewise in the said arm; but the true parry will be to parry with the sword and then in the striking to go to accompany the sword with the cape, therewith hitting the enemy's sword, and thus one will strike safely. Moreover I say that the following figures show the manner that one must employ to gain the sword of the adversary on the inside with sword and cape.

---

<sup>42</sup> In guardia di testa ("head guard"), the sword is held high with the point forward and somewhat to the left, hand usually in seconda. See Manciolino pg. 7 verso, or Marozzo Ch. 143, which includes illustration.



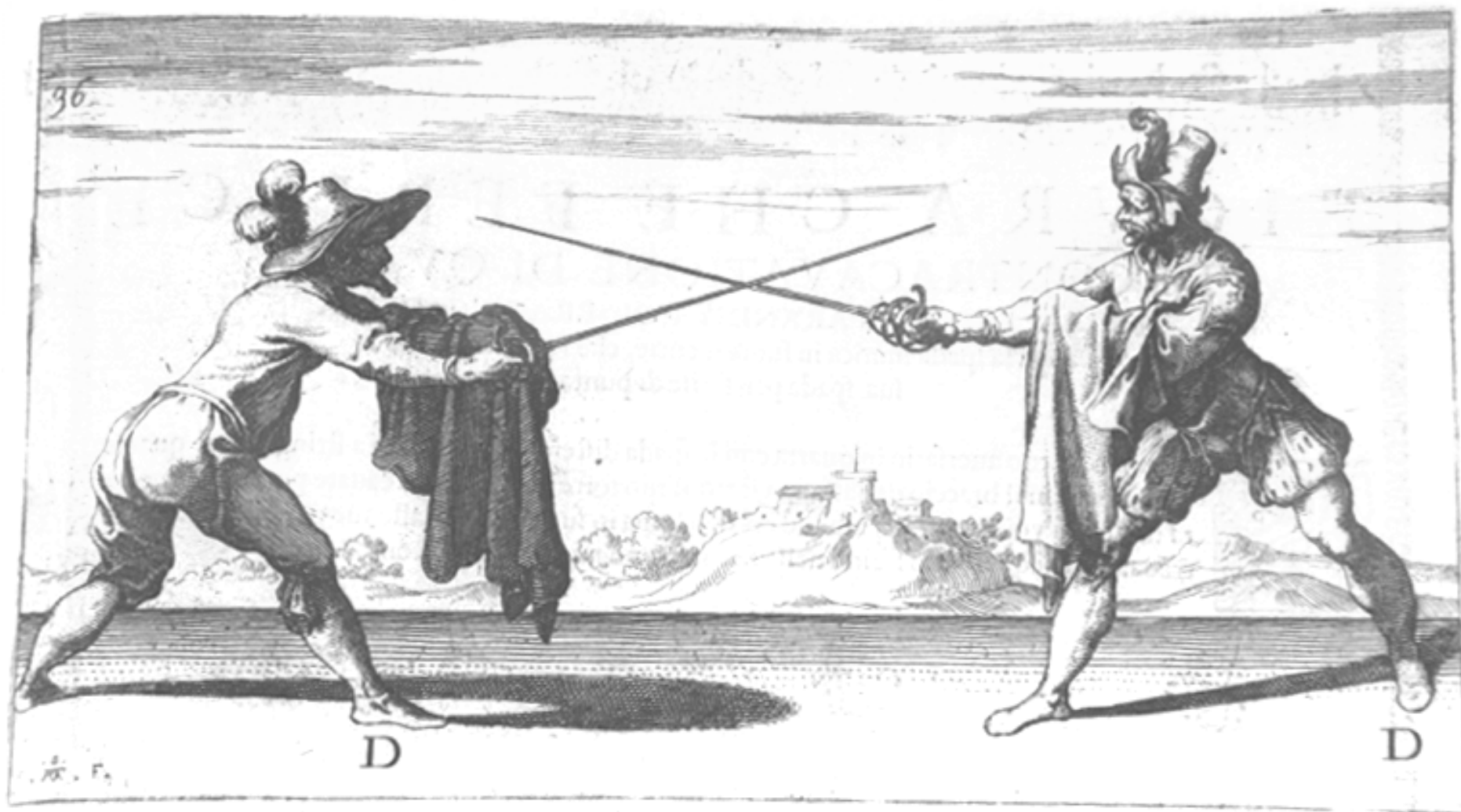



PLATE 36

FIGURE THAT STRIKES WITH A COUNTER-DISENGAGE FROM  
QUARTA INTO THE FACE, PARRYING THE ENEMY'S SWORD TO THE  
OUTSIDE WITH THE CAPE ARM, AS THE ADVERSARY DISENGAGED  
HIS SWORD IN ORDER TO STRIKE WITH A THRUST

our adversary being in quarta with his sword extended and high, you will commit yourself to stringer it in quarta on the inside, with your cape arm under your forte; he wanting to disengage in order to strike you with a thrust in whatsoever manner,

parrying upwards with your cape, to the outside of your left side, and counter-disengaging in quarta, you will strike him in the face or wherever it will happen to be more convenient for you.

