

Fiore Dei Liberi: A Pioneer Sport's Teacher

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The paper introduces to the physical education profession Fiore dei Liberi, physical educator and author. Fiore dei Liberi, a master fencer, lived and published his book "Flos Duellatorum" or "The Flower of Duelling" in the XIV century. The remarkable fact about Fiore's publication is that, together with the work of Meister Lichtenauer's Fechtbuch, is the only source of information available regarding fencing in the Middle Ages. Furthermore, Fiore's book was to be the starting block for many publications on fencing which were to follow, especially in Italy where the sport was to be refined and re-introduced throughout Europe. Fiore was well qualified for the task as an author of a book on fencing. The author in fact, was writing on knowledge he had acquired through many years of practice as participant in jousts and tournaments, and as master of arms. Fiore, also, had spent many years of his life traveling in Europe learning about fencing.

The "Flos Duellatorum" is organized as follows: the book is introduced by a prologue in which the author describes his objectives. This portion of the book is succeeded by Fiore's teaching the wrestling skills. It should be noted that the author describes, and illustrates with a picture, each skill. The teaching of wrestling is followed by instructions on the use of the dagger, and the one-handed and two-handed sword. The last part of the book treats of fighting clad in armour.

Fiore's book has much historical value, but this is not all. The author used a novel method of presenting the material. Fiore, in fact, was the initiator of the "show and tell" style that is commonly used in sports skills books today. Fiore dei Liberi made a valuable contribution to the field of physical education and sport and should be duly recognized as one of its great pioneers.



Classicist Clarence Forbes gives his rendition of the feats of the Greeks. Later he was given the NASSH Honor Award.