

Art of Fencing Foil and Sabre

by
Juan Nicolás Perinat

Translation by Tim Rivera

Note: This book was printed in 1758, and the original manuscript from the previous year contained many differences in technical terms from the printed edition. The original Spanish terminology of both is listed in footnotes at the term's first appearance. Drawings have not been recreated.

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ART OF FENCING WITH FOIL AND SABRE

By the safest, easiest, and most intelligible principles.

BY DON JUAN NICOLÁS PERINAT

Master of Fencing in the Royal Academy of Marine Officers.

First work touching this art.

In the year 1758.

Censure of Don Joseph Diaz Infante, Lieutenant of the Navy of the Royal Armada, Master by His Majesty of Artillery in the Royal Academy of Marine Officers, and Erudite Member of the Royal Society of the City of Seville, etc.

By commission of Don Joseph Xavier de Solórzano, of His Majesty's counsel, Honorary Minister of the Royal Audience of Seville, Mayor of this city of Cadiz, Deputy Judge of Printing and Bookshops of it; I have registered a notebook that Don Juan Nicolás Perinát, Master of Fencing of the Company of Marine Officers, has composed with the title of Art of Fencing with Foil and Sabre, in whose work comprehending much care and work that has been made on the part of the author, in order to manifest in figures and explanations his notable skill in this profession. The use of the smallsword or foil being already introduced in all the nobility, I have been persuaded that the rules that it prescribes will not only be appreciated by the Marine officers, but very useful for all that want to learn the use of such a common weapon. For this reason, as well as because nothing in it is opposed to our Holy Faith and good customs, nor to the Pragmatics and Royalties of His Majesty, I am of the opinion that he can be given the license that he seeks for printing, hail, etc. Cadiz, 13 of November, 1757.

Don Joseph Infante.

Don Joseph Xavier de Solorzano, of His Majesty's counsel, Honorary Minister of the Royal Audience of Seville, Lieutenant Governor and Mayor of Cadiz, Deputy Judge of Printing and Bookshops in it and its Bishopric, etc.

I give license to be printed for a notebook entitled Art of Fencing with Foil and Sabre, it's author Juan Nicolás Perinát, Master of Fencing of the Royal Academy of Marine Officers, due to it not containing anything that opposes our Holy Faith or Royal Laws and Pragmatics of His Majesty, which by my commission Don Joseph Diaz Infante, Master by His Majesty of Artillery in the same Royal Academy, Erudite Member of the Royal Society of Seville, has given, with such that in each exemplar of those that are printed is comprehended said censure and this license. Given in the City of Cadiz on the fourteenth of November, in the year seventeen-hundred fifty-seven.

With Joseph Xavier de Solorzano.

By mandate of his Lordship.

Francisco Pacheco y Guzmán.

LICENSE OF THE SENIOR PROVVISOR.

Cadiz, November 19, 1757.

Since this volume was examined by the Very Reverend Father Master Francisco Serrano of our order, Rector of the College of the Company of Jesus of this city, nothing is opposed for the printing that is solicited, we give our license so that it is executed.

Dr. Ortega

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SABRE TREATISE

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PROLOGUE

The art of fencing, that I demonstrate in this work, is one of the most essential parts of the military, whose object is the defense of our Holy Faith, the king and queen, and the state, and the glory of defeating their enemies. Because of this, in the most political governments special care is always taken that the youth destined for arms are instructed early in the art of fencing, to the end of acquiring agility, skill, boldness, and fearlessness.

In order to be able to perfect this art with more ease, it has been divided into two parts. The first, that one sees only in the play of the smallsword, pertains properly to the officers of war. The second, that one sees in the handling of the sword or sabre, is more commonly for the soldier. These two branches have always been separate from each other, and each one has had its own masters, but as the Marine Officers are destined for work in which it is very useful to be able to use the sabre, and that some have asked me to teach them, I have happily consented to give them this instruction, notwithstanding the common worry of the academy masters, that they would lose some of their rights and prerogatives if they would teach the play of the sabre.

It is also true, that not all masters of the smallsword can teach the play of the sabre, and it is necessary to have found, as I have, the occasion of learning it. I confess, that in ten companies that I have done, in which I have encountered various sites and assaults, I would have perished had I not known how to parry a sabre.

