



Figure 1 ANDREWA FARRERA

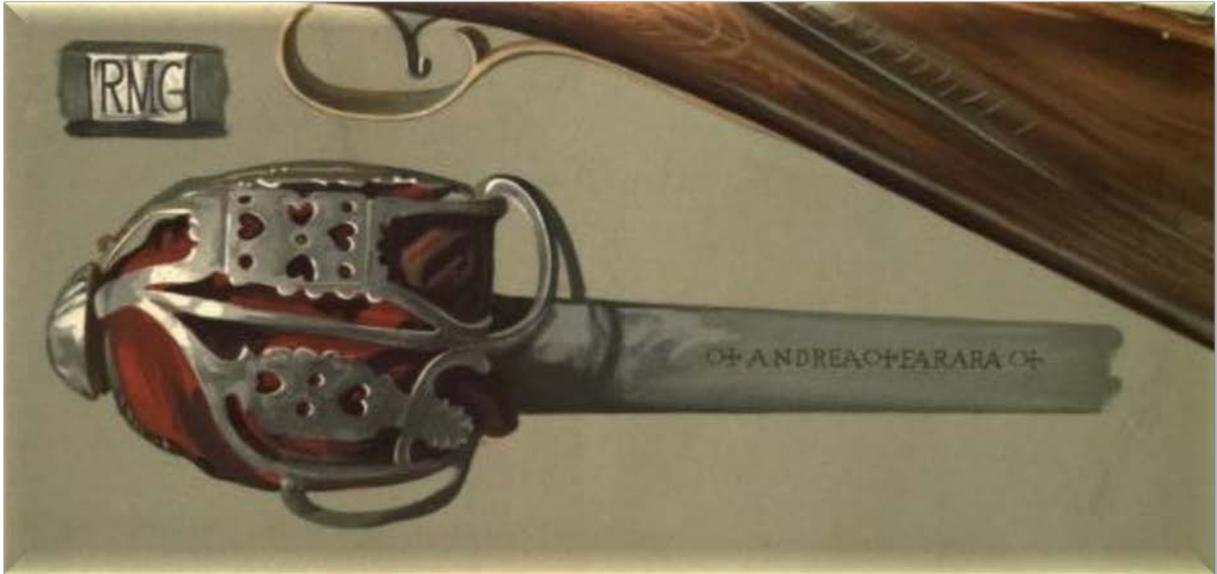
Ferra'ra. [An Andrew Ferrara](#).¹ A broadsword or claymore of the best quality, bearing the name of Andrea Ferra'ra, one of the Italian family whose swords were famous in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Genuine "Andrea Ferraras" have a crown marked on the blade.

: My father had an Andrea Ferrara, which had been in the family about a century. It had a basket-hilt, and the name was distinctly stamped on the blade.

"We'll put in bail, my boy; old Andrew Ferrara shall lodge his security." — [Scott: Waverley](#), chap. 50 page 149.

The blades had [legendary flexibility](#) – Andrew Ferrara is said to have carried one of his blades wrapped in his bonnet. Unfortunately, many are not genuine.

¹ At [Abbotsford](#), Rob Roy's sword, once owned by Sir Walter Scott is marked [Andrea Farara](#).



[Gentleman's Magazine, Volume XXVII January-June 1848 page 2.](#)

some blades are marked "ANDREA FERARA," and I have seen one "ANDREW FERARA," but no doubt many blades were made marked with his name which were not genuine. His family name I have never been able to make out, as in this country he went by the name of "Andrew of Ferrara." Where he died I cannot ascertain, but no life of him has yet been published.

[The Foreign quarterly review, Volume 26 page 96](#)

An ancient Turkish legend relates, that one day a warrior being without arms for an ensuing combat, snatched from the forge a [yatağan](#), red hot, and urged his horse to a gallop, flourishing the blade around his head, which air cleaving gave it an excellent temper. The material of the [Damascus](#) blade, now much used by our own cutlers, the celebrated [Wootz](#) has conferred on our language the term [damask](#), from the wavy character of this celebrated steel. The meteoric iron presents, when wrought, the same appearance. [Tavernier](#) states, that the [steel susceptible of being damasked](#)² came from [Golconda](#), obviously alluding to Delhi blades. [Professor Crevelli](#) has succeeded in an excellent imitation of these celebrated oriental sabres. We extract from the [Allgemeine Militär-Zeitung](#) his method.

"A long flat piece of malleable steel, of about one inch and a half in breadth, and one-eighth in thickness, is to be first bound with iron wire at intervals of one-third of an inch. The iron and steel to be then incorporated by welding, and repeated additions (from 10 to 20) of iron wire are made to the first portion, with which they must be finally amalgamated. This compound material is then to be stretched and divided into shorter lengths, to which, by the usual process of welding, grinding and tempering, any shape may be given. By filing semicircular grooves into both sides of the blade, and again subjecting it to the hammer, a beautiful roset-shaped [Damascus](#) is obtained; the material can also be made to assume any

² *A treatise on the progressive improvement & present state of the Manufacture of Metals.* Volume 1 p. [284](#).

other form. The infusion, by which the figures are made visible, is the usual one of [aquafortis](#) and vinegar.”

These sabres have been submitted to the following severe tests — cutting off hobnails, which had been placed in great numbers behind each other; cuts upon a strong iron plate and many folds of cloth; horizontal blows upon a wooden table; and finally, like the celebrated Andrew Ferrara blades, powerful bending upon both sides. Out of two hundred and ten blades, examined by a military commission, and each of which was required to perform thrice on iron and twice against a flat wooden table, not a single one snapped or had its edge indented. In [Prussia](#) and [Silesia](#) an equally valuable manufacture exists. The process appears similar to the Andrew Ferrara, which probably obtained its excellence from the welding. Andrew Ferrara is said to have carried one of his blades wrapped in his bonnet. Elasticity and power of edge appear to be the common property of the Andrew Ferrara, the [Damascus](#) and [Delhi](#) blades, together with those at Milan manufactured under the direction of [Professor Crevelli](#). Interlamination is probably the peculiar and yet unfathomed mystery. Andrew Ferrara is commonly supposed to have welded the blade of alternate layers, about two or three lines thick, of iron and steel, which approaches closely to [Professor Crevelli's method](#).