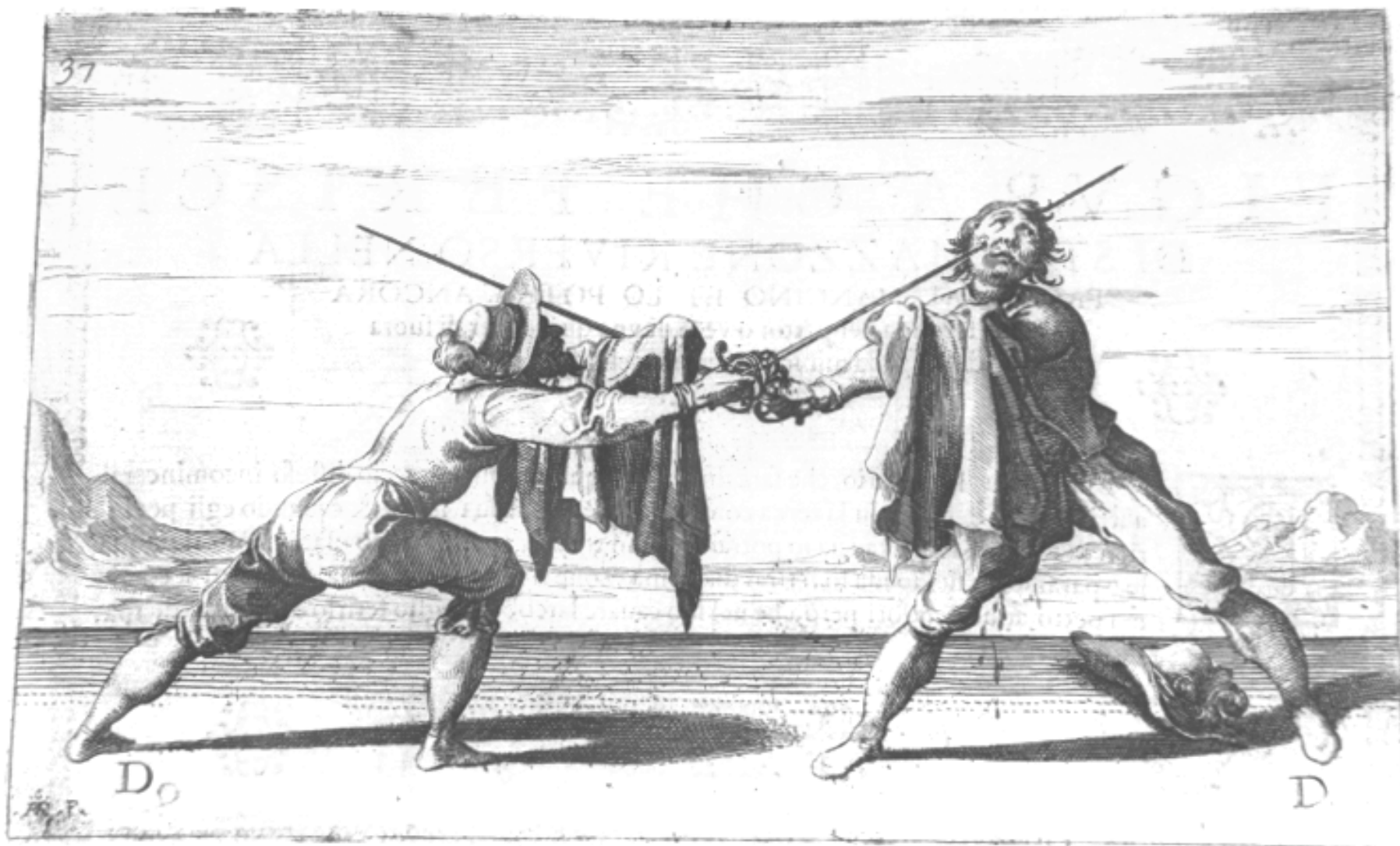


PLATE 37

FIGURE THAT STRIKES WITH A STRAMAZZONE RIVERSO IN  
THE FACE OF A LEFT-HANDER AND WILL ALSO BE ABLE TO STRIKE HIM  
IN THE CHEST IN SECONDA; OR ALTERNATELY IN QUARTA FROM THE OUTSIDE  
OF THE ENEMY'S SWORD DURING THE DISENGAGE THAT HIS  
POINT MAKES IN ORDER TO STRIKE

**T**he adversary, who will be left handed, lying in quarta with his arm extended, you will begin to stringer his sword on the inside<sup>43</sup> in terza, with your dagger high, and he disengaging in order to strike you in seconda in the face, you will be able to strike him in three manners: first, only lowering your dagger and parrying his

sword you will strike him with a stramazzone riverso in the face; alternately, in seconda in the chest; taking note, nonetheless, that during his disengage it could be better to strike him in with your sword alone on the outside<sup>44</sup>.

---

<sup>43</sup> Note that the plate clarifies that this is the adversary's inside, i.e. your outside.

---

<sup>44</sup> Presumably the adversary's outside, so most likely an attack in quarta with opposition using your true edge.

