

# La Bandiera (1638)

By Francesco Ferdinando Alfieri  
A treatise on the art of the flag

Translated by Piermarco Terminiello and Caroline Stewart



## The Accademia Delia

Francesco Ferdinando Alfieri was the Master of Arms of the Accademia Delia in his native Padua, most likely from 1632 until some point in the mid 1650s.<sup>1</sup>

While not the first military academy in the Italian peninsula,<sup>2</sup> it is recorded as the first state academy, with generous support from the city's coffers. The academy appointed Masters in only three disciplines: fencing, equitation, and mathematics, famously turning down Galileo Galilei for the position of professor of mathematics in 1610.

Founded in 1608, the Accademia Delia served as an elite finishing school for the sons of Paduan nobility, a military academy for future cavalry officers, continuing in this form until 1801. The academy's statutes provided for a maximum of sixty students, but in practice there were often fewer. 1632, the year Alfieri began his tenure, bore witness to a difficult period in Padua. In 1631 the city had suffered a terrible epidemic, bringing its population from 30,000 to a mere 13,000, with many of the academy's students losing their lives.

Nevertheless the academy occupied a position of considerable prestige in Paduan society, and in the entire Veneto region. For example on 18 April 1638, in the year Alfieri published *La Bandiera*, the academy hosted an extravagant festival, with contests and displays of fencing and jousting. This was watched by thousands of spectators, and concluded with a mass in the church of Santa Giustina, with a musical score composed for the occasion by Claudio Monteverdi.

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1 The biographical information, and the details on the Accademia Delia in this section are summarised from:

Del Negro, Piero. *L'Accademia Delia e gli esercizi cavallereschi della nobiltà padovana nel Seicento e Settecento in Il gioco e la guerra nel secondo millennio*. Edited by Piero Del Negro and Gherardo Ortalli. Treviso: Fondazione Benetton Studi Ricerche, 2008.

And from:

Martuscelli, Umberto. *Uomini e cavalli nelle venezie*. Milan: GEA, 1988. pp.20-36.

2 In fact the Accademia Delia was the fourth military academy founded in Padua alone, after three previous short-lived attempts. The first Italian military academy is recorded as that of Treviso, founded in 1518.

## Biographical Notes

Alfieri was the third Master of Arms at the Accademia Delia, after his fellow Paudans Bartolomeo Tagliaferro and Gaspare Magnanino, Alfieri's long tenure attests to his popularity and success.

Alfieri's publications consist of: *La Bandiera* (translated below) published in 1638; *La Scherma*, published in 1640 on the art of fencing (reprinted in Ancona in 1645); *La Picca*, the pike, published in 1641 bound together with a reprint of *La Bandiera*; and finally *L'Arte di ben maneggiare la spada* in 1653, consisting of a reprint of *La Scherma* together with a treatise on combat with the two-handed spadone (reprinted in 1683).<sup>3</sup>

Alfieri appears well-read in the literature of fencing, citing: Marozzo, Falloppia, Viggiani, Fabris and Capoferro by name in his treatise on fencing. In addition, although the structure of their respective treatises is very different, more than once Alfieri reprises specific themes discussed by Gaiani, suggesting Alfieri was also familiar with this author.<sup>4</sup>

Despite his name (Alfieri translates as “Ensign”), Alfieri does not seem to have had direct military experience.<sup>5</sup> However in *La Scherma*, Alfieri describes his “many years of experience with both sharp and blunted swords”,<sup>6</sup> implying his participation in duels, not only training with practice swords.

Alfieri's treatises are cited positively by later masters. Marcelli for example, often critical of earlier masters, instead takes a generally favourable view of Alfieri;<sup>7</sup> while *L'Arte di ben maneggiare la spada* includes a poem by the Paduan intellectual Antonio Monterosso which lavishes praise on Alfieri as “writer and warrior... in the lists and public academies, unmatched, an exceptional fencer, Alpha and Omega”.

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3 Alfieri, Francesco Ferdinando. *La Bandiera*. Padua, 1638; Alfieri, Francesco Ferdinando. *La Scherma*. Padua, 1640; Alfieri, Francesco Ferdinando. *La Picca*. Padua, 1641; Alfieri, Francesco Ferdinando. *L'Arte di ben maneggiare la spada*. Padua, 1653.