In order to make this book more manual and less costly (which is the first brought to light in Spanish on the play of the foil), I have only placed in it the most necessary and subtle of the art. But if the public will receive it with benignity and manifest desire for a more extensive treatise, I will dedicate myself to giving one so complete that it won't leave any desire for more on the subject.

As it has not been possible to represent in plates all the postures of the art, nor give greater perfection to the drawing, I ask the reader to pay attention more to the explanation than the plates, taking care that in all the thrusts in Fourth and its parries, the body has to be found in the same posture, as well as in those in Third and its parries, and that all the innumerable thrusts and parries that the art encompasses are founded in these four principal points, without the more skillful master being able to alter anything.

METHOD OF BEING IN POSTURE OR IN GUARD

PLATE I

It is necessary to be in guard in the mode that is seen in the figures of the first plate, both feet on the same line, both legs bent, the left more than the right, the hip supported on the left side, both arms half extended, the left higher and arched, the head erect, looking at the enemy, the hand turned between fingernails up and fingernails down, or in the regular posture, and the thumb over the plane of the sword, presenting the point to the enemy.

2

METHOD OF GOING TOWARD AND AWAY FROM THE ENEMY

PLATE II

In order to go toward the enemy, it is necessary to lift the right foot and advance about one foot forward, the body back, as shown in figure 1. In order to move back, the opposite has to be done, passing the left foot back a distance of one foot, and the right following it an equal distance without dragging it, in order to avoid the danger of falling backward whenever there is uneven terrain, and always taking care to form your parries¹ well.

The second figure shows another method of going toward the enemy, passing the left foot ahead of the right.

Many use this method, but it is not the safest, and I will never advise it, except in the case that the enemy is very far.

3

METHOD OF SALUTING

PLATE III

It is necessary to stomp with the right foot, removing the hat with the left hand, extending both arms, the head erect, lifting the hand fingernails-up (figure 1), then passing the right foot slowly behind the left (figure 2), and finally take the left foot back and position yourself in guard.

¹ *quites* in the print edition, *paradas* in the manuscript

INVITING² IN FOURTH AND IN THIRDPLATE IV³

In order to invite in Fourth it is first necessary to be in Third, and with a lifting movement of the hilt, lower the point, passing it below the enemy's hilt, and supporting it in Fourth without forcing the sword, stomping with the right foot to discover his intent, and taking care not to enter inside. Figure 1 represents this invitation. For the intelligence of one that is in Fourth or Third, it will be advised that these two figures are in Fourth, and if the swords will pass to the other side, which will be called freeing,⁴ they will be in Third.

THRUST⁵ IN FOURTH, FINGERNAILS UP

PLATE V

In order to throw this thrust, the hand has to go first, and the body has to follow it falling from its weight, with the two feet in the same line, the knee vertical with the buckle of the shoe, the left leg well extended, without raising the left foot, the body lifted and somewhat inclined forward, the head outside the arm, the hand lifted fingernails up, the left hand held up somewhat, and the body well profiled (figure 1).

Then after having thrown it, it is necessary to return to guard and place the sword in Fourth or in counter-Fourth.

2 *citar* in the print edition, *acometer o atacar de pie firme* in the manuscript

3 The second figure differs between the manuscript and print editions.

4 *librar*

5 *estocada*

PARRY IN FOURTH, FINGERNAILS UP

PLATE VI

The preceding thrust should be parried with the strong and edge of the sword, and presenting the point to the enemy, the body back, and forcing his sword after having parried,⁶ so that in lifting, he cannot avoid the thrust over the parry, which has to be done with pure agility of the hand, lifting it in order to cover the face.

The second figure represents one who throws, and the first one who parries.

THRUST IN THIRD, FINGERNAILS DOWN

PLATE VII

In order to throw this thrust, the hand has to go first, turning fingernails down, the head to the inside of the arm, the body well profiled, the left hand a distance of four fingers from the left thigh, the left foot on the floor without lifting it, the leg well extended, the right knee vertical with the buckle of the shoe, and the two feet in the same line (figure 1).

After having thrown, it is necessary to return to guard.

PARRY IN THIRD, FINGERNAILS DOWN

PLATE VIII

The preceding thrust is parried with the strong and edge of the sword, turning the hand well fingernails down (figure 1).

