

SABRE-FENCING, the art of attack and defence with the sabre, or broad-sword. Besides the heavy German basket-sabre and the Schlager (see below) there are two varieties of sabre used for fencing, the military sword and the so-called light sabre. These are nearly identical in shape, being composed of a slightly curved blade about 34 in. in length and a handle furnished with a guard to protect the hand; but the military sword, or broad-sword proper, the blade of which is about  $\frac{5}{8}$  in. wide near the guard, tapering to  $\frac{1}{2}$  in. near the point, is considerably heavier than the light sabre and is generally preferred by military instructors, being almost identical with the regulation army sabre in size and weight. Until 1900 it was the common fencing sabre in Great Britain, the United States, and most European countries, although its use was practically confined to military circles. About 1900 the light Italian sabre was introduced and became the recognized cut-and-thrust weapon among fencers throughout the world. In Austria-Hungary it became popular as early as 1885, while in Italy, the country of its origin, it has been in use since the middle of the 19th century. Its blade is about  $\frac{7}{16}$  in. wide a little below the guard, tapering to  $\frac{5}{16}$  in. just under the point. For practice this is truncated and the edge blunt, but in scoring both edge and point are assumed to be sharp, while in countries on the continent of Europe (though not in Great Britain or the United States) the back-edge (false-edge) is also supposed to be sharpened for some 8 in. from the point. In Italy when used for duelling the point and both edges are actually sharpened.

The modern sabre is a descendant of the curved light cavalry sword of the late 18th century, which was introduced into Europe from the Orient by the Hungarians.

The old-time European swords used for cutting were nearly all straight, like the Ital. *schivona* and *spadroon*, the English and German two-handers and the Scotch claymore (see SWORD). There was indeed a heavy curved fencing weapon called *dussack*, very popular in the German fencing schools of the 16th and 17th centuries, which was of wood, very broad and as long as the fencer's arm, with an elliptical hole for the hand in place of a guard. But the *dussack* was introduced from Bohemia, where, as in Hungary, swords were oriental in shape, and as it completely disappeared in the last half of the 17th century it can hardly be considered in any way as the ancestor of the modern sabre. The old English *back-sword*, the traditional English weapon, though the curved form was not quite unknown, was almost invariably straight. The ancient English sword-and-buckler play (see FENCING) was, to the disgust of its devotees, driven out as a method of serious combat by the introduction at the beginning of the Elizabethan era of the Italian thrusting rapier. Nevertheless it survived as a sport up to the first half of the 18th century, being practised, together with the backsword or broad-sword play, cudgelling or single-stick fencing, foiling and boxing, by the fencing masters of that period, whose exhibitions, given for the most part in the popular bear-gardens, were described by Pepys, Steele and others. The masters who figured in these "stage-fights" were called "prize-fighters"; and at that period they regarded boxing only as an unimportant part of their art. The most famous of them was Figg, the "Atlas

of the Sword" (see FENCING). The back-sword of Figg's time was essentially the military sword then in use, having a single straight edge. The blows were aimed at the head, body or legs. Towards the close of the 18th century sticks began to be used for back-swording, the play at first being aimed at any part of the person; but the head soon came to be the sole object of attack, blows on the body and arms being used only to gain an opening. The usual defence was from a high hanging guard. No lunging was allowed. Fencing with the broad-sword did not, however, at any period entirely disappear in England, and was taught by all the regular masters, especially by the celebrated Angelo. The earlier play, of the time of Figg and later, was simple and safe. The prevailing defensive position was the hanging guard, high or medium, with the arm extended and the point downwards. There were also high inside and outside, tierce, quarte, low prime, seconde, and the head or "St George," parries; the last, a guard with the blade nearly horizontal above the head, being the supposed position of England's patron saint from which he dealt his fatal blow at the dragon. Owing to the great weight of the old backsword wristplay was almost impossible, the cuts being delivered with a chopping stroke. Later in the 18th century a nimbler style, called the Austrian, came into fashion, owing to the introduction of a lighter, curved sabre, the principal guards being the medium, with extended hand and sword held perpendicularly with the point up; the hanging, with the point down, both outside and inside; the half-circle; the "St George"; and the spadron, with horizontal arm and sword pointing downwards. The spadron (Ital. *spadrona*), a light, straight, flat-bladed and two-edged sword, was also a popular 18th-century weapon, and was used both for cutting and thrusting. The thrusting attacks and parries were generally similar to those of the small-sword (see FOIL-FENCING), but few or no circular parries were used. The cuts were like those of the broad-sword. The Germans, like the British, were once masters of the edge in fencing, but the art declined with the introduction of the point, and sabre-playing survived only in the army and in academic circles with the heavy basket-sabre (see below).