4 See: Capoferro, Ridolfo. *Gran simulacro dell'arte e dell'uso della scherma*. Siena, 1610; Fabris, Salvator. *Scienza e pratica d'arme*. Copenhagen, 1606; Falloppia, Alfonso. *Nuovo et brieve modo di schermire*. Bergamo, 1584. Gaiani, Giovan' Battista. *Arte di maneggiar la spada a piedi et a cavallo*. Loano, 1619. Marozzo, Achille. *Opera nova*. Modena, 1531; Viggiani, Angelo. *Lo schermo*. Venice, 1575.

5 For example in the introduction to Alfieri's treatise on the flag, below, he comments: “such a treatise would belong to a captain rather than to me”.

6 Alfieri, Francesco Ferdinando. *La Scherma*. Padua, 1640. Part I Chapter IX.

7 Marcelli, Francesco Antonio. *Regole della scherma*. Rome, 1686.

## La Bandiera

The first of Alfieri's publications, *La Bandiera* presents a largely performative art, but one intimately tied to war. Alfieri includes brief instructions on self-defence with the flag, and several plays present obvious parallels with fencing actions. Alfieri employs fencing terminology throughout and states "There is no guard or blow in fencing that cannot be adapted to the art of the flag".<sup>8</sup>

Alfieri further recommends manipulating a heavy flag-pole as a conditioning exercise for fencing:

*To be secure with the blows which you learn in this art it is essential to build dexterity and agility, as indicated above, through training. To achieve this it is of great benefit to get used to handling poles or other heavy objects to strengthen the wrist and make the sword feel light in the hand.*<sup>9</sup>

In the context of a military academy in seventeenth-century Italy, there would have been nothing incongruous about the ludic aspects of Alfieri's *La Bandiera*, and he seamlessly switches from discussing the use of the flag in play to delight a crowd, to its use in war or self-defence.

Alfieri's dedication provides yet further insight. Dedicated to Lodovico Vidman, Alfieri indicates not only that Lodovico was his patron, and had been his student, but that Lodovico had from time to time enjoyed the play of the flag as a pastime under Alfieri's tutelage. While speculative, this may also explain why Alfieri elected to publish his treatise on the flag ahead of his other works.

Born in 1611, Lodovico was still a relatively young man when *La Bandiera* was published, and with Alfieri's time at the Accademia Delia likely starting in 1632, it seems probable Lodovico frequented the academy near the beginning of Alfieri's tenure, although it is possible he had been a private student.

The Vidman (or Widmann) family were an extremely wealthy merchant family, originally from Carinthia in present-day Austria, but settled in Venice. Generous patrons of the arts, in the course of the first half of the seventeenth century they were ennobled first by the Holy Roman Emperor, then by the Venetian Senate.



Lodovico Widmann, by Tiberio Tinelli, probably 1637

Interestingly, while Alfieri dedicates his *La Bandiera* (1638) and *La Picca* (1641) to Lodovico Vidman, he dedicates *La Scherma* (1640) to the students of the Accademia Delia in general, and *L'Arte di ben maneggiare la spada* (1653) to Lodovico's brother, Martino.

For students of historical fencing *La Bandiera* provides a useful insight into the mindset, and arguably the pedagogy of a significant master, and beyond its pure historical value it serves as a testament to the interests and concerns of masters, students, noblemen and soldiers of its day.

<sup>8</sup> See Chapter XVIII below.

<sup>9</sup> Alfieri, Francesco Ferdinando. *La Scherma*. Padua, 1640. Part I Chapter IV.



# THE FLAG

By Francesco Ferdinando Alfieri  
Master of Arms at the Illustrious Academy Delia of Padua

*In which it is demonstrated by way of figures an easy and new method, its handling, and its use with  
the defence of the sword.*

Dedicated to the Most Illustrious Sir, Sir

## LODOVICO DI VIDMAN

Free Baron of San Paterniano, and Sommeregg, etc.

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In Padua, printed by Sebastiano Sardi. MDCXXXIIX.