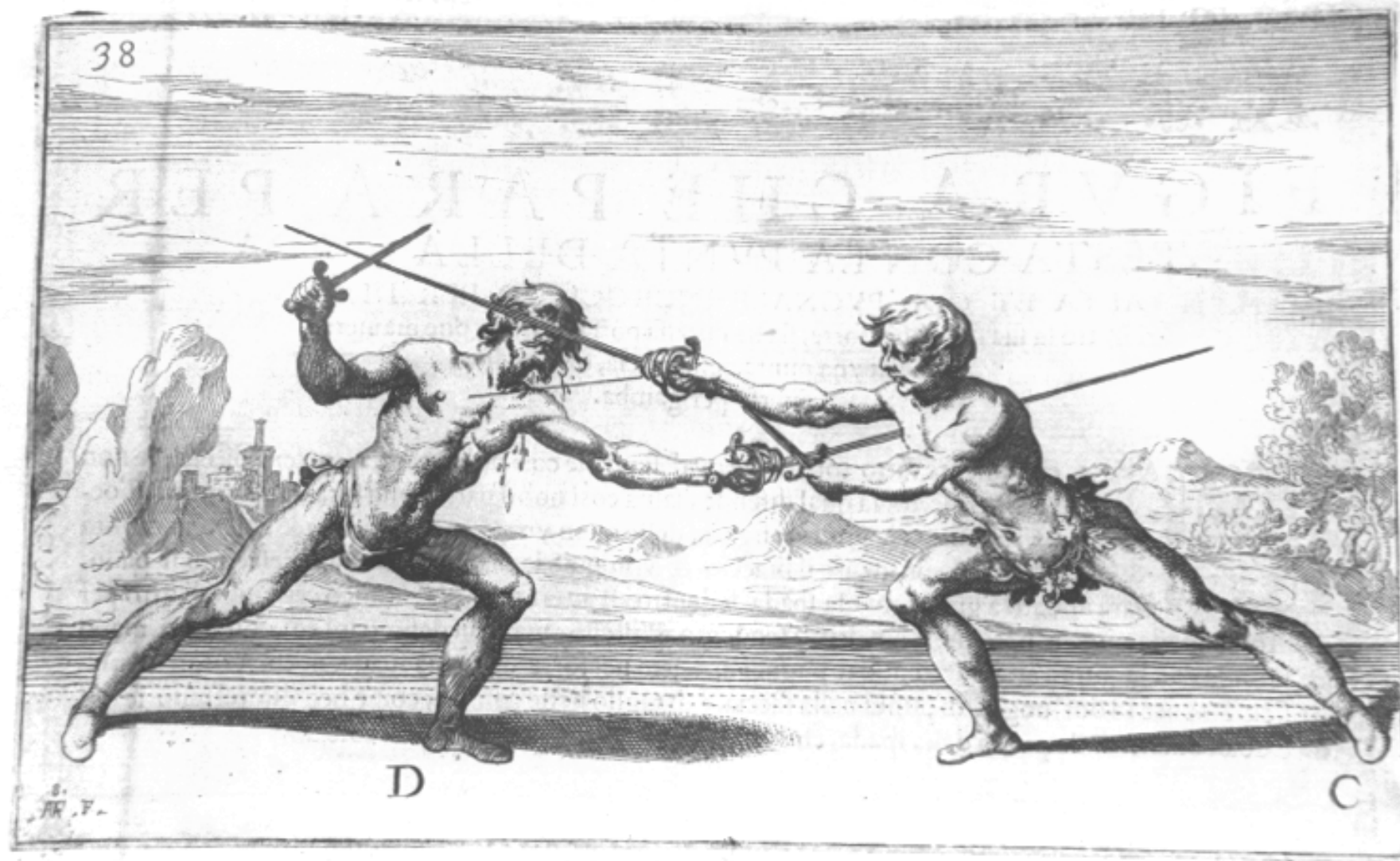


PLATE 38

FIGURE THAT PARRIES THE HEAD<sup>45</sup> WITH THE POINT OF THE  
SWORD HIGH AND WITH THE DAGGER CROSSED WITH HIS SWORD  
ON THE INSIDE AT THE FORTE, SO THAT THE SAME WILL BE ABLE TO  
STRIKE IN TWO MANNERS: FIRST WITH A THRUST TO THE FACE;  
OR ALTERNATELY WITH A RIVERSO TO THE LEG

**I**would certainly have wronged myself if I had not revealed to you this noble parry, or defence, which defends, and saves such a noble part of the body; accordingly on this occasion I put forth to you the present figures, of whom one lies in prima, and the other in quinta; and from quinta, only by raising his arm and turning his hand into quarta, increasing the pace, he will have come to gain the sword of the

adversary on the inside, and the enemy<sup>46</sup> disengaging by turning under his enemy's<sup>47</sup> sword, he<sup>46</sup> will have thrown a dritto fendente at the same<sup>47</sup>, but the same<sup>47</sup> only by turning his hand into seconda with the point high, putting the dagger to the rear on the forte of his sword, will be able to strike the adversary safely in two places: with a thrust in the face, or a cut to the leg, as the two lines descending from the point of the sword demonstrate well, the one falling to the head, and the other to the thigh.

---

<sup>45</sup> i.e. a blow to the head.

---

<sup>46</sup> i.e. Figure A.

<sup>47</sup> i.e. Figure E.