6 In contrast, the manuscript reads “being careful not to force his sword after having parried”

THRUST IN SECOND, FINGERNAILS OUTSIDE BELOW THE SWORD

PLATE IX

In order to throw this thrust, the hand has to go first, turning it somewhat more than for Third, the right arm well extended, the head covered with the arm, looking upward, the body profiled, the left hand parallel to the thigh, the leg extended, the foot firm without lifting it, the right need vertical with the buckle of the shoe, and the two feet in the same line (figure 1).

After having thrown Second below the sword, it is necessary to lift, and in the case that the enemy parries and throws over the parry, parry with a semicircle in the mode that is explained in the following article.

10

THRUST IN FOURTH, FINGERNAILS UP, PARRIED WITH A SEMICIRCLE AND
OPPOSITION OF THE LEFT HAND*PLATE X*

The method of executing this parry well is lifting and inclining somewhat the right hand downward fingernails up, lowering the point a little, placing the left hand, and at that point parry and throw. This parry is the most useful, because it parries all the thrusts thrown inside and below the sword, but it is necessary to take care to throw at the point that the enemy's sword was met, without waiting so that it is lifted, and detain the sword well with the left hand, as figure 1 shows, and always return to guard, with the sword directed at the enemy.

11

PARRY IN FOURTH WITH A SEMICIRCLE

PLATE XI

The two figures of this plate represent a thrust in Second, parried with a semicircle.

If the enemy was close, it would be necessary then to bend the right arm, applying it to the side, place the hand well, to the end of meeting the strong of the opposing sword.

In order to assure this parry, it suits to pull back a little, and return to guard.

THRUST IN LOW FOURTH BELOW THE HILT

PLATE XII

This thrust must be thrown with the hand going first, somewhat deviated from the line, the head supported on the inside of the arm, the left hand parallel to the thigh, the left foot firm on the ground, the leg extended, and the right knee vertical with the buckle of the shot. After having thrown, it is necessary to return to guard, parrying in Third.

This technique is very dangerous; because of that I advise that it is used as little as possible.

PARRY IN EIGHTH AND IN FIFTH

PLATE XIII

The first figure represents the parry in Eighth, the second that in Fifth. The first is the best, as with it the low Fourth is parried, and if the opponent frees above the sword, the second parry of Fifth can be done, forming a small circle with the point, which is called a counter-parry.

After the parry in Fifth is formed, if the opponent frees, there is no recourse than the parry in First, which (as well as the Fifth) is very dangerous, because of which you should not relax the hilt; with respect to the parry in Fifth, it should never be used except with some that throw punching thrusts,⁷ which are thrown by those that are not versed in fencing, withdrawing the arm in order to wound with more force.

⁷ *estocadas de puño* in the print edition; this paragraph is not in the manuscript

FEINTS⁸ IN THIRD AND IN FOURTH*PLATES XIV AND XV*

The feint is a threat of a thrust. If the threat is made in Third, it is called Feint in Third, and if in Fourth, Feint in Fourth. If one feints in Third, it is necessary to free below the sword and throw in Fourth, and it is called a Simple Feint; in the same way, if one feints in Fourth, freeing below the sword, it is thrown in Third. There are also Double Feints that consist of consecutive threats to one side and the other, and returning to the first to throw there, always freeing below the sword.

Plate 14 represents a Feint in Third, and plate 15 a Feint in Fourth.

FEINTS IN SECOND

PLATE XVI

This feint requires that first the opponent's sword is somewhat forced in Third, so that it is seen necessary to lift the arm somewhat, and at the point the Second is feinted, the Third or Fourth is thrown above the sword.

If the opponent parries with Eighth or Fifth, a double feint is made, that is feinting in Third after having feinted in Second, and throw in Second.

8 *acometimientos* in the print edition, *fintas* in the manuscript

THRUST IN FOURTH AT THE LIFTING OF THE ENEMY'S FOOT

PLATE XVII

This technique is very useful, but so difficult that it is necessary to be accomplished in the art in order to execute it successfully. One has to begin by moving back and freeing in Fourth; if the opponent approaches freeing in Third, one has to respond when he lifts the foot and, taking advantage of this instant, free below the sword and throw in Fourth, always returning to guard.