Figure 2 Sword in possession of the [Future Museum](#)



Hon. HAMILTON B. STAPLES presented to the Society, in behalf of Mr. Thomas L. Winthrop of [Boston](#), the sword of Fitz-John Winthrop. In making the presentation Mr. STAPLES said:

On the 11th of December last, I received a letter from Mr. Thomas L. Winthrop of Boston, grandson of a former President of the Society, the late Hon. Thomas L. Winthrop, in which, through me, a very interesting proposition was made to the Society. I give entire this part of the letter. "Miss Winthrop has much interested me in her account of our family relics in the rooms of the Antiquarian Society, and I have thought it possible that it might be agreeable to the Society to become the depository of yet another which I have held for many years, uncertain where to bestow it. The article in question is a basket-hilted 'Andrea Ferrara,' bearing upon its blade the name and 'punches' of that famous maker and accompanied by the following inscription, in the handwriting of Mr. Robert C. Winthrop: 'Sword of Fitz-John Winthrop, sometime a captain in [Monk's army](#), second in command of the expedition against Canada in 1690, agent for Connecticut in London, 1693-8, and afterward for nine years Governor of Connecticut. Born March 14, 1638 — died November 27, 1707. [Buried in the Kings Chapel graveyard.](#)' This sword, which is in perfect preservation, I inherited from my father, Grenville Temple Winthrop, who was an older brother of Mr. Robert C. Winthrop, and son of that namesake of my own, who presented various family relics to the Society, the late Hon^{ble} Thomas Lindall Winthrop. Would you sometime at your leisure ascertain if it would be pleasing to the Society to receive the sword?"

I immediately laid the proposition before Mr. SALISBURY, the President of the Society, and was asked by him to inform Mr. Winthrop that if the [American Antiquarian Society](#) should become the custodian of the sword, it would be regarded as a trust to be most carefully guarded and that the sword would have a conspicuous place among our most valued relics. I communicated the President's answer to Mr. Winthrop in a letter, first submitted to Mr. SALISBURY for his approval. On March 29, 1888, the sword was forwarded to me accompanied by a letter which clearly explains itself, and should be formally communicated to the Society.

38 BEACON ST, 28 March, 1888.

MY DEAR JUDGE STAPLES:

Your letter of the 13th February

was duly received by me in which you express the willingness of Mr. Stephen Salisbury, on behalf of the American Antiquarian Society, to become the trustee of the sword of Governor Fitz-John Winthrop

and to give it a suitable place in the hall of the Society. The acceptance of the trust by the American Antiquarian Society is a high compliment to my family, and assists in confirming my opinion that the sword, although borne by a distinguished Governor of Connecticut, has at least equal claims to interest in the State with which my family was first and most intimately identified. Upon quite different grounds the sword claims the attention of the antiquary of every State and Country, from its being a blade of the most famous sword-maker of the Renaissance, whose name and punches are to be found upon it. Allow me to thank you for your kind trouble taken in this matter, and believe me, my dear Judge Staples, yours very truly,

THOMAS L. WINTHROP.

In presenting the sword to the Society at this time, I comply with the request of the President in giving a somewhat more extended sketch of the wearer of the sword, and of the sword itself. [Fitz-John Winthrop](#) was the son of John Winthrop, the first Governor of Connecticut under the charter, and grandson of John Winthrop, the first Governor of Massachusetts. His father, born at [Groton, England](#), in 1605, educated at the [University of Dublin](#), was a fine scholar and an eminent physician. He died in Boston, April 5, 1676.

Fitz-John Winthrop was born at [Ipswich](#)³, March 14, 1638. Before attaining his majority he went to England to seek service in the civil war. The time of his arrival there is indicated by a letter from his uncle, Emanuel Downing, at [Edinburgh](#), dated 2nd February, 1657, congratulating him upon his safe arrival, and also by a letter from his uncle, Colonel Thomas Reade, Governor of [Stirling Castle](#), dated February 15, 1657, in which young Winthrop is advised to remain in Scotland, and assured of the willingness of Colonel Reade to assist him in obtaining military preferment. The promise was soon fulfilled. In a letter dated December 8, 1658, he is addressed as "Lt: Winthrope at [Stirling](#)." In the following February he was at [Cardross](#) as Governor of the castle with the same title. In 1660 he was a captain in Colonel Reade's regiment. That he was with General Monk in London shortly before the Restoration is shown by his letter to his brother Wait Winthrop, afterwards Chief Justice, from London, dated May 8, 1660. Returning to New England, at or near the end of 1661, he identified himself with the [Connecticut](#) colony, became a representative, served in King Philip's War as Major, and for a time was a member of the Council of Sir Edmund Andros. In May, 1689, he was chosen one of the magistrates.



Figure 3 Fitz-John Winthrop, Governor of the Colony of Connecticut, 1698-1707
"From the Connecticut State Library website"

³ Ipswich, Massachusetts

In 1690 he was appointed Major-General of the land forces in the expedition against Canada. The scheme on the part of [New York](#) and the New England colonies was to attack [Montreal](#) with nearly a thousand men, assisted by five or six hundred Indians of the Five Nations, who had promised their co-operation; while a fleet and an army of about two thousand men under command of Sir William Phipps, Governor of [Massachusetts](#), were to proceed up the St. Lawrence and attack [Quebec](#). It was supposed that the result of the combined attack would be the capture of one or both of these strongholds. Captain Leisler had then assumed the government at [Albany](#), and Milborn, his son-in-law, was appointed Commissary. It had been agreed that [New York](#) should furnish a certain number of troops for the expedition, also the provisions and means of transportation for the army. The fleet sailed for [Quebec](#) with thirty or forty vessels, but did not arrive till October 5, a much later time than was anticipated. When Winthrop's army had arrived at Wood Creek, the place appointed for meeting the Indians, less than a hundred Indians were present, the rest refusing or evading the requisition, and the [New York](#) contingent had not appeared. The army continued to advance a hundred miles further to the lake where means of transportation were required. The Commissary had failed to provide the requisite means or a supply of provisions for the army. After a council of war, a retreat to [Albany](#) became necessary for the subsistence of the army. This retreat and the late arrival of the fleet defeated the expedition. General Winthrop returned to [Connecticut](#) after serious difficulties with the Governor at [Albany](#), the latter betraying a purpose to fix upon another the responsibility for the retreat, which clearly attached to him or his subordinate.