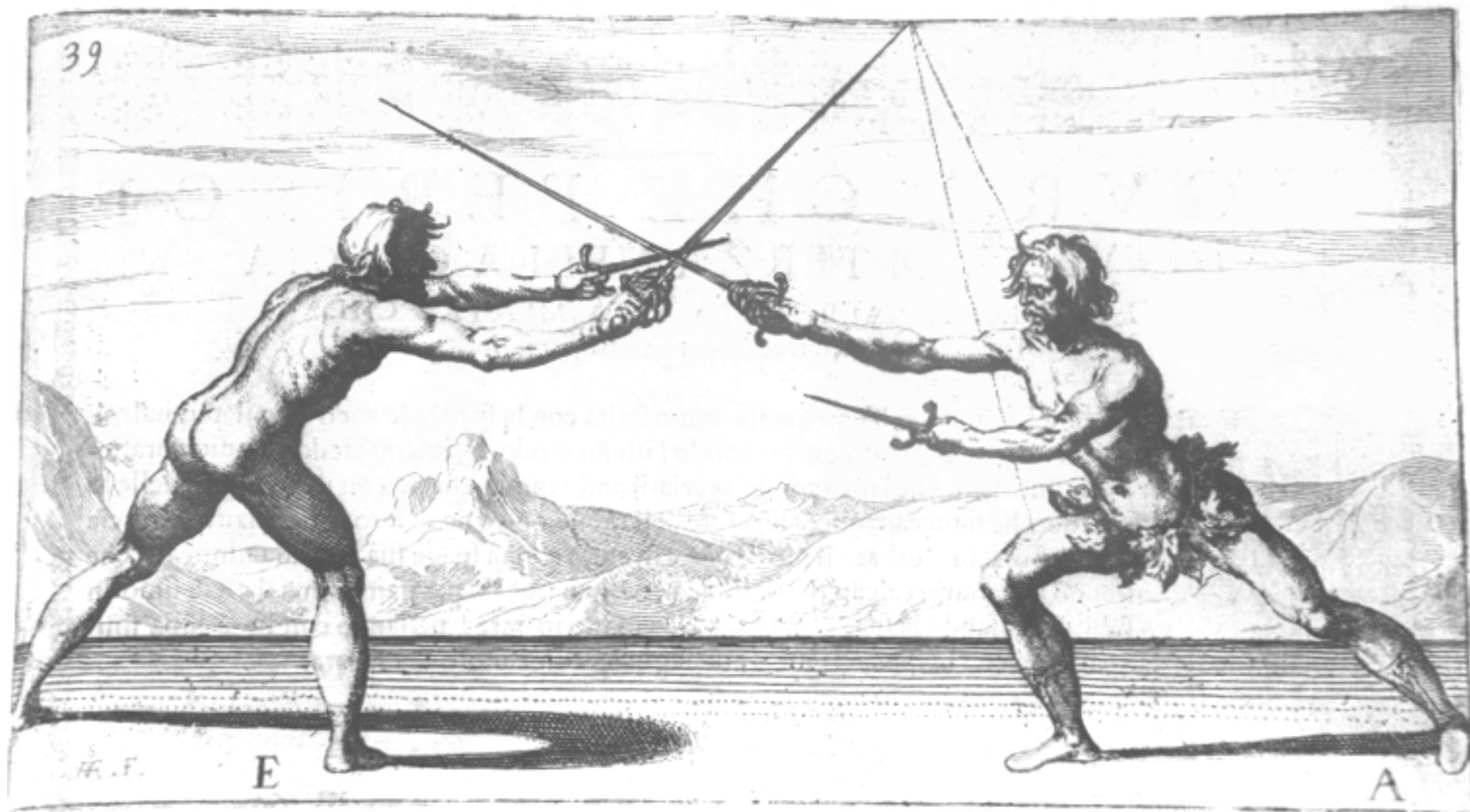


PLATE 39

FIGURE THAT STRIKES WITH A THRUST IN TERZA INTO  
THE THIGH AND WITH THE DAGGER INTO THE BODY WHILE THE  
ADVERSARY DISENGAGES A RIVERSO TO THE LEG IN ORDER TO STRIKE

**B**ecause to some, seeing this following figure struck with the sword and also with the dagger, it will perhaps appear difficult, nevertheless putting the same technique to the test, it will turn out to be easy considering the representation; hence I say, that the adversaries, finding each other in quarta, with the true edges of their swords such that they were touching each other and the points of

the same each aimed at their adversary's face, the same was forced, the enemy's sword pressing his sword, so that feeling his adversary press, he resolves to turn a riverso to the leg, but the same lowering his sword in an instant, and turning his hand into terza, passing forward with his left leg, strikes him, parrying, with his sword, and also with his dagger, as the figure shows<sup>48</sup>.

---

<sup>48</sup> "...they were touching each other" i.e. "si toccavano". Actual engagement and use of sentiment is uniquely specified in this plate. The agent applies pressure through the sword, provoking the patient to cut with a riverso, to which the agent responds with a thrust with the sword that serves to block said cut, and simultaneously thrusts with the dagger.



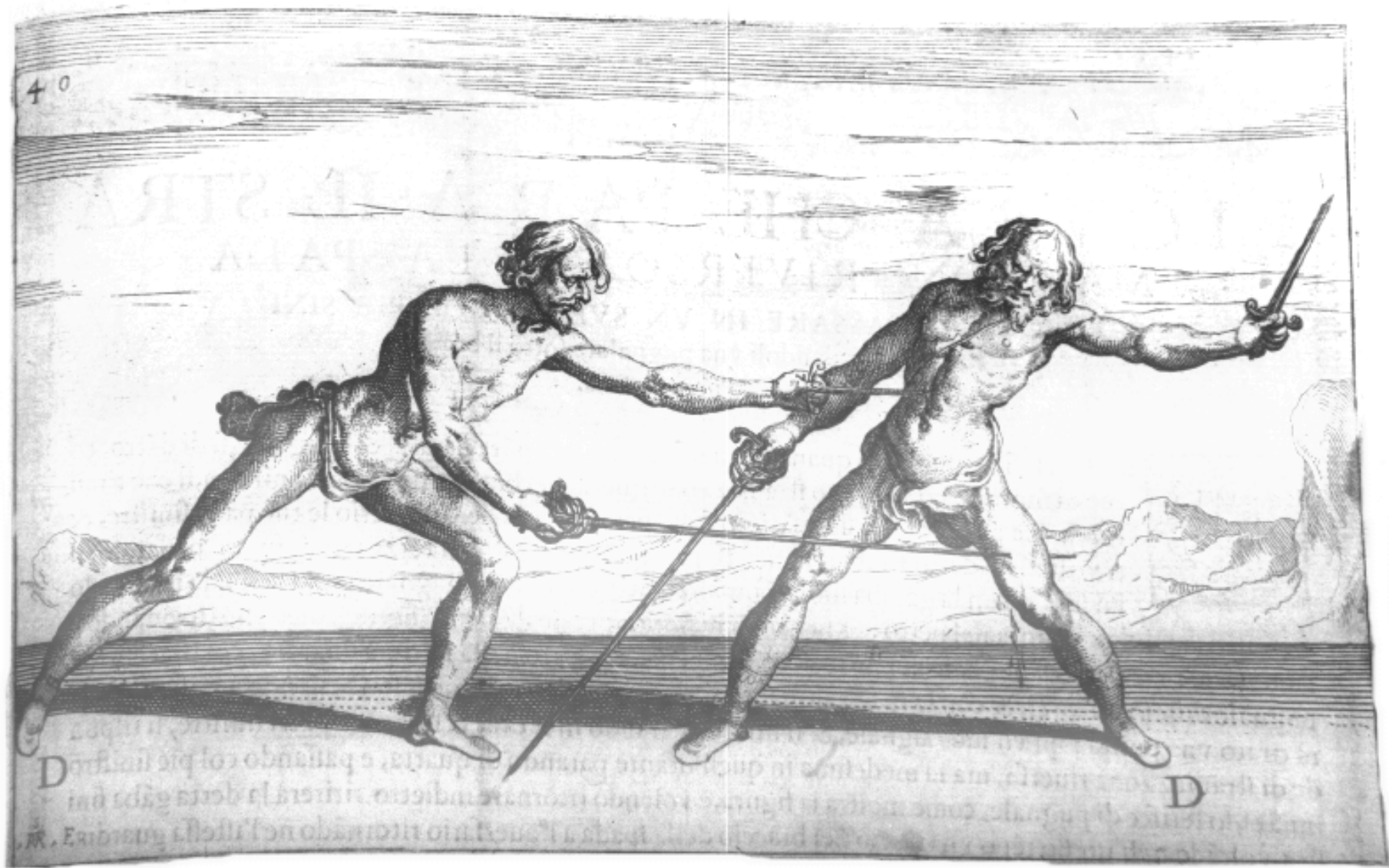


PLATE 40

FIGURE THAT PARRIES THE STRAMAZZONE RIVERSO WITH  
THE SWORD AND PASSES FORWARD IN AN INSTANT  
WITH THE LEFT FOOT, GIVING A STAB UNDER  
THE RIGHT ARM INTO THE PECTORAL

