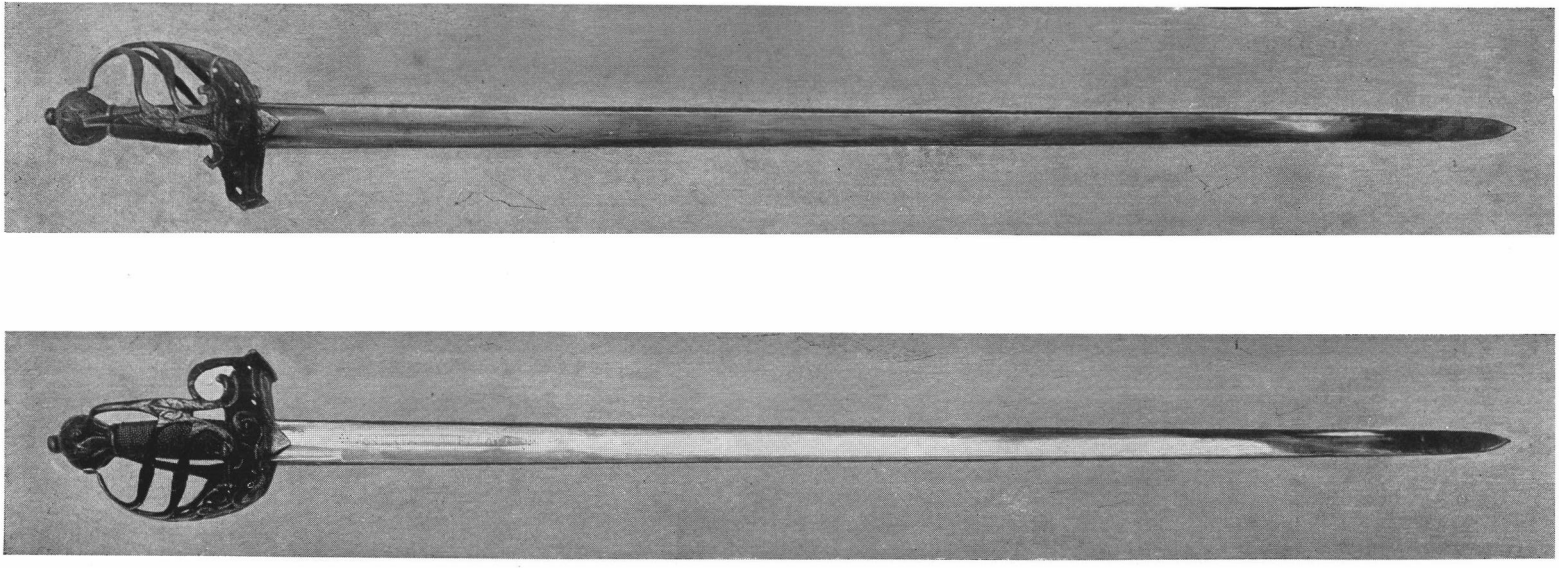

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TWO VIEWS OF THE SWORD FOUND IN THE THATCH OF A COTTAGE AT EGGINTON.

Cavalier's Sword found at Egginton.*

By the Rev. R. Lethbridge Farmer.

THE sword, of which a photographic illustration is here given, was in the possession of the late Ven. Archdeacon Freer, and for some years stood in the corner of his drawing room at Sudbury Rectory, being justly prized by one who was so deeply interested in everything historic.

It was discovered some few years ago at Egginton, when the thatched roof of a cottage was being removed to make place for one of slate. So deftly had it been hidden that, though the surface thatch had often been renewed, it was only when taking the whole roof to pieces that the weapon came to light. It was in excellent preservation, and the Archdeacon used to say that officers to whom he had shown it doubted whether it had ever been used.

To give a description, it may be said that the scabbard is perfectly plain, bearing no marks, and is $39\frac{1}{2}$ inches in length. The length of the sword blade is $38\frac{3}{16}$ inches, and the width $1\frac{3}{16}$ in., slightly tapering. It is double edged and grooved, bearing on each side the inscription ⁘ ANDRIA (⁘) FERARA ⁘ followed by the "wolf-mark."

The hilt is of the basket-form which, after the death of King Charles I., became known as "mortuary." It is profusely chased, pierced, and chiselled with four oval medallions, one of these evidently containing a portrait of Charles I.

* Mr. Andrew has kindly assisted me in this paper; otherwise I should have hesitated before attempting so technical a subject.—R. L. F.

In the spaces between the medallions the features of four other faces are very roughly indicated.

The grip is covered with double-stranded brass wire. A fragment of copper wire near the pommel was considered by the late Major Corfield to be the remnant of an older covering. It was also his opinion that the blade had been re-hilted.

The approximate date of the blade may be taken to be from 1580-1590, and the probable date of the hilt 1642. The

R. L. Farmer, del.

The Egginton Sword. Detail of the cup to the hilt.

date of the sword in its present form is, therefore, contemporary with the commencement of the Civil War in 1642. In March, 1644, there was an engagement on Egginton Heath in which the Royalists were defeated by the Parliamentarians under Sir John Gell—or, according to some, Major Mollanus —so that it would seem more than probable that this was the occasion when the sword was secreted. Possibly some officer,

finding his capture inevitable, thrust it securely into the thatch; or, deeming an unimpeded retreat the wisest course, thus hid awhile his weapon, hoping to regain it, and to "live to fight another day."