17

THRUST IN THIRD AT THE LIFTING OF THE ENEMY'S FOOT

PLATE XVIII⁹

This technique is the same as the preceding, with the only difference being that which is done in Fourth is done in Third, and vice versa.

18

PARRY IN THIRD WITH A CIRCLE, AND THE METHOD OF FOOLING IT

PLATE XIX

This parry cannot be executed without first being well profiled with the hand somewhat low. At the time that the opponent throws in Fourth, free below the sword and parry in Third, which is called Parry with a Circle.

This parry is so natural that those that know to practice it can parry three or four thrusts at one time, which cannot be done with simple parries; it is even more useful at night than in the day, as in the day the sword is seen, and at night it is necessary to search for it. Finally, by means of this parry, one can take shelter from the encounters.

If the opponent uses this parry, it can be faked threatening in Fourth; as he will not stop going to the parry, and then freeing another time below the sword, one can throw it in Fourth, and if he parries, threaten in Fourth and throw in Third, in the mode shown in figure 2.

9 The second figure differs between the manuscript and print editions.

PARRY OF FOURTH WITH A CIRCLE, AND THE METHOD OF FOOLING IT

PLATE XX

This parry is the same as the preceding, with the only difference that what was Third there is Fourth here, and vice versa.

ROUNDED TECHNIQUE¹⁰ IN FOURTH

When the enemy is in Fourth, it is also common to free above his sword and feint in Third. The enemy does not stop seeking the sword, and in such case, turning to free below, one will throw in Fourth, which is called Rounded Technique in Fourth.

ROUNDED TECHNIQUE IN THIRD

This technique is the same as the preceding, except that what is in Fourth there is done in Third, and vice versa.

THRUST IN THIRD PARRIED WITH A CIRCLE

PLATE XXI

These two figures represent a thrust in Third parried with a circle, which disarms. Because of that, one should never throw in Third against one who parries with a circle, as they have a great advantage.

But if one throws in Fourth above the sword, and he throws above the parry, the expressed parry with a circle has to be used, and returning to guard, as the second figure indicates.

¹⁰ *treta redonda* in the print edition, *bota redonda* in the manuscript

THROWING THE FLANCONADA

PLATE XXII

The time to use this thrust is when the opponent has the arm extended and the hilt higher than the point. It is necessary to place the left hand in front of the chest (figure 1) in order to detain the enemy's point, because if he would turn the hand, and the left is not found opposing the point of his sword, at the time that the Flanconada is thrown, he would be given the opportunity to throw a thrust in Second.

I advise that no one is served by the Flanconada unless it is thrown over the parry in Fourth or some feint in Fourth.

22

UNCOVERED INVITATION¹¹

PLATE XXIII

When two men are found in guard without one daring to feint to the other, it is necessary that the most daring makes an Uncovered Invitation, that consists of setting the sword aside in Fourth, giving space for the opponent to throw.¹² If it is not executed, half thrusts have to be thrown outside of distance, in order to provoke him to throw.

If he executes it in Fourth, the parry with a circle comes very well, and if in Third or Second, the parry with a semicircle has to recur, which figure 1 shows.

23

THROW IN FOURTH, EVADING WITH THE BODY

PLATE XXIV

After having thrown in Fourth, when the opponent reciprocates with the same thrust, it is necessary to evade the body, turning to the left on the right heel, profiling well, with the left foot behind the right a distance of one-and-a-half feet, as seen in figure 1.

¹¹ cite *descubierto* in the print edition, *falso acometimiento* in the manuscript

¹² The manuscript reads “the bravest attacks the other standing still, being careful not to get too close”

CONCLUSION ENVELOPING THE ENEMY'S SWORD¹³*PLATE XXV*

In order to execute this conclusion, it is necessary to be in guard¹⁴ with the body inclined forward, the hand and sword placed in Third, giving turns with it to the enemy's, lifting it upward suddenly, and at the same time go forward and take control of his quillons with the left hand (figure 1).

This parry doesn't disarm like the one with the circle, but it greatly facilitates the conclusion.

NIGHT THRUST¹⁵*PLATE XXVI*

These two figures represent the night thrust; the first frees and presses in Third, and immediately the second frees below the sword, taking the left foot back, extending the hand fingernails down, lower the body the most that you can, supporting yourself with the left hand on the ground, as shown in figure 1.