**B**ecause it is of great account when the adversary throws a thrust to parry it with the dagger, to the inside as to the outside, and to turn a stramazzone riverso to the enemy's sword arm, thus when you have thrown a thrust at your adversary, and he has parried it to the inside, toward your left side, and throws at you the said stramazzone, you will parry with your sword in terza to the outside, and passing forward with your left leg instantly, putting your dagger over the enemy's sword you will strike him in seconda with a thrust to the chest. But by presentation of the following figures, I say that the adversary lying in terza with his dagger upon the forte of his sword, and

the other in the guard of sesta, with the dagger arm extended forward, and the sword somewhat low and withdrawn toward himself, the same being at measure will throw a thrust at him over his dagger, and the enemy parrying to the outside, toward his left side, responds with a stramazzone riverso, but the same in that instant parrying in quarta and passing forward with the left foot, strikes him with the dagger, as the figure shows, and wanting to return to the rear, will withdraw the said left leg, turning in the same tempo a riverso to the sword arm of the adversary, returning into the same guard.

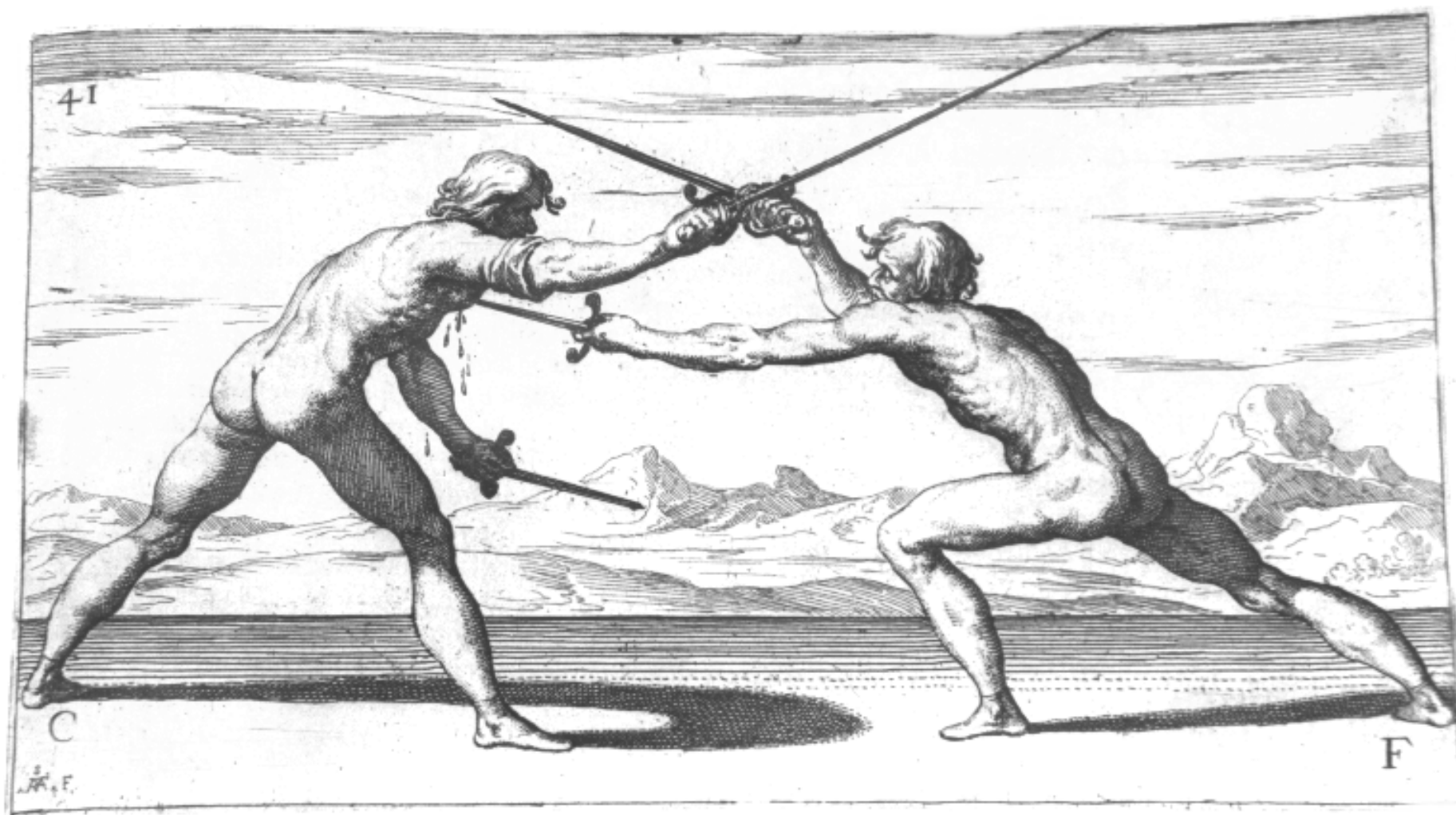



PLATE 41

## WAY OF KNOWING HOW TO AVAIL ONESELF WELL OF THE ROTELLA, FINDING ONESELF CONFRONTED WITH ANOTHER ROTELLA

s it often happens that one's own weapons wage war against one who does not know how to avail himself well thereof, accordingly I have judged it to not be out of place to give an inkling of some details of the rotella, as a weapon most dangerous to those who have not had some practice with the same; and in consideration of such, it is to be advised that the rotella must be embraced with the left arm somewhat curved, in a way such that it faces somewhat toward your left side, but not so curved that it impedes the vision so that one could not discern any part of the enemy whatsoever; and having done thus, wanting to go to strike, the enemy lying with his sword extended forward in *guardia stretta*<sup>49</sup>, it will be necessary first to stringer the enemy's sword on the inside or the outside according to the occasion, and then advancing with the left foot, to hit his already gained sword with your rotella, and strike him vigorously in *terza* with a rising thrust. But if it occurred that the enemy lay in *guardia larga*<sup>50</sup>, and that he threw a *dritto* or *riverso* to your leg, you would have to

