

THE UNSETTLED BOUNDARIES OF ONTARIO.

BY CHARLES LINDSEY.

WHEN the different nations of Europe which planted colonies in America first set up trading posts, or established feeble and scattered settlements, they clutched with avidity at territories they had never explored, and of the extent of which they had only the most imperfect ideas. Sometimes a claim to the ownership of a country several times as large as a first class European power, was set up on the strength of a trading vessel having sailed up the mouth of a river on a coast frequently visited before by the vessels of other nations, though the existence of that particular river had not been discovered. Raising a cross, burying a bottle, and attaching an inscription to the trunk of a tree, have each, in turn, been pleaded as conveying a title to immense tracts of territory, and the right to control the destinies of thousands of natives, whose freedom had not been filched from them by actual conquest. Circumstantial accounts of voyages that were never made, and discoveries that had no existence, added to the complexity of rival claims, till the imposture was detected. Such was Maldona's account of the discovery of the Strait of Anian, published in 1620, in which the author related a pretended voyage from the Labrador coast across the continent to the Pacific. The rivalry in discovery, for trade and colonization, among European nations, on this continent, raised questions of boundaries on all sides; between the French in New France and the English in New England; in the valley of the St. John, in the east; in the valley of the Ohio, in the north-west; on Hudson's Bay, in the north. The disputes over the latter led to many contests of arms, before the end of the seventeenth century, sometimes when the countries, by whose individual subjects they were carried on, were at peace with one

another. The territorial dispute over the limits of the two powers in the Ohio Valley, led to the seven years' war in which Canada changed owners. And the North-Eastern boundary question was reserved for England and the United States to wrangle over until the Ashburton Treaty put an end to it. Nor was this the only boundary question that survived the ownership of Canada by France. There are still left two questions of boundaries between the Dominion and one of the Provinces of which it is composed. The boundary on the north and the boundary on the west of Ontario are alike undetermined. On the west the disputed territory covers some five degrees of longitude, and comprises lands of great known and supposed metallic richness. On the north, it may perhaps be said, the boundary is unsettled rather than disputed; at least the dispute has not taken so definite a shape. The determination of this boundary may raise the question whether Ontario or the Dominion shall grant certain lands on the eastern section of the Pacific Railway in aid of that work. It is a question whether that road can be constructed at some points much south of the northern water-shed; and it may, in this view, become a question of some importance whether the Height of Land be the northern boundary of Ontario.

The northern boundary question presents less difficulty than the western. There seems no reason to doubt that this boundary is that laid down by the 10th article of the Treaty of Utrecht; but it may be necessary to a clear comprehension of the subject to trace the question from the beginning to the close. The early commissions granted by the French kings, in which boundaries were given, have little or no practical bearing on