

People We Hear About.

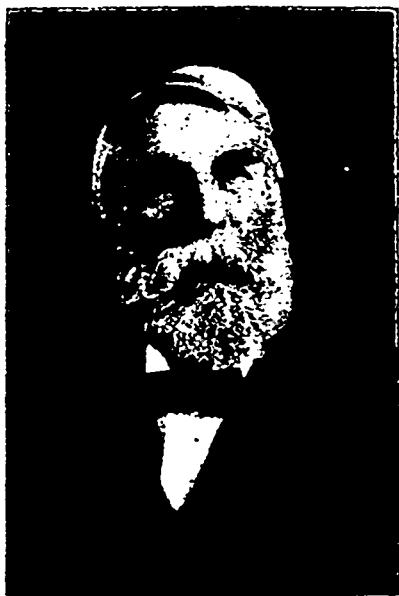
A GREAT CANADIAN INVENTOR.

THE MAN WHO CONCEIVED THE MAGAZINE RIFLE—JAMES P. LEE'S SUCCESSFUL CAREER.

EVERYONE has heard of the Lee-Enfield, Lee-Metford and Lee-Sharp rifles, but few have heard anything of their inventor, for he is a man whose exceeding modesty amounts almost to a fault, and who has shunned personal publicity to such an extent that his features—not to mention the outlines of his career—have only once or twice appeared in print. It will be a surprise to many Canadians to learn that the great gun inventor can practically be claimed by them as a fellow-countryman. True, he was born in Scotland, but at the age

of five years he came to Canada with his parents, and it was in this country that he received his education, learned his trade, and began experimenting with mechanical principles. Since 1857 he has lived abroad—mostly in the United States and Great Britain.

James P. Lee was born at Hawick, in Scotland, nearly 70 years ago. His father, George Lee—a watchmaker—emigrated to Canada and settled at Galt, Ont., with his family. The future



MR. JAMES P. LEE.

inventor was brought up to his father's trade, and became a thorough expert at it. When 19 years old, he left Galt and started in business for himself in Chatham, Ont., remaining there nearly four years, when he went to Wisconsin. It was there that he commenced to experiment with a view to improving the mechanism of guns. After a couple of years he returned to Canada, going to Owen Sound, Ont., where his father and the family had settled, and where he continued his experiments for a couple of years. He was, at that time, without regular employment, lived in a very humble manner, and was looked upon by many as a "crank." His time was chiefly spent pottering about in a small foundry, where he built an engine that was not a success.

In the meantime he had brought his rifle to a comparative degree of perfection, and the outbreak of the Civil War in the

United States furnished him his opportunity. He went to Washington and exhibited his invention to the War Department; and although it was not adopted—the Springfield carbine having already been chosen—he received so much encouragement that he resolved to go on with his experiments. Success gradually came to him. The first magazine gun he invented was taken up by the United States Navy, and by the Chinese Government. In the seventies he began the manufacture of side carbines and sporting rifles in Milwaukee, but the Remington Company's competition was too strong and this venture was not a success. In the eighties the British Government took up his invention and re-armed the whole regular force with the Lee-Metford. A new bore for the rifle-barrel having since been adopted, the weapon became known as the Lee-Enfield, manufactured at the Government's own works at Enfield. This rifle is not, however, the final form of Mr. Lee's principle, as perfected by himself. The principle has been developed and revised by him in the Lee straight-pull rifle, which is now used exclusively in the American Navy and which Mr. Lee considers a perfect weapon. In view of recent criticisms of the Lee-Enfield on the strength of what has been happening in South Africa, it is interesting to note that the inventor himself considers that rifle comparatively inferior to the straight-pull. He is making minor alterations, from time to time, in the mechanism of the latter, but he considers it to embody the highest application of the magazine principle. It weighs only 8½ lb., and the cartridge is so light that 150 rounds weigh only the same amount. The bullet will carry four miles, and at two yards will penetrate ½ in. steel, while at 30 yards 62 inches of plank are pierced like so much paste-board. The bore of the rifle-barrel gives three turns in its own length.

Mr. Lee's income, since the Boer War broke out, must be enormous. He gets a royalty of 50c. per rifle from the British and United States Governments. He is, however, a very simple, modest man, of frugal habits; and though he has traveled a great deal, and been entertained and honored by many men of high official and social position, he is always most unassuming. If there is one incident he is inclined to talk about, it is the presentation to him, by Duke Alexis, of Russia, of a superb diamond, on the occasion of the Duke's visit to America.

Mr. Lee claims to have constructed the first typewriter, but, being engrossed in his gun schemes, he turned it over to the Remington Company, which started to manufacture it. Shortly afterwards the company failed and the business was put into the hands of trustees. Three men—two of whom were employes of the Remingtons, one as a bookkeeper and the other as an office boy—took up the typewriter, and patented the essential parts. For a long time all manufacturers of typewriters had to pay them royalties, and the three are, to-day, worth millions of dollars.

Mr. Lee has a sister, Mrs. Robert Turnbull, in Galt, Ont., and a brother in Owen Sound, Ont., who carries on the old family trade of watch-repairing. One of his sons is a successful electrician, living at Hartford, Conn. Mr. Lee's wife died in London, Eng.

F. E. E. SIMSON.

PREVIOUS ARTICLES—Major Girouard, September 15; Hon. Wm. Mulock, September 22; His Lordship Bishop Boul, September 29; Mr. W. J. Gage and Mr. Louis Herlette, October 6; Hon. Jas. Sutherland, October 13; Mr. Chas. R. Hosmer, October 20; Lieut.-Col. Geo. T. Denison, October 27; Principal Grant, November 3; Professor Goldwin Smith, November 10; Dr. Jas. Stewart, November 17; Mr. Geo. Goolerham, November 24; Sir W. C. Macdonald and Lord Methuen, December 1; Archbishop Bruchesi, December 8; Mr. Cleophas Bensiolelli, December 15; Mayor Parent, of Quebec, December 22. The Hon. Justice Wurtelle, December 29; Sir Wm. R. Meredith, January 5; Mr. W. L. Doran and Mr. Raymond Prefontaine, M.P., January 12; Lord Kitchener, January 19; Archbishop Lewis, February 2; Hon. Senator J. P. B. Casgrain, February 9; Hon. Senator Geo. T. Fillion, February 16; Wm. Gilson, M.P., February 23; Mr. Hector Mackenzie, March 2; Mr. Donald MacMaster, Q.C., March 9; Sir Wm. Hingston, March 16; Mr. James Ross and Mr. Robert G. Reid, March 23.

THE tortoise is a great sleeper. The Spectator has had a story of one which was a domestic pet in an English house. As his time for hibernating drew nigh, he selected a quiet corner in the dimly-lit coal-cellar, and there composed himself to sleep. A new cook was appointed soon after. She knew not tortoises. In a few months, with the lapse of time, the tortoise woke up and sallied forth. Screams soon broke the kitchen's calm. On entering that department the lady of the house found the cook gazing in awe-struck wonder, and exclaiming, as with unsteady hand she pointed to the tortoise: "My conscience! Look at the stone which I've broken the coal wi' a' winter!"