The General Assembly voted that the conduct of General Winthrop "had been with good fidelity to his Majesty's interest," and thanked him "for his good services." In 1692 Colonel Benjamin Fletcher, Governor of [New York](#), had received a commission from the King vesting him with full power to command the entire militia of Connecticut and of the neighboring provinces. As the right to command the militia was expressly given to the colony by the charter, the Legislature refused to submit to the regulation. At this time occurred the amusing episode of Captain Wadsworth preventing by the noise of drums the reading of Fletcher's commission before the train bands of [Hartford](#). In 1693 the Assembly petitioned King William the Third on the subject, and appointed General Winthrop as their agent to present the petition to the King and use his best efforts to maintain the chartered rights of the Colony. This was rightly regarded as a vital question upon which the right of local government depended. So ably and yet so wisely did General Winthrop perform the duty assigned him that on April 19, 1694, the King decided the question in favor of the Colony. Trumbull's History relates that in January, 1698, Major-General Fitz-John Winthrop, having returned from his successful agency at the Court of Great Britain, was received with great enthusiasm and was thanked by the Legislature for "his public services." In May, 1698, he was chosen Governor, an office which he continued to fill till his death, November 27, 1707. Trumbull speaks of him as one in whose death the Colony "sustained a great loss." He had long resided at New London, where he had a very large estate, and displayed great hospitality, in marked contrast with his narrow circumstances at the close of his military life in England. Governor Winthrop rendered a great service in advance to the cause of the American Revolution. Organized resistance to the British Crown would have proved well nigh impossible in 1775 and 1776, if the colonies had not commanded the militia agreeably to the precedent of 1694.

Coming now to the sword itself, it is largely a matter of inference where it has been and in what scenes it has borne a part. It is, however, almost certain that it was obtained and worn by Winthrop when an officer in [Monk's army](#). The Ferrara blades were at that time in general

use in the [Army of the Commonwealth](#). There is the authority of an article in [Macmillan's Magazine on the "Form and History of the Sword"](#) for the statement that [Cromwell](#) wore this kind of sword. In the frontispiece to the [Leviathan](#), published in 1650, in the right hand of the mystical figure representing the might of the State, a Ferara sword is held, but without the basket-hilt. In the article upon the "Sword" in the new [Encyclopedia Britannica](#) the well known name of Ferara is said to be peculiarly associated with Scottish blades. This sword was the natural weapon for an officer of [Monk's army](#) to possess. It is not at all likely that it was procured for the expedition to Canada in 1690, as at that time this kind of sword was passing out of use. The sword was probably worn in the march of [Monk's army](#) from Scotland to London, which resulted in the Restoration. It may have been drawn from its scabbard to salute Charles the Second, as in his triumphal progress from [Dover](#) to [London](#) he passed through the army at [Blackheath](#). The history of the sword considered as a work of art brings us to a controversy which has engaged the attention of the antiquary for more than half a century. The sword has doubtless existed in a variety of forms. The curved guards, known as *pas d'âne*, the cross-pieces in the plane of the blade called [quillons](#), were the simple elements from which was evolved the basket-hilt, elaborate in form and design. Three views have been advanced as to the origin of this celebrated weapon and the age and country of Andrea Ferara. One view is, that he visited Scotland and manufactured his blades there for Scottish use. This theory derived its support from the number of Ferara blades extant in that kingdom early in the reign of James the Sixth. I find several allusions to this sword in the *Waverley* novels, which imply a use so familiar as to have given rise to a species of metonymy in the common dialect of the people. In the [Fortunes of Nigel](#), Richie threatens "[the swaggering billies](#)" with "[a slash of my Andrew Ferara](#)." In the same novel Lord Dalgarno tells his father that "[more land is won by the lawyer with the ram skin than by the Andrew Ferara with his sheep's-head handle](#)." In the [Bride of Lammermoor](#), the sexton in describing the [Battle of Bothwell Bridge](#), in 1679, says, "[there was auld Ravenswood brandishing his Andrew Ferrara at the head](#)." In [Woodstock](#), Wildrake pictures himself as saying to Alice Lee in behalf of his friend Colonel Everard, "[give him a good Toledo by his side with a broidered belt and an inlaid hilt, instead of the ton of iron contained in that basket-hilted, black Andrew Ferrara](#)." The last quotation throws some light on the character of the weapon worn by the officers of the Army of the Commonwealth. This theory of a Scottish origin conceived of the name Ferara⁴ not as a family name, but as derived from the Latin Ferrarius, pertaining to iron, and as denoting the name of a guild of armourers. So that the name Andrea dei Ferari as applied to the celebrated sword-maker should be translated, not as Andrew of the Feraras, but as Andrew of the Forge, — one of a guild of armourers in the records of the Scotch burghs under the title of [Hammermen](#). [Sir Walter Scott in the Notes to Waverley](#) appears to favor this view. "Who this artist was, what were his fortunes, and when he flourished, have hitherto defied the research of antiquaries: only it is in general believed that Andrea de Ferrara was a Spanish or Italian artificer brought over by James the IV or V to instruct the Scots in the manufacture of sword-blades."

The second view attributes to the sword a Spanish origin. In the north of Spain, in the Corunna district, is the town of Fereira. And the claim is that this was the seat of the celebrated manufacture. In the infancy of metallurgical science it was believed that sword-

⁴ The name is not uniformly spelled. In Meyrick's "Critical Inquiry into Ancient Armour," second ed., p. 6, is a long note in which the family name is spelled, "Ferera," "Farara," and "Ferara." In a volume of Illustrations accompanying this work, by Skelton, at No. CIII a sword of this workman is displayed inscribed on the blade "Ferara." In the citations above, from Scott and others, the spelling is allowed to stand as given by those writers. On the sword now given to the Society the name is spelled FARARA.—COMMITTEE OF PUBLICATION.

blades acquired the best temper by immersion in mountain streams, and the town in question was the only one of this name which answered the supposed condition.