parry it with the *falso*<sup>51</sup>, the *dritto* as well as the *riverso*, and then respond with a cut to the adversary in the leg; but if perchance he threw a thrust or a cut toward your face or head you could parry with the rotella when the cut or the thrust came not as a feint. But in order to protect yourself from the feint, being that the rotella is heavy so that it could not be of such quickness to parry as could be done with a *targa*<sup>52</sup> or *brocchiero*<sup>53</sup>, accordingly you will be careful not to parry in such a case with the rotella; then, the same figure wanting to parry a thrust which the adversary has thrown to the outside of his rotella, the same wishing to parry it will of course necessarily block his vision, and thus impeded, in that instant the enemy will have convenient opportunity to pass forward with his left foot and strike, without the motion of his sword being seen, into the breast or to the base of the body, as the figures show. But the same is to be parried in *seconda* or *quarta* with the sword, according to the occasion, and then advancing with the left foot, hitting the enemy's sword with the rotella, one will strike with a rising thrust in *terza*, and thus will be safer.

---

<sup>49</sup> "Guardia stretta": i.e. narrow guard, generally a guard in which the hilt is low and the point forward.

<sup>50</sup> "Guardia larga": i.e. wide guard, generally a guard in which the hilt is low and the point is not aimed at the enemy.

---

<sup>51</sup> "Falso": a defence using a rising false edge cut under the enemy's attack to displace it out and up.

<sup>52</sup> "Targa": a handheld rectangular buckler, usually corrugated; familiar to English readers of di Grassi as a "square target".

<sup>53</sup> "Brocchiero": a small handheld round buckler.

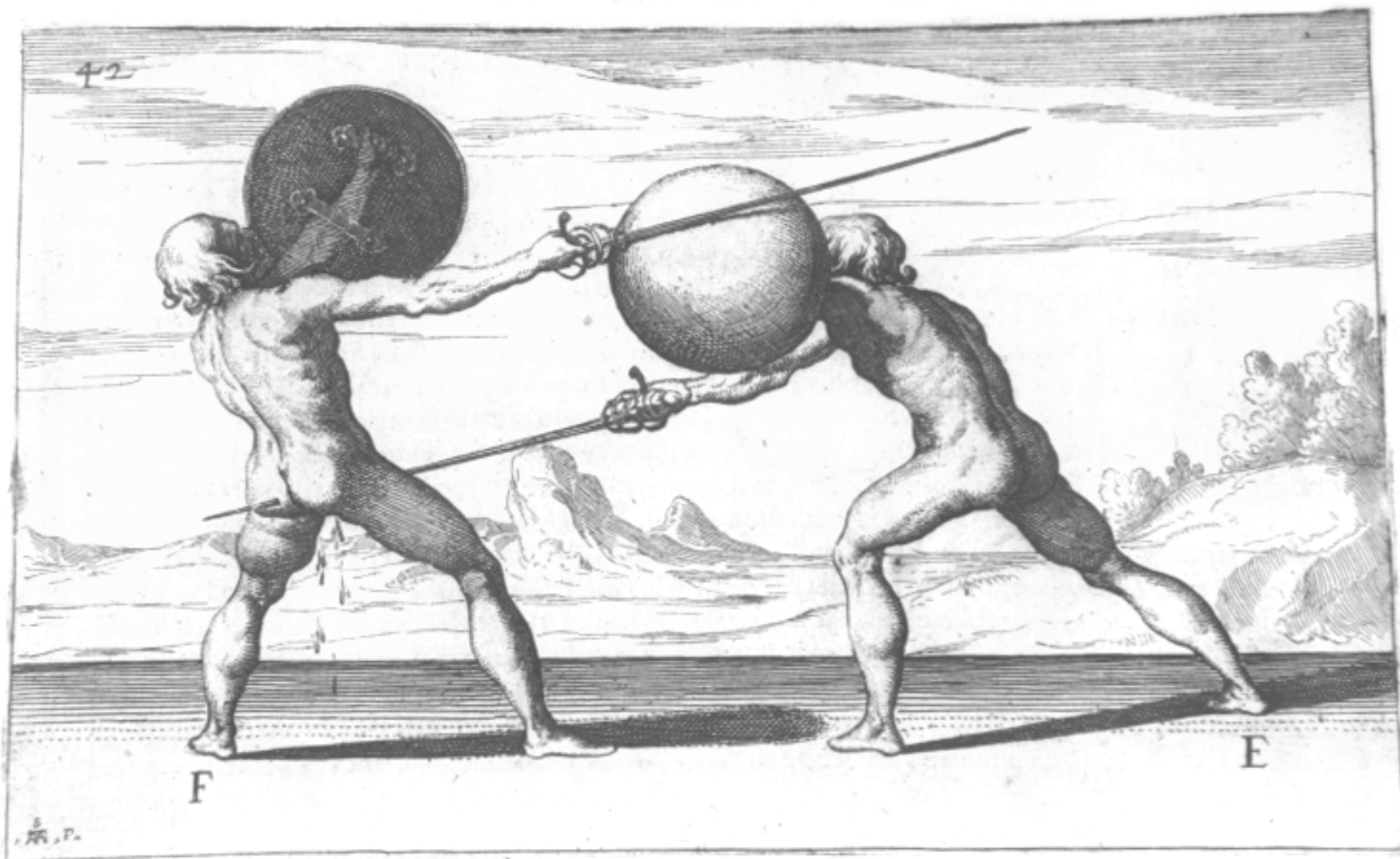



PLATE 42

FIGURE THAT STRIKES UNDER THE ROTELLA, WHILE THE  
ADVERSARY SEEKS TO PARRY WITH THE SAME ROTELLA,  
IN ORDER TO STRIKE WITH A THRUST IN THE CHEST

