POSITION OF THE INSTRUMENT.

Having had no master, I have been obliged to reason before raising any maxim into a fixed principle. I observed that all masters on the pianoforte agree in sitting opposite the middle of the key-board, namely the middle of the horizontal line passed over by both hands. I considered this precept very just, because, leaving both arms equally separated from the body, no motion would be confined. Hence I concluded that the middle part of the string (the 12th fret) should be found opposite my body. This opinion I found supported by the form of the guitar, which, describing the curve B C D A F, fig. 6, indicates the point A as that which should be placed on the right knee; but as in this case the instrument is too low for the left hand to be placed in the way which I find necessary, instead of requiring the guitar-makers to make any innovation in the instrument, I saught a support for my right foot which, by keeping my knee higher, raised the guitar to a proper height for the left hand. Yet, in proportion as I have required more and more of the instrument, I have found it necessary to have it better fixed in its position, from which it should not deviate but when I wished. To effect this, I have found nothing better than to have before me a table, presenting one of its corners opposite the 12th fret, allowing me to rest the point

Fig. 6.

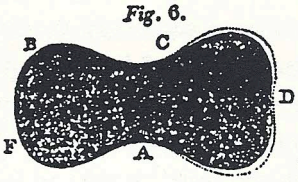


Fig. 7.

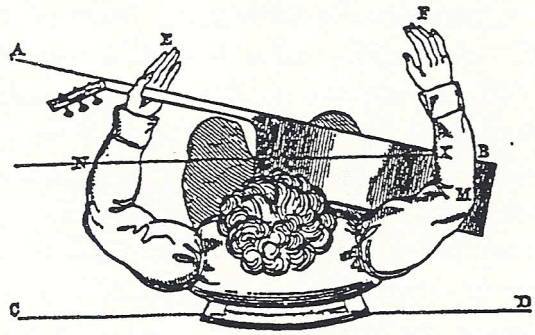
Fig. 8.

B of the instrument on the right knee a little turned out, and the point C on the corner D. By these means, finding myself placed in the position represented in figure 7. I am enabled to pass the left hand readily over the finger-board, it not being obliged to support the neck of the instrument, because the guitar is not only supported by the knee and the table, but is fixed by the weight of the right hand, which I cause to rest entirely on the point E.

I made yet another reflection on the position of the guitar. I remarked that the French and Italians generally held it in the way represented in fig. 8; and that the line A F was always parallel to the plane on which the man appears to the eye. That position (if I endeavoured to take it) would oblige me to advance the right shoulder in a constrained manner. My arm, having no support, could not determine a fixed position for the hand. The tendons acting continually to keep the arm in an unnatural position, such as the angle B C D, would make me feel difficulty in moving the joints of the fingers, and indeed often pain. At first I said to myself that this position could only be compared to that of a pianist sitting at one end of the key-board; that the left arm being

raised for a long time, the circulation of the blood must be affected in the parts most distant from the body; that the line C D, formed by the fore-arm indicates its continuation D E as the natural direction of the right hand, and that the latter being obliged to rise to encounter the strings, the wrist must be in a continual state of contraction in

Fig. 9.



order to keep it curved. I establish as a principle that since on my left I should have only the hand beyond the line A B, fig. 9, whilst on my right, half the fore arm should be advanced, the line A B could not by any means be parallel to the line C D, if I wished to prevent displacing my right shoulder, and the parallel could only be N B. Thus placed, I found that by letting my right hand F incline naturally, it came exactly in front of the strings; that, from its form and the different lengths of the fingers, I could use to advantage the dimensions given it by nature, instead of modifying them in order to accommodate them to the proper distances; and that the point X, at the middle of the fore arm, serving me as a support, I had only to make a motion with the elbow to cause the arm of the lever X M to act in the opposite direction to that which I desired to communicate to the other arm of the lever X F.

RIGHT HAND.

The line on which the strings bear at the edge of the bridge, is a straight line, as well as that of the nut, consequently all the strings are in the same plane. If these strings were to be touched by keys or moved by quills, like the old harpsichords and spinets, all the hammers or jacks (when not set in motion) would be seen to form a straight line parallel to the strings which they were to set in vibration; and when several were made to act at once, they would always preserve a straight line parallel to the plane of the strings, and this would be one cause of uniformity in the quantity and quality of the sound. From this truth I deduced that it is necessary for the ends of the fingers of this hand to be placed in a straight line in front of the strings and parallel to the plane which they form, and I examined whether my fingers were found in that situation naturally. I saw that my fingers did not allow me to apply a straight line to touch the extremties of more than three of them, fig. 10, A B, and that if I wished to bring in the fourth, it would always be at the expense of the two which, being obliged to be bent not to over-pass the line E A (the others continuing extended), would place my hand in a constrained position, on account of the difficulty which I have always experienced in bending one single finger (excepting the thumb), if the others have not a point of support, as happens to the left hand. The joint of the thumb as well as its position cause its action to be in another direction different from that of the fingers, and, besides the possibility of pushing the string, it can approach them or recede without deranging the hand. It can slide on two succeeding strings with such a velocity as to make them both be heard together. I therefore establish as a rule of my fingering, for the right hand, to employ commonly only the three fingers touched by the line A B, and to use the fourth only for playing a chord in four parts of which the part nearest to the base leaves an intermediate string, as in example 1, Plate I.

Fig. 10. *Right hand.*