The third view is, that the sword is an Italian weapon. The evidence in its support may be briefly stated. In the new [Encyclopedia Britannica](#) under the article, the Sword, there is a pictorial representation of typical European swords. That which in every particular corresponds with the sword now to be presented is classified as Italian, late in the sixteenth century.

From the article in Macmillan, already referred to, I quote the following passage: "A still greater reputation was gained by the strong and keen broadswords bearing the name of Andrea Ferrara, long a puzzle to antiquaries as to whether he was of Spanish or Italian origin. Evidence exists that sometime after 1580, two brothers, Giovan Donato and Andrea dei Ferrari, were well known sword makers working at [Bellune](#) in [Friuli](#), the Illyrian territory of Venice." The strongest authority is Cigogna. In the [Trattato Militare](#), Venetia, 1583, he confines his enumeration of sword manufacturers "to the most excellent armourers of Italy," to whom he gives the pre-eminence in this art. He further says, that "in the town of [Bellune](#) are the ingenious masters, Giovan Donato and Andrea of the Ferraras, both brothers." It is further stated that there were others of the same name, sword makers in that country, as shown by dei Ferrari, of the Ferraras, indicating an established family originating in the ducal city of that name. The half-length figures on the blade wear on their heads the crown known as the Eastern or Antique crown, a device which implies an Italian rather than a more Western origin. Finally the opinion of the accomplished donor of the sword, in part based on family tradition, favoring the Italian view, is entitled to be considered in deciding this question. It seems very clear that the evidence preponderates in favor of the Italian view. It is to be hoped that the possession of the sword by the Society may lead to a more exhaustive study of its origin and mode of manufacture than can now be attempted.

Nothing remains but to present the sword through you, Mr. President, to the Society, and to congratulate it on the acquisition of an additional relic of a family long and most honorably identified with the Society, and of a work of art of interest alike to the historian and the antiquary. The sash of choicest silk, its hues mellowed and enriched by time, is presented with the sword.

The PRESIDENT said: The American Antiquarian Society accepts with satisfaction the trust confided to them by Mr. Thomas L. Winthrop, and is happy to recognize the peculiar fitness of the halls of the Society for a depository of so treasured a relic as the sword worn by the great-great uncle of our former President, the Hon. Thomas L. Winthrop.

Rev. EDWARD E. HALE, D.D., said: I am sure that I represent the wish of the whole Society, when I propose a vote of thanks to Colonel Winthrop for the valuable and interesting gift which he makes to the Society. It is indeed grateful to the Society at any time to renew the recollections of the close connections of the honored family of Winthrop with the history of the country, since that history began. We are so fortunate as to possess in our own hall the original portrait of John Winthrop, which has been ascribed to the pencil of Vandyke, as well as that very curious "loving-cup," with its memories of many generations, which has been already alluded to. It is needless to refer to the name of Governor John Winthrop, the first historian of New England, who recorded for us, day by day, the history of the great movement, the whole of which he saw, and of which he was so large a part. To his son John, the Governor of Connecticut, we owe that body of correspondence, which I think the

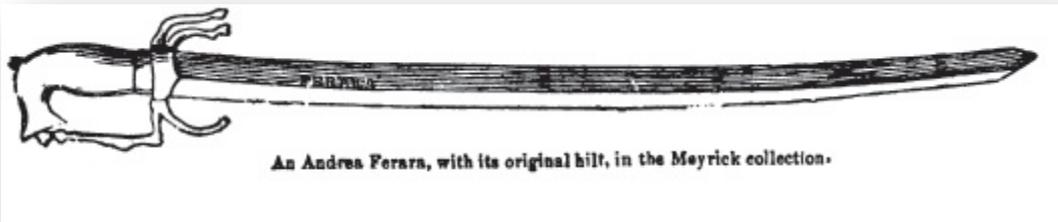
gentlemen around me would say is the most valuable store-house we have for information on the habits, the events, the social order, and the tone of feeling, of the generations after the first settlement, up to his death. His son, Fitz-John, entered — one almost says, of course — into the service of the country, and served it in such ways as have been traced by Judge STAPLES. John Winthrop, his nephew, in his own selected line of life rendered public services no less important. He was a graduate of Harvard College, and a fellow of the Royal Society. The fondness for science has shown itself, indeed, in all the Winthrops, from the beginning to this hour. The other John Winthrop, who was also a fellow of the Royal Society, and professor in Harvard College, was the friend and correspondent of Franklin. In the study of the Franklin correspondence lately, I have been greatly interested in seeing how close were his relations with Franklin, and how accurate were his observations in natural science. The dramatic story of the first occultation ever observed of the planet of Venus by young Horrocks in England, has always connected the return of that interesting phenomenon with his name. It is not, perhaps, so generally remembered that to Professor John Winthrop, above referred to, the world of science owes the second observation of that transit, which was made by Winthrop successfully, with a party from Harvard College whom he took to Newfoundland for that purpose. To our President, for many successive years Lieutenant-Governor of Massachusetts, in those good days when Massachusetts kept a good officer when she had found him, this Society owes much. It still possesses, as memorials of such obligation, the interesting objects which have been alluded to. We may add that we owe to him, as well, his share of our gratitude for the distinguished services of his son, who has served the State in a thousand ways, and who was so long the honored President of our sister society. Colonel Winthrop now renews all these remembrances by this gift of a sword which had been used in the service of the short-lived Commonwealth of England, and was destined to be used in the service of those other Commonwealths of New England, which have so long survived their mother. A sword which hung at its owner's side when he asserted that essential principle of New England history, — that the armies of New England are to be directed by the Governors of New England, and not by the English crown, — is certainly one of the most interesting memorials of that history. The Society is glad to associate it with the memory of the Governor who founded Massachusetts, of the two Governors who maintained in Connecticut the liberties and privileges which Connecticut had received at her birth, of the men of science and of letters who have done so much for the nobler life, riot of New England only, but of America, and of these distinguished gentlemen who still live, to leave to those who come after us new reasons for honoring the name of Winthrop. I move that the thanks of the Society be presented to Colonel Winthrop for his priceless gift.