CONCLUSION¹⁶ IN FOURTH AFTER HAVING PARRIED THE THRUST*PLATE XXVII*

The method of executing this technique is at the parry in Fourth, press the enemy's sword until he goes to lower it, and throwing the left foot forward immediately, taking control of his quillons with the left hand, and rest the strong of the sword over his, in order to force him to release it, as seen in figure 1.

13 *ligar las armas y desarmar* in the manuscript

14 "in the Italian posture" in the manuscript

15 *estocada de noche*

16 *desarmamento* in the manuscript

CONCLUSION IN THIRD AFTER HAVING PARRIED THE THRUST

PLATE XXVIII

At the time of parrying in Third, the opponent's sword is forced in order to set the point aside, and passing at the left foot ahead of the right at the same time, the opponent's quillon is caught, as figure 1 shows.

28

PASS IN FOURTH

PLATE XXIX

In order to give this step well, the hand has to be what goes first, and the left foot must pass ahead of the right, the body well profiled, and after having thrown, return quickly in guard.

29

PASS IN THIRD

PLATE XXX

This technique, in the mode of the preceding, requires that the hand goes first with freedom, and the left foot passes ahead of the right, the body well profiled, but here the head has to be along the length of the arm (figure 1).

After having thrown, it is necessary to return to guard (figure 2). This pass and the preceding are used in this art, but I don't advise that they are practiced, because there are other, safer techniques.

COUNTER-CONCLUSION¹⁷

PLATE XXXI

In the conclusion, at the time that the quillon is taken control of, if the enemy grabs the hand, the sword will be taken with the left hand, and one will be able to wound with it, as figure 2 shows.

WHIP¹⁸

Although the conclusions are ordinarily practiced, as they are very dangerous, it is much better to use the Whip, which consists of a parry in Fourth with a strong whipping strike that hurls the enemy's sword to the ground.¹⁹

METHOD OF THE LEFTIES

PLATE XXXII

It is necessary that a lefty doesn't turn the hand in Third to throw or parry. He has to always throw in Fourth on the inside as well as the outside of the sword, and parry in the same manner. For this effect, the two edges of the sword have to serve in order to parry: the inside edge for the parry in Fourth, and the outside for Third, extending the arm and lifting the hand a little, but without turning it, because if it would turn, in the opponent (who isn't a lefty) throwing, due to the length of the sword with the strong over the weak, one wouldn't have another parry than that in First, which is very dangerous, being obligated to have the point of the sword low and outside the enemy's body.

In order to represent all the techniques of the lefty, there is nothing more than changing the postures in this book.

17 *contra-conclusion* in the print edition, *desarmamento offensivo* in the manuscript

18 *derrote* in the print edition, *latigazo* in the manuscript

19 “and if the sword has not fallen from the enemy's hand, one will go to the circular parry, which will surely finish dismantling it, whether in German, Italian, or French posture” in the manuscript

SABRE TREATISE

FIRST POSTURE AND THROWN CUT²⁰

PLATE XXXIII

The first figure represents the first posture of the sabre: it has the hand turned in Second, the head along the arm, the body lifted, the point of the sabre low, the right leg a little bent, and the left hand behind the kidneys in order to avoid the enemy's blows that could meet it if it was in front.

The second figure shows a thrown cut. Suppose a distant combatant; in order to get closer, bring the left foot forward to join the right, open the legs, and extend in order to throw the cut shown.

It is necessary to take note that this, as well as all those that are offered in the present posture, have to be given diagonal and with the edge of the sabre, without ever passing in front of the face, but to the side of the ear so as not to wound the face, and without lifting the hand too much, for fear that being uncovered, the opponent will wound with the point.

²⁰ *tajo*

SECOND POSTURE AND CUT

PLATE XXXIV

The posture that the first figure of plate 34 represents is more advantageous and defensive than the first, which only serves to begin to form the disciple, and this other then teaches one that has come to a certain point.

Its advantage is that, in conforming more to the posture of the foil,²¹ the sabre can threaten the opponent with a thrust, and over the parry that is formed, free above or below, throwing a cut at the meeting of the same parry.

The same happens in the feints that follow, and will only be explained in few words, reserving their demonstration.

I will be content with naming the nine principal cuts here, relative to this second posture.