With Permission from the Authorities

TO THE MOST ILLUSTRIOUS SIR  
MOST EXCELLENT AND HONOURABLE SIR AND PATRON  
LODOVICO CONTE  
DI VIDMAN

The benevolences I receive from Your Excellency daily are so frequent, and so generous, that considering what gratitude could be expected from my feeble, but above all devoted, service, I conceived to illustrate my obligations succinctly in these sheets of paper.

Here, Your Excellency, is the fruit of my labours, dedicated in every respect to your generous name; such that under your protection it might acquire the esteem, that the little acumen of the author would be unable to grant it.

You will see, Your Most Illustrious Excellency, the art that you deigned to learn, honouring my discipline. I have effortlessly persuaded myself that it would not displease you, to see printed this pastime which you occasionally enjoyed to practice. Nonetheless I am aware of the scarce value of my gift, but your magnanimous brilliance has emboldened me.

My soul is overflowing with obeisant reverence, and Your Most Illustrious Excellency of benignity, to you I most humbly bow.

In Padua the 6<sup>th</sup> day of September M.DC.XXXIIX.

Your Most Illustrious Excellency

Your Most Humble and Most Obligated Servant

Francesco Ferdinando Alfieri.



## To the reader

Reader I present to you my flag. If it is not handled according to your spirit, blame the fact that the task was beyond my abilities.

The condition of this century brings such liberty, that everybody burdens the printing presses, and I too have allowed myself to be taken by this custom.

I am sure you will tell me I have not dusted off many bookshelves, and I will reply that my books have been experience and practice, which I leave you the image thereof. That which I have in my mind to show you, if it does not seem completely new to you, neither is it trivial.

Every master of arms professes some knowledge of it, few have written treatises and nobody up until now has condensed this art into the form that you see.

I desire nothing more than to please you, and to benefit you. If I achieve this goal, and you also learn that which you seek, I nonetheless seek your pardon; and perhaps in short I will bring out a new treatise on all aspects of fencing, which will please you even more.

Finally it is just to admit that he who labours for others is always worthy of being commended.

# THE FLAG

By Francesco Ferdinando  
Alfieri

From what I have been able to learn, from those few books that have come to my hands, from the discourses of great men, and from a long and uncommon experience, there is nothing in my judgement either more honourable or more necessary to a person of noble birth, than keeping their youth engaged in the practices that are useful to, and which help and adorn, the virtues of the soul.

The antique and famous republics which will always serve as examples, and as stimuli to set on the path towards civic happiness, also prized virtue, skill, and agility, reputing as blessed those who were solemnly considered stronger and faster than others.<sup>10</sup>

They were seen in the piazzas competing, some at wrestling, some launching the pole, they challenged themselves in races, they battered one another with the cestus, and at times by hurling discs or balls of wood, they put on show the gifts they had received from nature, enhanced through their art.

These exercises were common into the early centuries of the Italic nation, and if they are never expressed with the pomp in which the inhabitants of the Peloponnese and Phrygia excelled, they have nonetheless been largely conserved up to the present age, as you can see every day principally in Tuscany, while other arts that were not practised in antiquity have been discovered.

The practice of the flag will always be among the most commended, since it readies the foot, it renders the waist pliable; the hand becomes strong, the arm flexible. If we look to its origins, and to who was the first to unfurl it in an army we find in the holy scriptures that it was the great captain Moses,<sup>11</sup> he was followed first of all by the Assyrians, then the Egyptians followed the same example both with representations of bulls and other animals they held in veneration, and with numerous hieroglyphics alluding to victory, the pretexts and reasons for war, and to the strength and valour of their soldiers. Finally there is no people so barbaric, that it does not see its armies ordered and distinct under a particular standard.

If we then turn to consider how useful and of what consequence it is in the management of war, although such a treatise would belong to a captain rather than to me, even I am clearly aware that the fortune and glory of war depends in large part on the flag, and that in truth via this instrument military discipline forms troops and centuriae, permits them to understand and execute commands, maintains them in order, and allows the parts of the army needed for victory to be deployed quickly and without confusion.