The motion of Dr. HALE was unanimously adopted.



Scottish notes and queries, Volumes 7-9 [Page 158](#)

Andrea Ferrara (IX, 95, 109, 143). — “Centurion” in N. & Q. of 16th Feb., 1856, writes that the temper of such blades is much over-stated. He adds, “I gave for my best claymore (the make of Andrea Ferrara) £3 10s, but in this specimen the hilt is not inlaid with silver, as is the case with many of them.” Mr. E. S. Taylor also writes: “Planché, in his [History of British Costume](#), p. 350, engraves one of these sword-blades from the [Meyrick Collection](#), and says that these were highly prized in Scotland about 1574. Their value has risen since the



[Highland Gatherings](#) at [Braemar](#), &c., as a genuine Andrea Ferrara to wear on that occasion is considered ‘the thing.’ Of the maker, I believe, nothing satisfactory is known. The name is variously engraved on them ANDRIA, ANDREA, FERRARA, FERARA, and some are said to be spurious.” He adds that a specimen he bought in [Glenfinlas](#) is incomparable for elasticity and flexibility, length 34 inches, exclusive of the basket hilt, breadth 1¼ inches tapering to a rounded point; blade three-grooved. “F” writes subsequently that it seems to be agreed that no sword manufacturer of this name has been discovered, and suggests whether “Ferrara” does not stand for *ferra rara* choice blades, but he does not suggest how to get over the difficulty with the word Andrea. Mr. W. J. Bernhard Smith states that he has a specimen,

probably of the time of Charles II, with basket-hilt of Spanish fashion, embossed, blade single-eyed but with very thin back, on each side the word Ferrara, with a mound or orb, double crossed and inlaid with copper. Sometimes the word is spelt "Farrara," with a sun for the forge-mark. The mark is also found on rapiers. Mr. Smith adds that, good as they are, few, if any, could stand the test of Wilkinson's proof. Ray, in his [History of the Rebellion](#), says his sword was "of the [Highland make](#), by that curious workman Andrew Ferrara⁵." "Clericus," in further discussing the question, says "I believe that all *genuine* Farrara blades are of nearly the same date, having been forged by one of two brothers, natives of Farrara in Italy, Andria's blades being the best." He adds other interesting information regarding them (N. & Q., 22nd March, 1856).

⁵ Journal of the British Archaeological Association Volume XXI page [316](#) *On Andrea Ferrara Swords* by George Vere Irving.

Andrea Ferara

“Sliceing swords, broad, thinne, and of an excellent temper.”⁶

WHAT was the age and country of Andrea Ferara? This is a question which has excited and disappointed the antiquaries of Scotland and England for more than half a century. The inquiry interested Sir Walter Scott through great part of his literary life, was vainly followed by [Sir Samuel Meyrick](#), and occupied the Deputy-Keeper of the Records in [Edinburgh](#) during a critical examination of the Chamberlain’s and Treasurer’s accounts, and all the documents of the Register House likely to have included the entry of payments to the celebrated swordmaker.

These researches were undertaken in consequence of the popular belief that Andrea had visited Scotland — a supposition, however, only founded upon the number of his blades extant in this kingdom, from which it was gratuitously assumed that they had been especially manufactured for Scottish use and within the realm. Originally, however, Ferara’s blades were no less common in all the Western and Southern countries of Europe, while the broadsword was a popular arm, and only in later periods became more numerous in Scotland, because this weapon was retained among the Highlanders and Borderers for more than a hundred years after it had disappeared in other nations before the rapier and the small-sword; but in the armouries of Spain, Italy, and Germany, especially in the two former regions, the number of Ferara’s blades still bear witness to their ancient prevalence.

The belief being established that the great master had visited Scotland, it was suggested by Sir Walter Scott that he was one of the various foreign artificers invited by James V. to improve the arts and manufactures of his country.⁷ This supposition was very generally received, but no evidence was discovered for its confirmation. Meanwhile, the country of the fabricator remained no less doubtful than his period, for though his surname is one of those derived from nativity or domiciliation, there are towns of Ferara in Spain,⁸ as well as the ducal metropolis in Italy; and thus it was uncertain in which of these cities the family of the swordmaker had its origin. From some unknown bias, however, in Scotland, the popular belief was wholly directed to Spain, though apparently this preference had no better foundation than the popular intercourse of the Highlands with that country in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and the general celebrity associated with the blades of Bilboa⁹, [Toledo](#), and [Valencia](#), which in later times had superseded the more ancient renown of the once pre-eminent “[Milan](#) steel;” but whatever the cause for the nativity imputed to Ferara, a

⁶ Sir JOHN HAYWARD: *Life and Raigne of King Edward the Sixth*. 4^{to} London 1630, p. [30](#).

⁷ *Pitscottie Chronicle* 8^{vo} Edinburgh 1814, ii. 407.

⁸ In the provinces of [Lerida](#), [Coruña](#), and [Oviedo](#). Madoz: *Geog. Españ.* The name is often written indifferently, Farrera, Ferraria, and [Feraria](#), but this does not affect its identity with Farara. For the Italian city is also given as Ferara, Farara, and Ferare, and all these forms are only examples of the universal uncertainty of orthography in the middle ages, to which the name of the swordmaker was equally subject, appearing on his blades as Ferara, [Ferrara](#), Farara, and Farrara.

⁹ [Bilbao](#), Spain.

tradition current in the West Highlands explains not only his Celtiberian origin, but the event through which he visited Scotland.

