

THE
ASTROLABES OF SAMUEL CHAMPLAIN
AND GEOFFREY CHAUCER.*

READERS of Canadian newspapers may have noticed a mention made, some time ago, of the finding of an old scientific instrument called by the French and Lower Canadian writers an Astrolabe, supposed to have been dropped by Samuel Champlain when passing up the Ottawa in 1613, *en route*, as he hoped, to the country of the Nipissings and the Salt Sea beyond. It was lighted on accidentally in 1867, during the cultivation of the soil on the line of a portage which used formerly to be traversed for the double purpose of making a short cut, and also of avoiding difficulties in the navigation in this part of the Ottawa River. The instrument, when discovered, had evidently lain long on the spot where it was found, being covered with several inches of soil formed of decayed vegetation, but its state of preservation was extraordinary. The relic itself is now in Toronto in the possession of R. S. Cassels, Esq., who obtained it directly from the settler who in 1867 ploughed it up in the rear half of lot No. 12, in the second range of the Township of Ross, in the County of Renfrew, land at the time in a state of nature, whose only previous owner had been Capt. Overman, commander of a steamer on Muskrat lake.

Previous to actually handling the object, and while judging only from a photograph taken of it and an engraving made from that photograph, I had been inclined to doubt its identity with the astrolabe said to have been lost by Champlain in this neighbourhood in 1613. The ærugo of 264 years must, I thought, have produced a greater obscurity in the lines and minute figures delineated on the surface of the brass; and a certain apparent freshness in the look of the date

*A paper read before the Canadian Institute, Toronto, during the Session 1879-80.