Efforts should not be directed elsewhere, other than to seize flag. If it is lost it seems you must no longer fear resistance, there remains a confused and armed multitude without a guide, oppressed more by disorder than by iron. Thus we see that standards are the real trophies which render a warrior's valour immortal, and they are suspended in perpetual remembrance not only in private

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<sup>10</sup> This passage is later self-plagiarised by Alfieri in the introduction to his treatise on the spadone of 1653.

<sup>11</sup> Although taken somewhat out of context, Alfieri appears to be referring to Numbers 21:8:

“And the LORD said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole” (King James Bible).

homes but also in public buildings and churches. Therefore the subject of the art I have chosen to demonstrate is itself a worthy one and perhaps inferior to no other.

Some might wish to object, stating that the flag is employed in war, but not its art, to these I would reply with a question: is the ensign needed to defend the flag? One who would deny this hints at having a rare talent, and of being a few eggs short of a dozen.<sup>12</sup>

If this is undeniable then, who is better able to defend the flag than one who knows how to handle it perfectly? Why is the pole armed if not intended to injure? To know how to wound it is necessary to practice the art, otherwise the flag serves only to entangle and envelop the hands, while it is horribly lost, holding it up being in vain. This does not occur in the hands of someone experienced, who when reduced to such extremes will have a ready solution appropriate to the situation. Emboldened by virtue one such as this will either rescue the flag from the enemy or will pursue it through vendetta.

Therefore for those who understand this virtue, without need for further exposition, it will be a simple task to arrive at the mastery desired, observing the following figures which make clear the particulars that are difficult to express with words alone.

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12 Here Alfieri employs a practically untranslatable idiom “*tenero di sale*”, which refers to a dish lacking in salt but also ironically to a foolish, naïve or credulous person. The translator has replaced this with an approximately equivalent English idiom.

## How the ensign or other person should present themselves with the standard

### Chapter I

Wishing to proceed in an appropriate order, to arrive at a perfect understanding of this art, we must begin with its principles, since all of its perfections derive from these.

In truth I confess that skill, strength and gracefulness are gifts dispensed by nature. Nonetheless with exercise and good discipline they can be acquired and developed. Therefore the movement of the ensign, or other person who wishes to handle the standard for pleasure, should be free, smooth, but also ordered and martial. You should take it with your right hand, as more noble, and passing it to your left you should gather the edges, and grasp them together with the haft, which resting on the arm, situates the flag at the breast as the figure shows. In this manner, without having to change hands and take two tempi, you can quickly unsheath the sword, and employ it as the occasion demands.





## On hoisting the standard

### Chapter II

To hoist the standard you take it with your right, lifting it so it unfolds, and assuming that the wind and location allow it, you find yourself in the posture seen in the picture. With your right foot, pole hand, and your waist gracefully in unison, you may salute the spectators before commencing your play, noting that for an army passing before a prince, general or other great personage it is an act of reverence to lower it to the ground waving it with a *riverso*.<sup>13</sup>



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13 Note the use of fencing terminology to describe actions with the flag, which continues throughout the treatise.

## On the first method of beginning to handle the standard

### Chapter III

This is the first lesson, in which we begin to walk. To attain the honour that is desired, the body should be somewhat bent and braced to take its force. The arm should be extended, strong and raised above the head. Passing with an ample but natural step, at the same time you will judiciously catch the wind with a *mandritto*, which unfurls and does not entangle the standard.

This is followed by a *riverso* on the second pass, continuing in this manner as desired. You can also change hands, and the greatest skill is to throw the flag and take it in the air, which by its nature changes hands.



## On thrusting with the standard

### Chapter IV

All the lessons are arranged so that one is linked to the next. Here we learn how to deliver a thrust with the standard. This serves not only to demonstrate the skill and ability of the player, but could also be necessary to employ in war.

The arm should be stretched out, and having flourished a circular *mandritto* with your right hand over your head, you should quickly push the flag forwards without wasting time, thrusting in *quarta*. After you should turn your arm and hand into *seconda*, and in unison with your left foot extend the blow, always taking into account the wind, and correct footing, to avoid misadventures, which detract from the merit of what you wish to accomplish.