According to this history, Ferara was a Spanish artist, and in the height of his celebrity had an apprentice, who was an excellent workman, and possessed a high spirit of emulation to perfect his skill in the service of so great a master; his ambition, however, was disappointed by a habitude of Andrea, that when the blades were in a certain stage of forging, he excluded the workmen, and locked the door of the atelier while he performed some unknown operation, after which he again admitted the assistants to finish the blades which were in progress. The apprentice was persuaded that this seclusion concealed some occult process which essentially affected the perfection of the arms. Anxious to possess this important secret, upon the first absence of his master, he bored a hole in the door of the atelier, and at the next occasion when he and his fellows were excluded, returned alone to the smithy, and applying his eye to the prepared orifice, discovered his master in the act of drawing a heated blade from the forge. The lad watched with suspended breath. Ferara laid the red steel on the anvil, and taking from a bench a small tin like a flour-dredge, rapidly covered the glowing metal with a coat of white powder, which he then hammered into the iron until it was cold, when he again returned it to the fire, and having given the proper degree of heat, repeated the same operation of powdering and hammering on the other side of the blade. This process was performed in succession upon all the weapons then in progress, until the whole being completed. Ferara laid down his hammer and turned towards the door. The varlet perceived that the mystery was at an end, and dreading to be surprised, abandoned his eyelet-hole, and fled to his companions, with whom he was immediately recalled to continue their vocations. The apprentice exulted in his discovery, but he could not boast with the ancient sage — “My secret is my own;” and it escaped among his companions. These youths, being less ambitious to emulate the skill of their master than to vaunt the possession of his mystery, their disclosures were soon repeated to Ferara, and one day, when the inquisitive apprentice was alone in the smithy, Andrea entered in a tempest of wrath, and loaded him with reproaches for having betrayed the secret of his art. The young man replied with intemperance; and in the heat of their altercation Ferara struck him on the head with a hammer which he had in his hand, and laid him senseless at his feet; the blow was fatal, and to avoid pursuit for the homicide, Andrea fled the country, and escaped into France, from whence, in an itinerant exercise of his profession — not uncommon in the middle ages, and still continued in the [Wanderschaft](#) of Germany — he passed the sea into Scotland.

Whether there is any truth in this tradition, or whether it is a passage in the life of some other eminent armourer confounded with that of Ferara,¹⁰ will now perhaps never be known, but in the secret operation attributed to this artist there is a singular coincidence with two practical facts — the one in the ordinary manufacture of iron, the other in the operation of the ancient sword-blades of Damascus. In the former carbon and silica are mixed with the ore in the furnace. “The carbon combines with the oxygen of the iron, and escapes in the form of carbonic acid gas, while the silica unites with the lime,” which is also present in the furnace, “and forms a kind of fluid glass or scoria which protects the iron from the action of the atmosphere.” In the manufacture of the Damascus scimitars, one of the operations for producing the finest blades was to sprinkle the steel while red hot with diamond and ruby dust, and to hammer the powder into the metal.¹¹ This process has been ridiculed by an

¹⁰ WILKINSON'S *Engines of War*, p. [224](#).

¹¹ Arabic MS in the Rzewusky Library. By an erratum in WILKINSON'S *Engines of War*, p. [211](#), the title of the eminent orientalist is given as “Rzwruczchi.” WILKINSON'S *Engines of War*, p. [211](#).

eminent experimenter for the “ignorant” extravagance “which used” diamond-dust for carbon, and ruby for alumina or silica;¹² but Sir Isaac Newton discovered that diamond is the purest carbon, and ruby is known to combine a mixture of alumina with a large proportion of the finest silica. It is therefore probable that the operation of the Damascus smiths was founded in a sensibility of these principles, and that, far from the result of “ignorance,” it was derived from that profound knowledge of chemistry in which the Saracens had been the masters of the Western world. Whether, however, the operation was efficacious or vain, is not a question here, where we have only to consider the coincidence between the Damascus and the reputed Spanish process. That they were identical in matter as in formula, may however be doubtful, from the improbability that a medium so costly as jewel-dust could have been commanded by a trans-Pyrenean smith. The identity of operation, however, is unequivocal, and this community in facts is enhanced by a community of origin in the arts of the operators; for all the chemistry of Spain was derived from the Moors, and these were only the Western line of the Saracens, who were equally the parent stock of the mediaeval Syrians; and though the Spanish artist should not have used diamond and ruby dust, he might — as suggested by the British critic — have substituted the simpler elements of the same principles, carbon in the forge, and silica and alumina in “the white powder” amalgamated on the anvil.

In these considerations we have received the operation attributed to Ferara without any relation to his nationality; partly because the circumstantial evidence of the tradition indicates a verity in fact — partly, that whatever the nativity of the operator, he might at some period of his life have wrought in the forges of Spain,¹³ or, as before said, that the legend may have originated with another master, and become associated with Ferara by one of those various transmigrations which sometimes confound the personages of oral record; but whether the story applied to Andrea or to another, we have now to show that in the height of his profession he was established at the town of [Belluno](#) in [Friuli](#), an ancient duchy of Illyria, which in 1420 was added to [Venice](#); and though in the succeeding year the eastern portion was seized by Austria, the city of [Belluno](#) and the remaining territory continued under the dominion of the Doges until 1707. The evidence of Ferara's domiciliation in this province is contained in a chapter upon the most renowned sword masters of Italy in the sixteenth century — part of a once highly esteemed military treatise, published at [Venice](#) in 1585; and as the account illustrates the celebrity of the artist by showing the pre-eminence of the masters with whom he was associated, we shall give the text without diminution:-

LAME DA SPADE, STOCCHI, PUGNALI, ET ARME DA INASTARE. Cap. LXX,

“Se la cognitione de i luoghi et de i maestri de me descritti sin’hora sarà punto grata, et di qualche commodità a tutti i soldati, maggiormente, sarà questa ad ogni altra qualità di persone, le quali tal forte d’armi sogliono esercitare come sono spade, spadoni, stocchi, cortelazzi et mazze de cavalli, con pugnali et arme da inastare d’ogni forte che si usano. De i maestri delle quali volendo alcuno sapere il nome tralasciando molti, mi restringerò ne i piu eccellente che se ritrovino; et de i luoghi et paesi lasciando adietro la grandissima Alemagna, la Francia, et nella Spagna la famosa [Valenza](#), dove si trovano infinite arme d’ogni sorte: verrò all’Italia, alla quale daremo con ogni ragione il pregio et vanto di quest’arte. Et primieramente diremo di Milano, cioè nel castello si lavorano perfetissimi lavori di lame da spade et pugnali, et di diverse altre varie sorti de lame, che sono di buone et finissime tempre. Di Brescia non mi estenderò molto, ma solo toccando il nome di due fratelli, ambi maestri sopra ogn’altro eccellentissimi, i quali sono Simone et Serafino, figlioli & heredi del famoso et tanto celebrato Maestro Serafino, che faceva lame con tempre miracolose, et di esso si dice che fece una spada a un gran Principe, di tanta eccellenza, che gli donò in pagamento meglio di cinquecento ducati, oltre altre infinite

¹² WILKINSON'S *Engines of War*, p. [211](#).