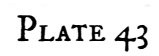
onsidering the deceptions and feints that are found in arms, it is necessary to pay great attention when one comes to blows with his enemy, so through presentation of the following figures I show to you how parrying is most often harmful when one parries and does not respond in the same tempo; so I will demonstrate it to you in this action of the rotella, being that one of them lies in quinta with his arm sloping and with the point of his sword low, with the rotella forward of his breast, and the enemy lies in sesta with his rotella arm extended forward, and with his sword somewhat back, so that the same<sup>54</sup>, if he will be accosted at measure, will throw a thrust outside the rotella to the face; and he<sup>55</sup> raising his rotella to parry, the view will be

obscured, and the same<sup>54</sup>, falsing his sword under the rotella, strikes him in quarta in the way that the figure shows. But if he had been an experienced person, when the adversary threw a thrust at his face, he would have parried, stretching out his rotella arm, and passing forward with his left foot, instantly bending his body and head toward his right side, giving him a thrust in the chest; alternately, when the adversary threw the thrust, he could have parried with the sword in quarta, and passing forward in an instant with his left foot, and hitting the enemy's sword with his rotella, he would strike him in terza with a rising thrust to the body, and thus he would have been safe.

---

<sup>54</sup> i.e. Figure E.

<sup>55</sup> i.e. Figure F.



## OF SOME TERMS OF THE CUT

I had resolved myself to present to you some figures that would have shown you the way of using a cutting weapon, of parrying as well as striking, and in these actions to show you many effects, but considering this, that could have been done with figures, I can also do with these few pieces of advice, that I put to you, thus: the adversary lying in *terza* or in *quarta*, so that the point of his sword is aimed at the middle of your body, you will place yourself opposite him in *quarta* with the point of your sword somewhat high, and crossed toward your right side, and approaching somewhat toward the adversary's sword, you will throw a *drritto* at his sword followed by a rising *riverso* to his face; on the contrary, when your enemy will turn a *riverso* to your face, you will pass, parrying with your dagger in *guardia di faccia*<sup>56</sup> over your right arm, giving him a thrust in *terza* in his chest; alternately, having parried, and passing as above, you will be able to give him a *drritto* to his leg, and moreover you will be able to parry the said *riverso* with your sword in *quarta*, as that figure shows, which strikes with the dagger under the arm of the adversary, and passing and parrying with the dagger, one will strike with a *riverso* to the leg, or with the dagger in the same way into the pectoral; moreover, you will also be able to put yourself in *quarta* with the point of your sword low, showing him your

body somewhat, and he coming from the outside to throw a thrust at you, you will parry upwards with the false edge of your sword, giving him a *drritto* to the face, or a thrust to the chest, but if the adversary approaches you to beat your sword, to the inside as to the outside, you will do such: if he throws a *drritto* to your sword, in the same tempo you will turn a *riverso* to his face; and if he throws a *riverso* to the outer side in order to beat your sword, in the same tempo you will turn a *drritto* to his face. Be advised that the parry of the *drritto*, as well as the *riverso*, to the head, will be parried in the same way, as that figure shows that parries with the sword crossed with the dagger at the rear upon the forte of the sword, which has two lines, one falling to the face, and the other to the thigh; and upon the occasion that the adversary throws at you either a *drritto* or *riverso* to the lower parts, you will parry in *seconda* with the point of your sword low, and if it will be a *drritto*, you will parry and disengage with the edge, over the enemy's sword, putting your dagger upon the said sword, giving him a *riverso* to the arm; and if it will be a *riverso*, you will parry to the outside in the same way, giving him a thrust in the chest, putting however your dagger upon the adversary's sword in the same tempo; and this is as much concerning thereof that occurs to me to say.

---

<sup>56</sup> "Guardia di faccia"—i.e. face guard, a guard in which arm is extended at shoulder height and the point is forward with the hand in *quarta*. See Manciolino pg. 8 recto, or Marozzo Ch. 143, which includes illustration.



# SECURE WAY OF DEFENDING ONESELF FROM EVERY SORT OF BLOW WITH A PARRY OF A RIVERSO AND STRIKING ALWAYS WITH AN IMBROCCATA

**W**anting to put an end to this, my work, it does not seem to be to be out of place to seal it with this brief discourse of mine, which consists only of demonstrating the virtue and the action of the guards of prima and quarta, discovering in prima the offense, and in quarta the defence, the beginning and end of whatsoever honoured scheme; considering that quarta defends against any blow, resolute or irresolute, and prima offends the adversary, accordingly it is necessary to say (for the two to be faithful companions) that the beginning of the one is the end of the other, and thus, without beginning and end they evade beginning and ending, since the prima begins from high and finishes in a somewhat low quarta, and this is for two reasons. First, because if the adversary throws a thrust or a cut,

passing somewhat with the left foot, in parrying with a riverso toward the right side of the adversary, advancing the right foot, one can strike with an imbroccata in the chest, and by such an end, one returns into the guard of quarta. Second, because the adversary cannot offend if not to the right side, which can easily be defended with an ascendente from the said quarta, demonstrating nonetheless in these actions boldness in the face, the eye quick to recognize the uncovered and covered parts of the adversary, strength and speed in the legs, arms, and hands, quickness in parrying and striking, and agility in the body; and this is the nature of the guards of prima and quarta<sup>57</sup>.

THE END



---

<sup>57</sup> This section resembles the advice given by dall'Agocchie on pg. 32 verso as the method to learn when one has only one month to prepare for a duel, as well as the heart of Viggiani's entire schermo. I find it tempting to speculate that the alternation of an attack from prima with a parry of a riverso may have been a commonplace in the didactic repertoire of Italian maestri of the time, perhaps reserved for the paying customer who wanted quick results.

