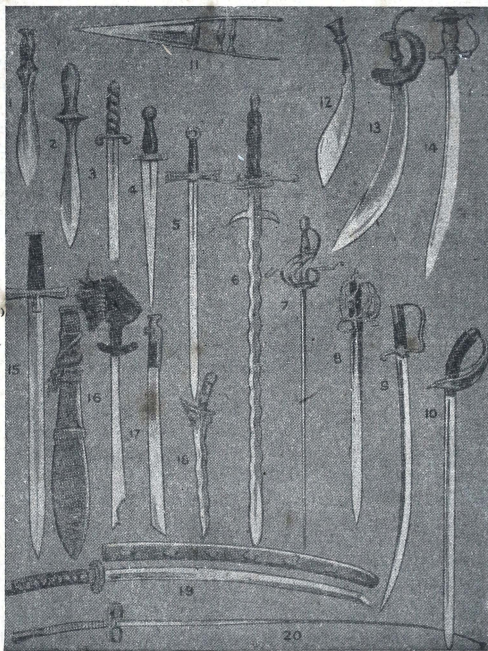


HISTORY SECTION

THE MOST ROMANTIC OF WEAPONS

A SWORD, that most romantic of weapons, has been the symbol of war and the badge of honor and courage among fighting men since the days when iron and bronze were first hammered into blades. The right to carry a sword has almost always been a mark of rank; and today, when most of its usefulness has departed, it remains part of the dress uniform of an army and navy officers the world over.

In the days of chivalry knighthood was conferred by the flat of the sword laid on the young warrior's shoulder. In



DEVELOPMENT OF THE SWORD

1. *Sword of Bronze Age*
2. *Greek*
3. *Roman*
4. *Norman (1066)*
5. *Crusader's Sword*
6. *Two-handed, 15th Century*
7. *Rapier, 16th Century*
8. *Ferrara, 17th Century*
9. *French, 1800*
10. *English, 1914*
11. *Dagger, India*
12. *Russian*
13. *Indian Talwar*
14. *Scimitar*
15. *Soudanese*
16. *Malay*
17. *Machete*
18. *Kris*
19. *Japanese*
20. *Fencing Sword*

many lands kissing the ruler's sword was a token of homage. Oaths taken by a soldier on his sword were rigidly binding. When a general surrendered his sword, he admitted defeat. To have his sword broken by his superior officer was the greatest disgrace that could come to the disloyal or cowardly soldier. These and many other sword ceremonies reappear constantly in history, and many stories—folk tales and mythological stories—contain accounts of magic swords.

In modern warfare, the work of the

sword, and of its smaller brother, the dagger, and of its cousin, the spear or lance, is mostly done by the bayonet fastened to the rifle, or carried in a scabbard at the belt. But for many centuries before the invention of firearms, the sword in one or another of its many forms was the principal weapon of the fighting man.

The ancestor of the sword was probably the stone dagger of the fighting cave man. Among the earliest historical blades are the leaf-shaped arm of the Greeks and the long, thin Assyrian sword. As nations progressed in the military arts, they usually shifted from the chopping swords to the sharp-pointed thrusting weapons. Thus the short sword of the Roman legionary defeated the heavy blunt-edged sword of the northern barbarians, and it was literally "at the point of the sword" that the Saracens, who carried curving scimitars and blades which could be used only for slashing, were kept from taking all of Europe.

The heavy two-handed sword of the Middle Ages was abandoned as soon as the invention of firearms destroyed the usefulness of shields and armor. In its place grew up the saber, the rapier, and the smallsword, and with these lighter blades swordsmanship became a fine art. During the 17th and 18th centuries in Europe it became the custom for all men, even civilians, to carry swords, and quarrels were usually settled on the spot with cold steel.

In the reign of Louis XIII in France dueling became so prevalent that fencing masters were everywhere in great demand and highly honored. Earlier duels were fought with a sword in one hand and a dagger in the other. Later a cloak took the place of the dagger, and finally with the adoption of the slender, needle-

pointed rapier even this protection was abandoned.

The saber, either straight or curved, was always the special weapon of the cavalryman, and it survives today in some armies. The short cutlass was the weapon of the sailor.

Various races and peoples have had special swords and daggers associated with their names throughout history. Thus we hear of the curved sword, called *tulwar*, of the Persians, the sickle-shaped *kukri* of a certain race in India, the delicate *katana* of the Japanese, the Malay *kris* with its wriggling blade, the heavy-pointed *machete* of tropical America, the deadly *bolo* of the Filipinos, the bowie knife of frontier days in the United States, and many other members of the sword family.

Sword-making used to be one of the most honorable trades. The cities of Damascus in Syria and Toledo in Spain formerly owed much of their fame to the skill of their sword makers. But this glory faded when fire-arms came into use.

QUESTIONS

1. Why is the sword a "romantic" weapon?
2. What are some historical facts about the sword?
3. How did swords originate?
4. Can you tell of swordsmanship in the Middle Ages?
5. Can you tell of duelling?
6. What displaced the sword as a fighting weapon?
7. What is a saber? A rapier?
8. Study the various kinds of swords shown in the illustration on page 395. Can you name them?
9. What two cities were famous for the manufacture of swords?