The school of sabre still taught in most armies, and up to the end of the 19th century by fencing-masters of all countries except Italy and Austria-Hungary, shows little advance from that in vogue in Angelo's time. Two fundamental guards are usual, one (taught at the French army school at Joinville-le-Pont) corresponding to the guard of tierce in foil-fencing, except that the left forearm rests in the small of the back; and the other a high hanging guard, with crooked arm and the point of the sabre directed slightly forwards. The methods of coming on guard differ considerably, but have nothing to do with fencing proper. In 1896 the Florentine (Radaelli) system of sabre was introduced into the British army, the cavaliere F. Masiello spending some time at Aldershot for the purpose of training the army sword-masters; but since the year 1901 regular instruction in swordsmanship has practically been abandoned.

Fencing on horseback for cavalry is simple in comparison with light sabre-play. The cavalry sword is of two patterns, one the heavy, straight cuirassier's sword, and the other somewhat lighter with a slightly curved blade. On

the attack straight point thrusts, and wide sweeping cuts are used. The three principal parries are the "head" (or "high prime") with horizontally held blade; the "tierce", on the right, parrying cuts at the left side of the head and body; and the "quarte", on the opposite side.

The modern style of fencing with the light sabre was perfected in Italy during the last quarter of the 19th century, the most important pioneer in its development having been G. Radaelli, a Milanese master, who became chief instructor of the sabre in the Royal Italian Military Fencing Academy in 1874, when it was transferred to Milan from Parma. Radaelli's system was described by F. Masiello, an army officer whose works remain the chief authority on the light sabre. An old-time rivalry between the Neapolitan and the northern Italian fencing methods came to a crisis when M. Parise, an expert of the southern school, secured first place for foil-fencing in a tournament instituted by the military authorities, the result being the transfer of the Military Fencing Academy to Rome under the title of *Scuola Magistrate di Roma*. There was, however, less difference between the two schools in sabre than in foil play, and the Radaelli system for the former was so generally esteemed that a master of that method was established at the Roman Academy.

The light fencing-sabre is made up of two principal parts, the blade and the handle. The blade, from  $33\frac{1}{2}$  to 34 in. long and slightly and gradually curved from hilt to point (which is truncated), has the tongue, or tang, which runs through the handle; the heel, or thick uppermost part of the blade fitting on to the guard; the edge, running from heel to point; the back-edge or false-edge (sometimes not allowed), running from the point along the back for about 8 in.; and the back, running from point to heel (unless there is a back-edge). The blade is fluted on both sides from the heel where the back-edge begins. The handle consists of the guard, of thin metal, extending from the pommel to the heel of the blade, to protect the hand; the grip (of wood, fish-skin, or leather, often backed with metal), shaped to fit the hand, through which the tongue of the blade passes; and the pommel, or knob, a button which finishes off the handle and holds the tongue in place.