The same exercise can be done with the left hand which is all the more commendable, as by nature this member is usually weaker and less practised.



## How to handle the flag with the hand reversed

### Chapter V

This lesson is difficult but beautiful, and truly novel. You grip the shaft with the hand reversed, as it appears in the figure opposite, the arm must be somewhat gathered to help the wrist, which is encumbered by the weight. By taking smaller steps, with the movement of the hand rising from one flank to the other, the undulating volume of the flag is made to wave from one side to the other without confusion, while you interpose two or three passes under the leg or circle it behind the lower back, changing hands, however you prefer.



## On passing the flag under the legs

### Chapter VI

With the standard in motion, and wishing to perform the current lesson, the flag is launched into the air and caught with the hand reversed. Then with the arm turned and the body bent it is passed under the left leg towards the right. In the same motion it is then passed behind the lower back and taken with the left hand, and passed again under the right leg to the left. This can be repeated with either hand as your skill and vigour dictates.





## On launching the standard

### Chapter VII

I know very well that the unusual always delights, and for this reason I have applied myself to collect and create the lessons you now see. To narrate this figure, you wave a circular flourish with a *mandritto*, then throw the flag in the air, retrieving it with your other hand. This same play is continued, always keeping your arm in time with your foot, skilfully catching the wind. Other passes can be interposed, under the leg or other variations, serving to embellish the lessons and demonstrate the bravura of the practitioner.



## How to perform a *molinello*

### Chapter VIII

The *molinello* is delightful. To perform it comfortably, you should have the standard in your right hand. You complete a full turn above the head, then throw it up in the air, catching it around the middle of the standard as the figure shows. The *molinello* is then turned towards the rear foot. After several rotations, as your the hand becomes fatigued, you should grip the butt of the flag with your other hand and repeat the same lesson, again throwing it in the air as described above.





## How to manage the standard behind your lower back

### Chapter IX

This figure presents a wonderful innovation in this art. In order that everybody may understand it, I will briefly describe it. The flag should start in your right hand. Having performed a full flourish above your head, it is pulled backwards and with a reverse turn it is carried behind your back on the left side, where it can be fluttered several times, as desired, with your left hand.

This can be performed while walking, or standing without walking. However it is always necessary to watch the length of your stride, and the wind, since it is dangerous to err while both hands are occupied, and you cannot view the motion of the flag, because in order to display your mastery we advise not to stare at it. Everyone can perform this same lesson with the left hand, loosening the arm and bringing it into presence, observing the order prescribed above.



## On waving the flag behind your back

### Chapter X

In this figure the arm is kept extended, and very prominent, and after turning it behind your back, the standard is played from one side to the other, stepping proportionately so it does not get entangled. After a few waves you can repeat with your left hand, which I will omit to avoid being bothersome by lengthening my discourse.



## On how the standard is passed under the legs

### Chapter XI

Having completed several steps, with both *mandritti* and *riversi*, you should raise the flag as required, adjusting for the ripples which form in various places, and finally bend your waist in the manner depicted. Having circled it above your head, you should lower your arm, passing the standard under your right leg, and by taking it with your left hand, the lesson you have followed has been performed.



## On passing the standard around your neck

### Chapter XII

I propose passing the flag around your neck. For this innovation your arm should tend to be high and extended. Having completed a few waves, you should judge the tempo so that the flag rests on your right shoulder. By pushing it, while catching a little wind from the left, you should let go of the shaft, turning your waist to retake the flag in the middle of the shaft, as the image indicates, entering into *molinelli*, and after the usual waves this lesson can be repeated with your left hand.



## How to throw the standard while walking, changing hands

### Chapter XIII

I hope to avoid being tedious by repeating the same things, or to become unclear by neglecting them. The standard is always in motion once the lessons begin, and the principal motions are the *mandritti* and *riversi*, which form the waves of the flag and are performed above your head. I am therefore forced to repeat this for the figure presented here, as we must connect them to what I wish to describe.

Having circled with a *riverso* you should throw the flag high, and taking it with your left hand you should perform the same towards your right side. This can be repeated many times from one side to the other before beginning a new play, the entertainment and delight that lovers of this exercise feel deriving from its novelty. This assumes as always that the timing, step, and wind are duly observed, without which every effort loses merit and earns nothing but reproach.