But whoever was the owner, and under whatever circumstances he parted with his sword, he was clearly a Cavalier of no small repute, for the weapon is of exceptional quality, and was, in its day, far too expensive an adjunct to be possessed by any ordinary soldier. This statement is borne out by the fact that with the exception of some details in the chasing, it is identical with the sword of the Earl of Lindsey, who was killed at Edgehill in 1642, and which bears his arms.

The blades of Andrea Ferara attained a world-wide reputation, and have always been exceptionally popular in Britain. In consequence, they have been re-hilted with every change of fashion, from his time down to our own, for it may safely be stated that during the last three hundred years they have been present in every great British battle, and our officers, especially of the Highland Brigade, cling to them to-day with the faith of tradition.

James Ray, in his *History of the Rebellion of* 1745, p. 160, recounts a personal incident at the Angel Inn, Macclesfield, where, to escape arrest as a spy by the Highlanders, he hid his arms in the tester of his bed, namely:—

> My Highland pistols which were a piece of curious workmanship, the stock as well as the lock and barrel being of polished steel ingraved and inlaid with silver, and . . . my sword which was of the Highland make by that curious workman Andrew Ferrara.

The blade of the sword of Rob Roy, preserved at Abbotsford, also is the work of Andrea Ferara, and Sir Walter Scott, in a note to *Waverley*, says that all the Scottish broadswords inscribed with his name were accounted of peculiar excellence.

Of Andrea himself we know little. Mr. J. B. Caldecott, however, calls attention to the fact that he is mentioned in Giovan Matthio Cigogna's *Tratato Militare*, Venice, 1583, p. 62:—

> In the town of Belluno are the ingenious Masters, Giovan Donato, and Andrea of the Feraris (de i Ferari) both brothers of the foundry of Master Giovan Battista, called the Barcelonian.*

The sobriquet, "The Barcelonian," suggests that Battista had come from Spain, and this curiously corroborates the traditions that Andrea wrought his blades both in Italy and in Spain. Sir Walter Scott credits him with having also brought his art to Scotland; but although the large percentage of Highland basket-hilted swords† bearing his name is remarkable, it is more probable that the blades were shipped from Italy to Scotland early in the seventeenth century.

The "wolf-mark" which follows his name on the sword before us is a mystery. Its design may be compared with the result of an attempt to draw a wolf with three or four strokes of the pen. In this crude form it often accompanies the most artistic engraving, for it is a mark handed down to the armourers through centuries. It is neither personal to Andrea nor national to Italy. We find it in just the same form on blades of the fourteenth century forged at Passau and Solingen, but it is rarely, if ever, found upon weapons of poor quality. Many of Andrea's swords bear it, and these seem to be of better design and finish than most of those upon which it is absent.

This is a horseman's sword, and from the circumstances of its discovery clearly English. It is a fighting sword, as opposed to a rapier, and although the date of the hilt is of the period of the Civil War, it is of a type which remained in use until, with the advent of William of Orange, Dutch influences superseded it with the introduction of a lighter weapon. Without attaching any serious importance to the point, there is one fact which rather indicates that the sword was lost early in its history. It will be noticed that the hilt

* East Herts Archæological Society's *Transactions*, 1901, p. 357.

† Incorrectly called "Claymores." The real Claymore was, as its name implies, 'the great sword,' that is the large two-handed and cross-hilted sword of the previous century.

is complete. Rupert's Cavaliers found that in actual battle the sword hand was too cramped within the hilt of this type; hence arose a custom of filing off the upper portion of the outer wrist guard, to give more play to the hand. The custom seems to have been peculiar to this country, and many, if not most of the weapons which bore the brunt of the war are found to have been so treated. Another example of this class, said to have been formerly preserved at Bramhall Hall, but now in Mr. Andrew's possession, may be mentioned for the purpose of comparison. It is of similar character and workmanship, the blade bearing the same inscription with the "wolf-mark," and the hilt being of the same character, except that it is more boat-shaped and the medallions are decorated with elaborated subjects, viz. (i.) equestrian figure of King Charles riding over the body of the Dragon (the Parliament); (ii.) the King, as St. George, slaying the Dragon; (3) portrait of the King; (iv.) portrait of Archbishop Laud; (5) portrait of the owner (?); (vi.) small portrait of the King on the wrist guard. The first medallion is strongly characteristic of the well-known equestrian figure in Van Dyck's painting. This sword also is essentially English, and the upper part of the outer wrist guard has been carefully filed off, above the small medallion (No. vi.) in its centre. On the other hand, Lord Lindsey's sword, which was never used after Edgehill, the first battle of the war, is like that of our illustration, perfect in this respect. Was it after Marston Moor, in July, 1644, that this custom originated?

It used to be thought that these swords must be subsequent to the death of Charles I., because of their name "mortuary," but this was not so, for the fashion of chiselling medallion portraits of Kings and Queens upon arms was not confined to England, but general upon the continent. The heads of Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain often so appeared on Spanish arms and armour of the sixteenth century. Portraits of Philip of Spain and Mary of England are upon a gorget which is said to have belonged to an officer of the Armada, and swords

contemporary with, and of very similar design to, that which is the subject of this paper, frequently bore medallion portraits of Louis XIII. of France. Moreover, the hilt of the sword last described, which is typically "mortuary" in type, was certainly forged during the lifetime of King Charles, for no one after his tragic end would hopefully personify him as St. George destroying the Parliament. After his death, swords bearing his portrait were much prized by the Cavaliers, and hence they obtained their name.