The recognition of the light fencing-sabre as a practice weapon only, related to the heavier military sword as the foil is to the duelling-sword, at once makes apparent the difference between the play of the two cut- and thrust-weapons. As a light cut with the military sabre will be of little advantage in battle, however prettily delivered, it is evident that in order to produce a shock of impact sufficient to put an adversary out of action, a wide sweeping movement with the sword (*moulinet*; Ital. *molinelli*) is necessary. With the fencing-sabre a hit is a hit if properly delivered with the edge or point, however light it may be: For hits of this kind less force is necessary, and wide moulinets are not only useless but dangerous, since in making them the point must for a moment be directed away from the opponent, and momentary openings are thus left of which the opponent may take advantage by attacks on the preparation. For this reason the cuts of the Radaelli school are delivered with moulinets of very narrow radius, made as much as possible by a movement of the elbow only, keeping the point directed menacingly towards the opponent. Again, whereas in battle

a wound on any part of the person may be effective and the school of the heavy sabre has to reckon with this fact, in fencing with the light sabre no hit lower than the hips counts, although hits upon any part of the person above the hips are good; in England cuts on the outside of the thigh are allowed. This somewhat narrows the scope of the fencing-sabre, just as the scope of the foil is narrower than that of the duelling-sword.

The military sword is, on account of its weight usually held firmly in the hand with the thumb overlapping the fingers; but in holding the light sabre the thumb is placed on the flat of the grip, giving a perfect command over the movements of the blade, called by the Italians *pasteggio*. Both attacks and parries are executed as narrowly as possible, avoiding the wide movements common in heavy sabre-play, and the moulinets (which are ellipses described by the point as it is drawn back for a cut) are made, not by swinging the sword round the head, but by drawing back the hand held in front of the body, and with the point directed forward. The thrusts with the light sabre are made with the thumb to the left; whereas in the French school it is turned down, so that the blade curves upward. The modern school allows no such parries as the "St George," in executing which the blade is held at right angles to the body, but teaches that the point should always be directed towards the adversary as much as possible. The attacks are either "simple," "complex" or "secondary," and bear a general resemblance to those in foil-fencing (q.v.); simple attacks being such as are not preceded by other movements, as feints; complex attacks those preceded by feints, advances, or some other preliminary manoeuvre; and secondary attacks those carried out while the adversary is himself attacking or preparing to attack. The parries also correspond in nomenclature, and generally in nature, to those used in foil-play, but no circular or counter-parries are taught, though sometimes employed.

*Terms used in Sabre-Fencing.*-"Absence of the blade": a guard so wide as apparently to leave the body uncovered, so as to entice the adversary to attack. "Appuntata," (Fr. *remise*): a supplementary cut or thrust after the failure of an attack, when the adversary replies slowly or with a feint. "Assault" (Ital. *assalto*), a regular bout. "Attacks on the blade" (see below under "beat," "disarmament," "graze" and "press"). "Beat" (Ital. *battuta*): a hard dry stroke on the adversary's blade, in order to drive it aside and push home an attack; a "re-beat" is made by beating lightly on one side, then dropping the point quickly under the adversary's blade and beating violently on the other side. *Cavazione* (see below under "disengage"). "Completion" (see below under *riposte*). "Controtempo": to parry an attack in such a manner that the adversary is hit at the same time. "Deceive the blade": when the adversary attempts an "attack on the blade" to avoid contact by a narrow circular movement of the point and hand; this is generally followed by a straight thrust or cut, as the force of his blow will carry his blade wide and leave an opening. "Development" (attacks on the): attacks made while the adversary is making a complex attack, *i.e.* one consisting of at least two movements (feint and real attack). *Deviamento* (see below under "press"). "Disarmament" (Ital. *sforzo*): striking the adver-