## On handling the standard under your legs

### Chapter XIV

Having performed the rotations above, and with the standard in your left hand, it should be lowered, and by circling a *mandritto* it should be carried and helped along under your leg, forming waves as shown by the figure. Having retrieved it either on the side it was put in on, or from under your left leg, you should change hands, with equal mastery executing again what has been described.



On thrusts with the standard in the form of a cross

## Chapter XV

The flag should be kept hoisted, and having circled a *riverso* in the usual way above your head, you should perform a thrust to your left side accompanied by your foot. Turning the flag towards your right side, you should then perform a thrust with the same mastery. The cross is completed by another two attacks. Your front foot should always be followed by your rear foot, and although everything is in itself quite straightforward, it is nonetheless difficult to put into practice without a maestro.





## On throwing the flag high behind your back

### Chapter XVI

This lesson is difficult and requires the usual waves as a prelude. After these, it is performed with a *riverso*, passing the flag behind your back and raising it, although it rests on your lower back, throwing it high in the air with the force of your hand and in particular with your index finger. It is made to pass over your left shoulder, where it is grabbed by your left hand, before the play is repeated. Once completed the flag returns to your the right hand, although it is also possible to recover the pole without passing it from one hand into the other.



On passing the standard under the legs starting from the right

## Chapter XVII

To perform the lesson shown here, having finished to circle a *riverso*, you should turn a *mandritto* while bending your body and lowering the standard, bringing it under both your legs starting from the right. All of this is performed in just one tempo, and what can be performed with one hand can always be performed with the other.



## On *montanti*<sup>14</sup> with the right hand

### Chapter XVIII

We have arrived at the manner of forming *montanti*. There is no guard or blow in fencing that cannot be adapted to the art of the flag.

To perform what I wish to teach with this figure, the flag starts in your right hand, in motion above your head. Having finished to circle, the *montanti* begin first from your left side, and then from your right, redoubling them as you desire. You can also swap hands and repeat the same lesson, as we have described many many times in the other chapters.



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14 *Montanti* (singular *montante*) in fencing terminology refers to rising blows.

## On throwing and recovering the standard with the same hand

### Chapter XIX

In the handling of the flag it seems that dexterity and agility matter more than strength, but at times these attributes must be equal to one another and are of utmost importance. The truth of this is manifestly demonstrated by this figure. After several steps and flourishes of the flag you should firmly plant your feet, then turn a *mandritto* over your head and extend a half-thrust, launching the standard into the air with all the force of your lower back and your hand so that it rotates a turn and a half and drops as illustrated by the figure, retrieving it with the same hand. You then return to normal play, which is the usual prelude to a new lesson.



## On the standard with the hand reversed

### Chapter XX

Having performed the last flourish to enter into this lesson, the standard is thrown into the air and gathered with the hand reversed. Your arm should be extended, and the tip of the staff must be pointed towards the ground. With judicious use of timing, and the wind, you will be able to perform waves, flourishes, passes under the leg, turns of the flag behind your lower back, and all that you have been able to learn from the faithfulness and merit of your maestro.





## On gathering the standard

### Chapter XXI

All the things that bring us delight, if they pass beyond a certain point, become bothersome. The end is the completion of the work undertaken. Having therefore to gather the standard, you should hold it with your right hand over your shoulder, and catching a bit of wind, the edge should be grasped with your left hand. Thereby holding it in the posture shown you may end your labours with high praise.



## On putting your hand to the sword

### Chapter XXII

The sword is a weapon that is used in various ways, the effeminate use it to ornament their perfumed finery, and to strong men it is minister of wrath, in defence of duty. But refraining from speaking too long on the subject, I will continue with as much as I propose to say on this topic for now.

Wishing therefore to unsheath your sword, if the flag is in your right hand, you can throw it in the air and catch it with your left, or without this action you can pass it naturally into the other hand.

