

ON ANDREA FERARA SWORDS.

BY GEORGE VERE IRVING, ESQ., F.S.A. SCOT., V.P.

IN redemption of the promise I made at the last meeting of our summer session, I now lay on the table drawings and tracings of a considerable number of these swords. For the majority of these I am indebted to our associate, J. B. Greenshields, Esq. I was at one time in hopes that he would have been able to relieve me of the duty of describing them, being so well qualified to do so by the numerous specimens preserved in the district where he resides, which he has had an opportunity of personally examining; but unfortunately he has been prevented by ill health from undertaking the preparation of the paper, to the value of which his researches have so much contributed. I am happy, however, to say that, after a visit to the south of England, he has so far recovered as to be able to resume his inquiries; the result of which, I hope, will be an exhaustive paper, not only on Ferara blades, but on our Scotch broad-swords in general.

The tracings which I lay upon the table are those of twenty-five weapons in the several collections belonging to Mr. Greenshields, Mr. Johnstone, Mr. Sim Lesmahago, Mr. M'Kirby, Andersonian Museum, Scottish Museum; and it is remarkable that they comprise no less than *seven* variations in the spelling of the name; and, if its position is taken into account, not fewer than *fifteen* varieties, of which the following is an analysis:

I. ANDREA FERARA.

a. "Andrea" on the one side of the blade, "Ferara" on the other; of which there are three examples, viz., in the *Johnstone* collection two specimens, and in the *Lesmahago* one. The last example is said to have been presented by the Duke of Cumberland to one of the persons who was engaged in the dastardly arrest of Kinloch Mordant when passing through Lesmahago in 1746. For my own part I am not inclined to lay much stress upon the ornaments on the Ferara blades, with the exception of the animal which resembles the fox of Passau, but so rudely drawn that Mr.

Cuming is inclined to assign it to the time of Charles II. It only occurs on the third example, along with a curious repetition of the letter w. Two of the examples have the orb; one of these, and the third, have pellets and ornaments common on both swords. One has also two ornaments common on Andrea Ferara blades, viz., two eccentric circles and the letter ε with a horizontal line projecting forward from its centre, and crossed by two others perpendicularly.

b. "Andrea" above, "Ferara" below, on both sides. One example. *M'Kirdy* collection. Ornaments, pellets, eccentric circles, and St. Andrew crosses, between the words.

c. "Andrea Ferara" in one horizontal line on both sides of blade. One example from *Mr. Sim's* collection, one from the *Scottish Museum*, and one from *M'Kirdy's* collection. The ornaments are pellets and eccentric circles.

d. "Andrea Ferara" in a horizontal line, but repeated twice on both sides. The ornaments are, pellets, orb, the ε ornament before described, eccentric circles, animals, orb, rose with a cross through it, a figure resembling a spur. There are two examples of this in the *Scottish Museum*, one belongs to *Mr. Johnstone*, and a fourth to *Mr. Greenshields*.

II. ANDREIA FERARA

on both sides. One example in the *Lesmahago* collection. Ornamented with pellets and eccentric circles.

III. ANDRIA FERARA.

a. in a horizontal line on both sides. One example from *Mr. Sim's* collection. It has a single fluted ornament approaching a Maltese cross, and is said to have been used in 1745.

b. "Andria" above, "Ferara" below on both sides. One example of *Mr. Sim's*. Ornamented with pellets and eccentric circles.

c. "Andria" on one side of the blade, "Ferara" on the other. An example from *Mr. Sim's*, and one from the *Scottish Museum*. Ornamented with pellets, orb, and the ε ornament.

IV. ANDREA FARARA.

a. in a horizontal line on both sides. One example be-

longs to *Mr. Sim.* Ornamented with a triple repetition of St. Andrew's cross.

b. "Andrea" above, "Farara" below, on both sides. There is of this one example in the *Scottish Museum*, ornamented with a double repetition of St. Andrew's cross.

V. ANDREIA FARARA.

a. in a horizontal line on both sides. Two examples occur,—one in the *Johnstone* collection, the other in *Mr. Greenshields'*, ornamented with pellets, orb, eccentric circles, and lines; and on *Mr. Greenshields'* the motto, *Soli Deo Gloria.*

b. "Andreia" above, and "Farara" below, on both sides. Of this, one example is in the *M'Kirdy* collection, ornamented with pellets and the ♀ ornament.