- 1st Cut to the head.
- 2nd To²² the belly from low to high.
- 3rd To the side.
- 4th To the thigh.
- 5th Bandoleer cut.
- 6th Cut to the fist.
- 7th To the face on the inside.
- 8th To the face on the outside.
- 9th Reverse²³ to the fist with counter-edge.

1st The cut to the head is parried in First, lifting the hand in the transverse line, coming to meet the blow.

21 *florete* (foil) in the print edition, *espadín* (smallsword) in the manuscript

22 Specified as a reverse in the manuscript

23 *mosqueta* in the manuscript

2nd The cut to the belly is taken from the point of the foot to the chin with the edge of the sabre, and is parried with the strong and the edge, like a Fourth.

3rd The cut to the side is thrown from the shoulder to the leg, and is parried with the hand turned in Second and the point of the sabre entirely outside the line.

4th The cut to the thigh is taken from the enemy's left shoulder and goes across both his thighs. Its parry is formed in First, the hilt lower than usual, so that the opponent can't free below the point and encounter said limbs.

5th The bandoleer is taken also from the left shoulder and crosses to the right hip. Its parry is formed in First with the hand entirely high and the point low.

6th The cut to the fist is essential against the smallsword. The point of the sabre coming to the enemy's quillon, it is necessary to free below his hilt, in order to meet it close to the hand at the end of the blow, and then retreating after having thrown. It is parried like a Fourth with the strong and the edge, except that one has to have the hand lower, so that the opponent cannot free below the hilt.

7th On the cuts to the face and arm inside and outside, the two to the face are prohibited in the schools, although they can be used with sharp weapons. The cut to the arm inside is thrown when the enemy has the point low and inside the arm; as if the arm had extended it would be necessary to set aside the sabre with a whip strike in order to uncover it and finish the blow. It is parried with a Fourth, lifting the hand.

8th The cut to the arm outside is thrown when the opponent has the arm extended, the strong continuing over the sabre and forcing it to deflect it from the line, and finish the blow from the shoulder to the elbow. Its parry is the same as that of a Third, and in a transverse line.

9th The reverse to the fist with the counter-edge requires that the combatants are in the guard of Second, with the two points low, and free suddenly below the opponent's, turning the hand much in Second and freeing below the quillons inside the sabre, to cross the blow and meet close to the fist with the counter-edge.

All the play of the sabre is reduced to these nine cuts and reverses. As to the feints, I will say in passing that they should be shown with the point in order to uncover less, principally when fighting with a swordsman. Suppose a feint in Fourth; the opponent forming its parry, it can be thrown to the head, and freeing over the point, throw it to the arm outside, or to the side.

Without freeing, it will be enough to pass below the hilt to give the blow. If the enemy presses the blade, and lowers the hilt, it has to pass below, and in the transverse line crossing the thighs.

After having thrown outside the sabre, it is thrown in Third, the enemy parries, and then has to free above the point and throw it to the head or fist or thigh.

AGAINST THE POINT, OR SABRE AGAINST SMALLSWORD

PLATE XXXV

It is necessary that he who uses the sabre against a swordsman throws to the fist with the point of the sabre when the enemy seeks to wound him, and returning to the point, he returns to throw to the fist with the counter-edge, and then re-positions himself in guard. If the swordsman repeats the thrusts, it is necessary to repeat the same cuts, always retreating. The one with the sabre has to seek to have a lot of ground, in order to retreat and give his weapon the necessary turns. But I have to advise that the swordsman will always have the advantage, while he takes care to only throw half thrusts to the enemy, giving hops forward, back, to the sides, and outside the line, in order to compel the sabre to press on it; so as soon as this has been achieved, it will be harmful to the sabre or sword or large sword, with only being compelled more and more on the inside.

37

FLOURISH OR SKIRMISH

PLATE XXXVI

The flourish or skirmish serves well to break through in case one is found surrounded by enemies.

In order to execute the flourish, it is necessary to be in the posture that this plate represents, and making the sabre describe a horizontal figure 8 ahead and behind at eye level; and as soon as one will have deflected something of the opponents, continue its path, passing the left foot ahead of the right, and return to the first posture, continuing the skirmish and successively this march until being free.

In Cadiz, in the Press of the Royal Academy of Marine Officers.