Raising the flag so that you have more room at your flank, the sword can be drawn as clearly demonstrated by the figure. Putting yourself in a firm stance, all that remains is to show yourself as experienced in this noble practice. If you wish to change hands, the sword should be placed under your arm, and having grasped the standard, your left will be armed, and you can perform whichever passages or lessons of the art you have learned.





## On walking with sword and flag

### Chapter XXIII

The first admonishment we must give to explain this figure, is that the sword and the flag must be held firmly and solidly. You are free to play according to your inclination, and the hand can be changed in one tempo by throwing the standard forwards into the air, grabbing the sword as it falls. This can be performed several times, because it is a beautiful lesson, and truly worthy of being observed.



On managing the standard with your right, while your left is armed

## Chapter XXIV

It is a fixed rule that the standard should never be idle. While your left hand holds the sword your right nevertheless remains free, but when it is somehow hindered, as I have said elsewhere, it is all the more praiseworthy. Performing this lesson with your hand behind your back, your left hand should be raised as per the figure, and with the usual waves of the flag, you can loosen your arm and enter into another lesson, changing hands, catching the wind and taking the tempo as required.



## On sheathing your sword

### Chapter XXV

The present figure speaks for itself. To return your sword you should gather up the standard, holding it very firmly with your left so it does not touch the ground. This is performed after the lesson we proposed above. You can also raise the flag with the same hand while leaving it unfurled.



## On unsheathing the sword for defence

### Chapter XXVI

Dangers arise when you least expect them, bravery allows us to fight, but victory depends on skill, to defend yourself in incidents both in war and peace. First you should quickly gather the standard, drawing your sword over your left arm, and turning the shaft towards your enemy, you should set yourself into a strong guard to resist against any offensive.



## On the guard of sword and flag

### Chapter XXVII

Defending yourself is so natural that the law still allows it against those who attack us in vendetta. If the ensign or other person is placed in this situation he should quickly gather and set the standard so that it does not block his view, but rather protects with its sheer volume.

The arm should be somewhat bent, with the hand held in *terza*, keeping his body in profile so it is better covered and presents a smaller target. The body should be balanced over his left leg, the nearby right foot remaining free and unencumbered, thereby able to press his enemy. He should set his stride, not too forced, and move to gain ground, the sword denying tempo and measure by anticipating his enemy's actions. The response should be faster than the call. Cuts should be parried from *tutta coperta*<sup>15</sup> or defended with voids of the body, while wounding with the point. If the enemy waits then he should be pressured, put into obedience and deceived; teaching the enemy, the threatener of life, that he is not worthy of the pleasure of living.



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<sup>15</sup> Literally “totally covered”, this describes a guard or posture in which your opponent has no direct line of attack, as demonstrated for example in chapters XXV and XXXIV of Alfieri's 1640 treatise on rapier fencing.



## On gathering the flag

### Chapter XXVIII

Having finished the lessons the flag is gathered and carried in your left hand, keeping the edges wrapped over, with your arm supporting the shaft.

These plates, made by a good engraver, if they are followed by whomever delights in such exercises, will credit my work, and have often relieved me of toil.<sup>16</sup>



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<sup>16</sup> Note that this final plate is simply reused from chapter I.



## Conclusion

I have arrived at the end of what I proposed. I confess my shortcomings, but nonetheless I will serve as a stimulus to others who understand more, to discover what I have not known, and demonstrate it in a style beyond the capacity of my intellect.

In this apathetic century it is difficult to please. Those who look at my soul will see what it yearns for. Meanwhile I console myself that a wise man is always understated.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Again this passage is later self-plagiarised in the conclusion to Alfieri's 1653 treatise on the spadone.

FOR PRINTING IN PADUA.

Brother Antonius Lendenaria, Inquisitor General of Padua, seen and approved.

On the 6<sup>th</sup> September 1638.

Commissioner General of the Holy Office of Venice, seen and approved.

*Brother Fulgentio de Servi.*

On the 21<sup>st</sup> day of October 1638.

Registered with the Most Excellent Magistrature against Blasphemy on page 125.

*Angelo Battisti.*

{Battisti Nani, Magistrate.

{Gierolimo Trivisan, Magistrate.

{Pietro Foscarini, Magistrate.

*Alvise Querini Secretary.*