## TABLE OF PLATES

Plate 1.....	41	Plate 16.....	67	Plate 31.....	97
Plate 2.....	42	Plate 17.....	69	Plate 32.....	99
Plate 3.....	43	Plate 18.....	71	Plate 33.....	101
Plate 4.....	43	Plate 19.....	73	Plate 34.....	103
Plate 5.....	45	Plate 20.....	75	Plate 35.....	105
Plate 6.....	47	Plate 21.....	78	Plate 36.....	107
Plate 7.....	49	Plate 22.....	79	Plate 37.....	109
Plate 8.....	51	Plate 23.....	81	Plate 38.....	111
Plate 9.....	53	Plate 24.....	83	Plate 39.....	113
Plate 10.....	55	Plate 25.....	85	Plate 40.....	115
Plate 11.....	57	Plate 26.....	87	Plate 41.....	117
Plate 12.....	59	Plate 27.....	89	Plate 42.....	119
Plate 13.....	61	Plate 28.....	91	Plate 43.....	121
Plate 14.....	63	Plate 29.....	93		
Plate 15.....	65	Plate 30.....	95		

# INDEX

*Acquiring the Sword. See Stringer*

## *Arm*

- fully extended*, 19
- left arm position when striking*, 18
- position when in guard*, 18
- right arm position when striking*, 18
- tucked in*, 19

## *Beat*

- counter to*, 122
- example of use*, 66, 72, 74, 92
- method*, 39

## *Body*

- position when in guard*, 16
- position when striking*, 16

## *Cape*

- sword and cape method*, 106

*Circling. See Movement*

## *Cut, 40*

- falso*, 40
- falso dritto*, 40
- falso manco*, 40
- mandritto*, 39
  - example of use*, 48, 106
- mandritto and reverso technique*, 40
- mandritto fendente*, 40
  - example of use*, 50, 112

*mandritto montante*, 40

*mandritto ordinary*, 40

*mandritto tondo*, 40

*mezzo mandritto*, 40

*example of use*, 54

*ridoppio*, 40

*reverso*

*example of use*, 50, 54, 58, 66, 72, 84, 86

*stramazzone*, 40

*example of use*, 50, 90, 110, 116

*terms of the cut*, 122

## *Dagger, 28*

*Debole. See sword*

## *Disarming*

*method and example*, 82

## *Disengage, 39*

*advice*, 32

*and striking*

*example of use*, 60

*counter-disengage*, 39

*method*, 25, 46

*vanity of the*, 13

*when to disengage*, 25

*False edge. See sword*

## *Feint, 37*

*counter-feint*, 37

*covering the sword*, 37

*vanity of the*, 13, 32

*Forte. See sword*

*Gain the Sword. See Stringer*

## *Guard, 35*

- changing guards*, 23, 37
- counterguard*, 36
- face guard*, 122
- head guard*, 106
- narrow guard*, 118
- of the left foot*, 38
- prima*, 35, 42
- quarta*, 35, 42
- quinta*, 42
- seconda*, 35, 42
- sesta*, 42
- terza*, 35, 42
- the most secure*, 32
- wide guard*, 118

## *Head, 14*

- placement when in guard*, 14
- position when striking*, 14

## *Inquartata*

- example of use*, 52, 70
- shortcomings*, 21

## *Leg*

# INDEX

- attacking the leg*, 50
- position when in guard*, 20
- position when striking*, 20
- Lunge**
  - illustration of*, 44
- Measure, 9**
  - attacking the legs*, 50
  - first, second, and third wide measures*, 10
  - fixed foot narrow measure*, 10
  - narrow measure*, 9, 36
  - wide measure*, 10, 36
- Movement**
  - circling*, 37
  - retreats*, 21
  - stepping sideways*, 21
  - walking*, 33
- Oblique Line**, 46
- Pace, 20**
  - extraordinary pace*, 20
  - half pace*, 20
  - just pace*, 20
  - narrow pace*, 20
- Parry**
  - advice*, 31
  - method*, 37
  - while striking*, 26
- with cape*
  - example of use*, 106, 108
- with dagger*, 31
  - example of use*, 78, 84, 90, 92
- Passata**
  - example of use*, 52, 58, 60, 62, 70, 72, 74, 96, 100, 102
  - shortcomings*, 21
- Retiring**
  - after lunge*, 34
- Rotella**
  - example of use*, 118, 120
  - method of holding*, 118
  - versus rotella*, 118, 120
- Scannatura**, 60, 62
- Seeking Measure**
  - method*, 24
- Straight Line**, 38
  - and the most secure guard*, 32
- Striking, 26, 39**
  - according to the point*, 46
  - and parrying*, 26
  - and tempo*, 36
  - body position*, 16
  - cut versus thrust*, 26
  - dominating the sword*, 39
  - from the inside*, 26
  - from the outside*, 26
  - head position*, 14
  - in contra tempo*, 33
  - left arm position*, 18
  - leg position*, 20
  - retiring after lunge*, 34
  - right arm position*, 18
  - sword placement*, 25
  - the adversary's hand*, 33
  - under the enemy's sword*
    - example of use*, 56, 62
- Striking according to the point. See Striking**
- Stringer, 32, 38**
  - method*, 46, 64
  - sword position*, 25
- Sword, 7**
  - debole*, 8
  - dominating the*, 39
  - false edge*, 8
  - forte*, 8
  - position in general*, 19
  - position in guard*, 22, 32
  - position relative to forearm*, 18
  - true edge*, 8
  - way of laying hand on the*, 41

## INDEX

### *Tempo*, 11, 36

*and striking*, 36

*contra tempo*, 36

*example of use*, 56, 62

*striking in*, 33

*dui tempi*, 36

*mezzo tempo*, 11, 31, 36

*primo tempo*, 36

*tempo and a half*, 12

### *The Guard*, 22

*arms*, 18

*body*, 16

*head placement*, 14

*illustration of*, 44

*legs*, 20

*prima, seconda, and quarta*, 22

*terza*, 22

*virtues of*, 23

### *The Oblique Line*, 15

### *The Straight Line*, 15

### *Thrust*, 40

*imbroccata*

*example of use*, 48

*punta riversa*, 40

*example of use*, 82

*stoccata*, 40

*example of use*, 52, 62, 70, 74, 104

### *True edge. See sword*

### *Void*

*advice*, 31

*example of use*, 58

*of the body*

*example of use*, 70, 72

*of the right foot*

*example of use*, 68

*shortcomings*, 21

### *Walking*

*with weapons in hand*, 33

