about 17 m. into the ocean. It has long been known as “ the graveyard of the Atlantic ”; over 200 known wrecks have been catalogued, and those unrecorded are believed greatly to exceed this number. The coast is without a harbour and liable to fogs and storms; irregular ocean currents of great strength sweep round it, and its colour makes it indistinguishable until close at hand. Since 1873 an efficient lighthouse system and life-saving station has been maintained by the Canadian government, and the danger has been much lessened. Since 1904 it has been connected with the mainland by wireless telegraphy. The island is constantly changing in shape, owing to the action on the sand of wind and wave, and tends to diminish in size. Since 1763, when taken over by Britain, it has shrunk from 40 m. in length to 2o, from 21/2 in breadth to 1, and from 200 ft. in height to 85; since 1873 the western lighthouse has thrice been removed eastward. As this makes navigation stiff more dangerous, the Canadian government has planted thousands of trees and quantities of root-binding grass, and the work of destruction has been somewhat stayed. Wild fruits grow plentifully during the summer, and cranberries are exported. Wild ducks, gulls, and other birds nest in large numbers, and a native breed of ponies has long flourished.

Sable Island, estimated as being then over 100 m. in length, was known to the early navigators under the name of Santa Cruz. Early in the 16th century horses were left on its shores by the Portuguese, and the native ponies, supposed to be their descendants, are still exported. In 1598 a band of convicts were left by the marquis de la Roche, but in 1603 the survivors were restored to France.

See Rev. Geo Patterson in *Transactions of Royal Society of Canada* (1894 and 1897).

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 5/8 in. wide near the guard, tapering to 1/2 in. near the point, is consider- ably 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 19oo 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 7/16 in. wide a little below the guard, tapering to 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. *schiaυona* 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 *bαck-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 back- sword 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 back- sword 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 perpen- dicularly with the point up; the hanging, with the point down, both outside and inside; the half-circle; the “ St George ”; and the spadroon, with horizontal arm and sword pointing downwards. The spadroon (Ital. *spadrone),* 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 swords- manship 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