¹³ In this alternative presumption, it is to be observed that the tradition defines only the operative domiciliation, and not the nationality of Ferara; that he was a “Spanish *artist*,” but not that he was *a native* of Spain.

maravigli che di esso si raccontano. In un'altro luogo chiamato [Gron](#) su'l territorio [Bergemasco](#), si ritrovano alcuni valenti maestri, et si chiamono quelli di Abram, che hanno buonissimo nome in quest'arte. Della quale ancora perfettissamente si lavoro in [Saravalle](#), et Ciuidal de [Bellun](#), luogi del [Friuli](#), ne i quale si trovano valentissimi maestri d'ogni sorte; cioè in [Saravalle](#), Maestro Pegin da Feltran, huomo famosissimo et raro, il quale alle sue fornaci fa lavorieri miracolossimi, & in Ciuidal di [Bellun](#) sono gl'ingegnosi Maestro Giovan Donato et Maestro *Andrea de i Ferari*, ambidue fratelli, i quai stanno alle fusine di Messer Giovan Battista detto il Barcelone. Nel territorio [Vicentino](#), al Monte della Madonna, a canto il [fiume Reron](#), u'è un valentissimo huomo detto Maestro Lorenzo da [Formigano](#), soprannominato 'il Zotto;' questo ha buonissima fama, & fa cose d'arme maravigliose di bellezza et bontà."¹⁴

“Though the knowledge of the places and the masters described by me, will be principally interesting to soldiers, it will also be acceptable to every other condition of persons, who are accustomed to exercise such arms as swords, broad-swords, rapiers, cutlasses, horsemen's maces, poniards, and damascined arms of all the kinds which are in use. Of those masters of whom it may be desired to know the names, omitting many in the illustrious Germany, France, and in Spain the famous [Valencia](#), where are found numerous arms of every sort, I shall confine myself to the most excellent, with their places and countries, in Italy; to which, with every reason, we will give the pre-eminence and boast in this art. And first we will speak of Milan, where in the castle are wrought most perfect works in blades of swords, and poniards, and divers other various sorts of blades, which are of good and finest temper. Of Brescia I will not relate much, only touching the names of two brothers — both masters above all others the most excellent, and who are Simone and Serafino, sons and heirs of the so much celebrated Master Serafino who made blades of miraculous temper, and of whom it was said that he made a sword for a great Prince of such excellence, that he gave him in payment better than five hundred ducats, besides other infinite marvels which are told of him. In another place called [Gron](#), on the territory of [Bergumasco](#), are found some valiant masters called Abram, who have a very good name in their art, which also is wrought most perfectly in [Serravalle](#), and in the town of [Belluno](#), places in [Friuli](#), in which are found excellent masters of every sort ; that is, in [Serravalle](#), Master Pegin da [Feltran](#), a very famous and rare man, who, in his forges, makes miraculous works; and in the town of [Belluno](#) are the ingenious Masters Giovan Donato and *Andrea of the Feraras*, both brothers, of the foundry of Master Giovan Battista, called 'the Barcelonian.' Of the territory of [Vicentino](#), at Monte della Madonna, on the bank of the [Rezon](#), is a most valiant man called Master Lorenzo da [Formignano](#), called by sobriquet 'the Dolt,' who has the best fame, and makes marvellous arms for beauty and for excellence.”

The date of this notice gives an approximate indication for the period of Ferrara's birth, for since he is associated with the sword makers of the greatest celebrity in the year 1585, such eminence could scarcely have been attained under the age of thirty years; from whence it may be assumed that he was born about the year 1555. The question of his country, however, may still be liable to the cavil, that as his master Giovanni Battista was named “the Barcelonian,” and, therefore, evidently a Spaniard, it may be conjectured that the brothers, Giovan Donato and Andrea [Ferrara](#), were brought by him to Italy. This supposition, however, is expressly contradicted by the author of the treatise, in the declaration that he forbore to mention the artists of Germany, France, and Spain, and restricted his celebration to those of Italy alone. The notice of “the Barcelonian” is no exception of this rule, since he is only introduced incidentally as the master of [Ferrara](#), without any reference to his own operation, and it is not even necessarily conclusive that he was established in Italy; for according to the prevailing usage of the mediæval craftsmen to improve their skill in foreign schools, his pupils, Andrea

¹⁴ GIOVAN MATTHEO CIGOGNA. *Trattato Militare*: 4^{to}, Venetia, 1583, fol. [62](#).

and Giovanni, might have resorted to Spain, to perfect their apprenticeship under a celebrated master.

But that [Ferara](#) was a native of Italy is confirmed by the evidence that before and during his time there were others of the same surname, swordmakers in that country. This is sufficiently indicated by the mode of his denomination — “*de i Ferari*,” of *the* “*Feraras*,” which expresses that a family of this appellation was then established, and familiarly known, if not celebrated, in the peninsula ; and that they were of native extraction is confirmed by the before-mentioned restriction of their recorder to the artists of his own country. From whence it may be concluded that the origin of the Ferari was in the ducal city of the same name. These assumptions are confirmed by the existence of blades bearing the name of Cosmo, and of Piero Ferara, the last of a form coëval with those of Andrea, the first of a period about two generations anterior. The time and country of both these makers are indicated by circumstantial associations; of Piero the nationality is presumptive in the name, which for a Spaniard had been “*Pedro*,” while his era is evinced by the form of his blades corresponding in model with those of Andrea. In the instance of Cosmo, the nationality is no less expressed by an appellation almost exclusively Italian, and the period by the form of weapons, identified with the first half of the sixteenth century. This datum is confirmed by a splendid two-handed sword in our possession, bearing the distinctive features of that time, marked with the name Cosmo Ferara, accompanied by the tradition that it belonged originally to the celebrated Italian general, Prospero Colonna, who died in 1523.