sary's weapon from his hand by means of a sweeping stroke along his blade from the point downwards. "Disengage" (Ital. *cavazione*): being on guard (engaged) in one line, to draw one's point under the adversary's sword and lunge on the Other side: to avoid a cut by retiring the right foot behind the left; a time-cut at the adversary's arm is usually made at the same time. "Graze" (Ital. *filo*): to run one's blade along that of the adversary and push home the attack suddenly. "Invitation guard": a guard in any line with the blade intentionally so Wide that the adversary lunges into the apparent opening, only to meet a prepared counter. *Incontro* (Ital. for double-hit): both fencers attacking at the same instant. "Lines" (of engagement) : the four quarters into which the trunk is divided, attacks and parries opposite them being called after them. These are, with the hand held in "supination" (thumb on top of sabre-grip): upper right, "sixte"; upper left hand, "quarte"; lower right "octave" (not used in sabre); lower left "half -circle." (not used in sabre). When the hand is held in "pronation" (thumb down) the lines are: upper right, "tierce"; upper left, "prime"; lower right, "seconde"; lower left, "low prime" ("seconde" generally used). *Quinte* and *septime* are also lines of the Italian school. "Lunge": the advance of the body by stepping forward with the right foot in order to deliver a cut or thrust. "Opposition"; pressing the hand and blade in attack towards the side the adversary's blade is on; the object being to occupy his blade and cover one's person from a "riposte." "Press": forcing the adversary's blade aside by a sudden push in order to create an opening for an attack, either directly or on the same side after he has recovered his blade and parried too wide on his supposed threatened side. "Preparation" (attacks on the): mostly made by "deceiving" when the adversary attempts a beat, graze or press. "Re-beat" (see "beat"). "Remise" (see "appuntata"). "Riposte": a quick cut or thrust made after parrying an attack, without lunging. When the, riposte in its turn is parried and replied to with another riposte, the French call this second riposte the *tac-au-tac*. *Sforzo* (see "disarmament"). *Scandaglio*: studying an opponent's style at the beginning of a bout. "Stop-thrust"; a direct thrust made as the adversary begins a complex attack, i.e. one of more than one movement. The stop-thrust must get home palpably before the adversary's attack or the attack alone is counted, the rule of scoring being that he who is attacked must take the parry. "Time-cut": a quick slash at the adversary's arm as he begins a complex attack. *Toccatol!* Ital. for "hit!" *Touche!*: French for "hit!"

*Manchette-Fencing* (Fr. *manchette*, a cuff) is a variety of sabre-play popular in Germany, in which the fencers stand at such a distance from each other that only hand and forearm can be reached with the last few inches of the sword nearest the point, both edges being supposed to be sharp. No thrusts are allowed, and both feet must remain stationary where they are planted when the bout begins. Narrow parries are necessary, though many cuts are avoided by withdrawing the hand. *Manchette-fencing* is not considered good practice for the light sabre and is therefore losing ground.

The German Basket-Sabre (*Krummer Sabel*, or *Krummsabel*) is a descendant of the heavy cavalry

sabre once in use in some branches of the German horse. It is now used almost exclusively by students. It has a strongly curved blade about 32in. long and 1in. broad, tapering slightly towards the end, which is truncated, no thrusts being allowed. The hand is protected by a large guard of heavy steel basket-work, and the handle is shaped to fit the hand, the forefinger being run through a leathern loop. On account of the great weight of the weapon (about 2  $\frac{1}{2}$ lb, more than half of which is in the guard) blows delivered with a full swing are impracticable, and all cuts are made from the elbow and wrist, the hand being generally kept as high as possible. The *Mensur* is the distance at which the combatants stand from one another. There are three recognized distances, that in general use being the middle, from which two sabres can be crossed at about 15in. from the points. Neither combatant may move his left foot (the right in the case of a left-handed fencer) from the position in which it is placed at the beginning of the bout, all advances and retreats being made by the movements of the right foot and the body. The position of the engagement is in high tierce, the arm being held straight out towards the adversary. The feet are planted about 24in. apart, the right in advance. The right shoulder is bent forward and the stomach drawn back, imparting a slight stoop to the fencer. There are eight cuts and as many parries. The basket-sabre is used in the more serious students' duels; the neck, wrist, armpits and body below the nipples being heavily bandaged.