VI. ANDRIA FARARA.

a. in one horizontal line on both sides. The one example is from the *Andersonian Museum.* The ornaments are a cross with the animal.

b. The same arranged $\begin{matrix} \text{A} \\ \text{A} \\ \text{F} \\ \text{F} \end{matrix}$ The one example of this is in the *M'Kirdy* collection, ornamented with pellets.

VII. ANDREA FERARE

occurs on one example in the *M'Kirdy* collection, with ornaments,—the orb, a variation of the eccentric circles, and a sort of star.

To these varieties of marking we must add the following :

1. The sword exhibited to us, which led to this investigation, with "Andrea Ferara" in three horizontal lines on both sides.

2. "Andrea Ferara em Lisboa," which occurs on a sword in the possession of Brodie of Brodie. This blade is mounted in the common Indian hilt, which covers the greater part of the inscription, and was most probably obtained by its native owner from the Portuguese settlement at Goa.

3. "Piero Ferara." I am indebted to Mr. Cuming for calling my attention to a sword with this name, belonging to Mr. Newington Hughes, exhibited at our Winchester Con-

gress (*Journal*, i, 365). This gentleman has since died, and his collection has been dispersed.

4. "Cosmo Ferrara," which occurs on a blade in the possession of the Count d'Albanie. This gentleman also informs me that he has seen the name of Ferrara coupled with that of the town of Solingen.

These facts inevitably lead to the conclusion that we have to deal, *not* with the productions of a single armourer, but with those of a succession of persons with the same or nearly similar names. I do not attach much importance to the variations in the spelling of the names of private persons, from being aware of the great latitude which persons in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries gave themselves in this respect. Indeed, I think I could produce from the MSS. in the British Museum a remarkable instance of this, where a Scotch nobleman in three consecutive weeks spells his name in as many different ways; but I most decidedly doubt if this ever extended to those constituting trade-marks.

The two main questions we have to deal with are,—1st, the date of those swords, or rather of the earliest of them; and 2, the country in which they were fabricated; and on both our information is most scanty.

1st, Date. The two earliest examples, undoubtedly, are the cutlass referred to by Mr. Cuming in the *Journal*¹ as engraved in Skelton's *Meyrick*, and the double-handed sword in Mr. Johnstone's collection. The former is referred to the early part of the sixteenth century, the second cannot be much later. Both bear the same mark,—the "Andrea" on the one side of the blade, the "Ferrara" on the other. The inscriptions in both cases are in letters, which were not used in Scotland till the reign of Queen Mary, towards the middle of the century, but might have been previously used abroad. The motto, *Soli Deo Gloria*, appears to have been one peculiar to the Stuart kings after their accession to the English throne, as witness their "touch-pieces."

The legends of Andrea Ferrara being brought to Scotland by James IV or V, and working in the Highlands, tempering blades in a dark cellar, and of his having killed his son in consequence of detecting him prying into his secret, may be ranged with the other myths in which such poetic antiquaries as Sir Walter Scott indulged. The fact that

¹ Vol. xx, p. 345. Dec. 1864.

the sword with which James IV fought at Flodden, now preserved in the College of Arms, is by a different maker, negatives the idea of his having brought Andrea Ferrara to Scotland.

2nd, Country. At first sight, the name Ferrara draws your attention to Italy, and reminds one of the well-known Milanese armour. This, however, on investigation, proves to be wrong. Very early in the inquiry Mr. Greenshields called my attention to the fact, that although the Italian town had always two R's, only one ever appeared on the swords. He subsequently forwarded to me a copy of a letter which a draper in the village of Lesmahago had sent, through such a simple conveyance as a bank parcel, to the King of Italy, asking if any Ferrara swords were preserved at Turin, and of a reply from the director "della Regia Galleria di Armatura ed Arnése, antichi e moderne," by the special directions of *il Rè Galantuomo*, by which it appears that weapons with this inscription are totally unknown, either in this collection, or to the Italian antiquaries generally. Spain, therefore, was the next resource. In the Royal Arsenal at Madrid, there is, perhaps, the finest collection of Ferrara blades in existence, which are reported to have been the property of the Duke of Alva. In Portugal, the name, although generally spelt Ferreira, is common. The two gentlemen who head the list of the Committee of the projected International Exhibition at Oporto, are so designated. Although *Ferrum* and its derivatives is very suggestive of workers in iron, I believe that this succession of armourers adopted their names from the town of Feraria, in the province of Corunna, in the north of Spain.¹

¹ See Madox, *Dict. d'España*.