From all these combinations there results a chain of circumstantial evidence, closely approaching to demonstration, that Andrea Ferara was born about the year 1555, that he was of a family of armourers which had existed in Italy at least two generations before that time, and of whom the first, like Giovanni de Bologna, Leonardo da Vinci, Paolo Veronese, and a crowd of mediæval artists, derived his nomination from the place of his nativity — the ducal city of Ferara.

Of Giovan Donato we know nothing beyond the notice of Cigogna; but since he is called the brother of Andrea, it is uncertain whether he was the son of the same mother and of another father, or whether the name of Donato was only a second baptismal appellation. This supposition is rendered probable from the general mediæval usage of Italy, in the popular nomination of artists by their Christian names alone, as Guido, Raphael, Claude, Salvator, Michel-Angelo, &c, an inference which is confirmed by the apparent similar example in the designation of the brother armourers, Simone and Serafino, “*figlioli del famoso Serafino*,” in which it is evident that not only the name of Simone, but that of the Serafini, father and son, was a baptismal and not a surname, for, if otherwise, the elder Serafino should have been distinguished by his prænomens. From all these considerations, therefore, it is probably conclusive that the entire name of Giovanni was “*Giovan Donato Ferara*,” and that he was a full brother to Andrea.

Archaeologia aeliana, or, Miscellaneous tracts relating to antiquity (1822)

[Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle upon Tyne Volume 22-23 pages 1-11](#)

IN THE CASTLE OF NEWCASTLE-UPON-TYNE.

No. 1. This sword weighs 2lb 9oz, and is three feet seven and seven-eighths inches over all.

The blade is two-edged, and three feet one and seven-eighths inches in length (3ft 1 $\frac{7}{8}$ in [0.9144m]), one and one-eighth inches broad at the base (1 $\frac{1}{8}$ in [29mm]), tapering to three-quarters of an inch (19mm) at three inches (76mm) from the point. It is slightly fluted, having one shallow central groove on each side in which is barely legible FERARA, and beyond the groove, with feet to the same edge as the tops of the letters, is the running wolf mark. This mark (see Figure 4 Nicknamed "Foxes" – the Wolf or Fox mark came from Solingen) is of frequent occurrence on excellent Ferara blades, and is probably imitated from the more ancient wolf blades of Passau and Solingen, which came to be known in England during the sixteenth century as 'foxes.' These blades were largely imported into this country, where this mark was taken for a fox, and the use of this word in our Elizabethan literature shows that it was then so familiar that a sword was popularly known as a fox.

It is generally assumed that all wolf or fox blades were made in Germany; but this is questionable, for in Webster's [White Devil](#) we have:

"O! what a blade is't?

A Toledo or an English Fox?"

... and in Broome's [English Moor](#).

"Old foxes are best blades."



Figure 4 Nicknamed "Foxes" – the [Wolf or Fox mark](#) came from Solingen

Originally, however, Ferara blades were also common¹⁵ in all the western and southern countries of Europe, whilst the broadsword was a popular arm, and only became more numerous in Scotland, because this weapon was retained amongst the Highlanders and Borderers more than one hundred years after it had been supplanted in other nations by the rapier and the small sword. Under these circumstances, the Highlander, a good judge of blades, would naturally acquire the best specimens considered obsolete elsewhere, and who

¹⁵ Large numbers were destroyed by the enforcement of the disarming Acts of 1716, 1725, 1746, and after Culloden a garden trellis was made of broadsword blades, many of them Feraras.

knows but that his choice may have been influenced by the apparent rebus of Andrea Ferara and St. Andrew's iron. There is, at any rate, one example:-

X ANDREWA X

X FARRERA X

... with St. Andrew's cross at the beginning and end of each word,¹⁶ certainly suggestive of having been made in Scotland or at least for Scotland.

Mr. G. V. Irving, F.S.A. Scot., in 1895,¹⁷ gave an analysis of twenty-five Ferara blades, which contained fifteen types, including seven different spellings, as follows:-

ANDREA	FERARA	FARARA	FERARE
ANDRIA	FERARA	FARARA	
ANDREIA	FERARA	FARARA	

Besides the variations caused by the Andrea being sometimes above the Ferara, sometimes on a line with it, sometimes both repeated twice on each side, and sometimes only the Andrea on one side and Ferara on the other.

[Baron de Cosson](#)¹⁸ says, 'It is certain that common as blades bearing the signature Andrea Ferara are in this country, scarcely any of them are the work of Andrea Ferara who gained such great renown for the superb temper of the blades which he produced at his workshop at [Belluno](#), in the second half of the sixteenth century.' Experts agree that the majority of blades commonly attributed to him date about the seventeenth century, being mostly made in [Solingen](#) or Spain, though perhaps a few in Scotland, and there are examples on which the name of the town of [Solingen](#) or that of [Lisbon](#) occurs in addition to his signature. There are also many bearing a [crowned king's head](#) at every second letter¹⁹ this was the mark of [Johannes Wundes](#) of [Solingen](#), 1560-1610.



I think we may conclude from these facts that at Ferara's death, about 1584, his blades had made such a reputation and the demand for them was so great that subsequent makers adopted his name as a sort of AI mark not, perhaps, intending to pass them off as his work, or why should they have put on their own marks?

¹⁶ See *Scottish National Memorials*. See Figures 1-3.

¹⁷ *Journal of Brit. Arch. Assoc.* for 1865.

¹⁸ *Arsenals and Armouries in South Germany and Austria*.

¹⁹ There is a fine specimen now in [South Kensington museum](#) lent by Seymour Lucas, R.A. See also [Egerton Castle's Schools and Master of the Fence](#) p. 231 and [Lord Archibald Campbell's pamphlet](#).