Rapier-fencing among the students of the German universities and technical high-schools of Germany, Austria, Switzerland and Russia may be considered under the sabre, as the rapier, although originally used for thrusting as well as cutting, is now employed by students only to cut. According to the association of German fencing-masters the modern weapon when blunt and used only for practice is called *Rapier* or *Haurapier*, but when sharpened for duelling, *Schlagler* (striker). It is derived from the long straight sword of the German *Reiters*, or light cavalry, who were famous in the 16th century and later. Its use, however, was only occasional before the middle of the 19th century, when it gradually took the place of the dangerous, *Pariser*, or long French small-sword, for the semi-serious duels (*Mensuren*) of the students. There are two varieties of rapier, each having a thin flat blade about 33  $\frac{1}{2}$ in. long and  $\frac{7}{16}$ in. wide and truncated at the point, but distinguished by the shape of the handle. The bell-rapier (*Glockenrapier*), used only at the north German universities of Leipzig, Berlin, Halle, Breslau, Königsberg and Greifswald, is furnished with a guard consisting of a cup or bell of iron about 4  $\frac{1}{4}$ in. in diameter and 2in. deep, joined to the pommel by a steel shaft protecting the hand. Its total weight is about 1  $\frac{3}{4}$ lb. The basket-rapier (*Korbrapier*), used at all universities except those named above, has a handle protected by a sort of basket of heavy steel wire. Its total weight is 2lb. The balance is just below the guard. The blade of the rapier is divided conventionally into the *forte*, the half next the hilt, and the *foible*. These are again divided into full and half forte and full and half foible, the half foible being the weakest quarter of the blade, nearest the point. Every bout, whether with sharp or blunt weapons, is preceded by the command *Auf*

*die Mensur !* (on the mark, literally distance). The two fencers take position with feet apart and the right slightly in advance just far enough from one another to allow their heads to be reached by the sword without moving the feet, which remain firm during the entire bout. During the first half of the 19th century the objective points of the rapier included the upper arm and breast; but later the head, including the face, became the sole target. In practice a heavy mask of wire with felt top, a glove with padded arm-piece (*Stulp*) and a padded apron to protect body and legs are worn. There is one defensive position, which is with the arm stretched upward bringing the hand and hilt about 6 in. in front of and above the forehead, and the point of the rapier directed diagonally downward across the body and to the outside of the adversary's knees. The fencers having at the command *Bindet die Klinsen!* (Join blades!) placed their hilts together with the points of the rapiers directed upwards, attack simultaneously at the command *Los!* (Go!). All blows are delivered from the wrist, slightly helped by the forearm, the hand never being dropped below the level of the eyes. No movement of the head or body is allowed except such as is unavoidably connected with that of the sword-arm.

Bibliography.-For the light sabre see *La Scherma italiana di spada e di sciabola*, by Ferdinando Masiello (Florence, 1887); *Infantry Sword Exercise* (British War Office, London, 1896), practically the system of Masiello; *Istruzione per la scherma*, &c, by S. de Frate (Milan, 1885); *La Scherma per la sciabola*, by L. Barbasetti (Vienna, 1898); a German translation of the foregoing, *Das Sabel-fechten* (Vienna, 1899); *Die Fechtkunst*, by Gustav Hergsell (Vienna, 1892). For the old-style sabre see *Cold Steel*, by Alfred Hutton (London, 1889); *Broadsword and Single-stick*, by R. G. Allanson Winn and C. Phillips Wolley, "All England" series (London, 1898); *Foil and Sabre*, by L. Rondelle (Boston, 1892), an exposition of the French military system. For sabre-fencing for cavalry see *The Cavalry Swordsman*, by Alfred Hutton (London, 1867); *L'Escrime du sabre & cheval*, by A. Alessandri and Émile Andre (Paris, 1895). For German basket-sabre and schlager, *Die deutsche Hiebfechtschule für Korb- und Glockenrapier* (Leipzig, 1887), published by the association of German academic fencing-masters; *L'Escrime dans les universités allemandes*, &c, by L. C. Roux (Paris, 1885), a French exposition of the German student fencing. (E. B.)