

THOMAS C. KEEFER, C. E.,
CANADIAN COMMISSIONER AT THE PARIS
EXHIBITION.

In the year 1739 a child was born of German parents near Strasbourg, then a French town. That child, called George Kieffer, grew up to manhood, and in 1765 emigrated to America, settling in the British Colony of New Jersey at Paulinskill, County of Sussex. His brother who accompanied him went to Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, his descendants about Lancaster, in that State, still retaining the original spelling of the name.

As Huguenots the Kieffers had probably followed many of their countrymen to America, for emigration to this country from an interior point as Strasbourg was not then the simple matter it is now.

M. Kieffer married in 1767, and in 1776, on the revolt of the British North American Colonies against the Royal Government, fought for the Royalist cause.

He volunteered into the Rangers under Sir William Howe, in New York, and there died of army fever and was buried on Staten Island. His property including two farms, a female slave and a distillery, was confiscated by Congress, but this confiscation was not carried into effect until his son George had attained the age of eighteen, and had made a journey into Canada to select a place for the home which was offered there by the British Government to the families of its loyal adherents in the past struggle.

Returning in 1792, George Keefe brought his mother to the place he had selected at Thorold, in the Niagara Peninsula, leaving behind him both the old country and the old name, for he now first spelled his name Keefe.

The hardships of such a removal cannot now be well estimated. He brought his mother on horseback by an Indian trail through unbroken forests from the Susquehanna to Lake Erie. At that time the site of Buffalo was occupied only by two fishermen's huts.

Mr. Keefe lived at Thorold for nearly seventy years, and although thus deprived of his patrimony, by a long life of industry, temperance and strict integrity he acquired considerable estate and successfully brought up a large family. He was also the first President of the Welland Canal and the constant supporter of its projector, the late Hon. William Hamilton Merritt.

The mother of the subject of this notice was the second wife of George Keefe, the sister of Edward McBride, who represented Niagara for some years in the Local Parliament, and daughter of one of the Irish volunteers who came to



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FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY TOPLEY, OTTAWA.

Canada in 1776, under General Carleton, from Traloe, having married there Mary Bradshaw, who was descended from Colonel Bradshaw (brother of the Regicide who went to Ireland with Cromwell's army), and who was thus descended from the famous Bishop of Winchester, William of Wykeham.

Mr. Thomas C. Keefe was born at Thorold, on the 4th of November, 1821. He was educated at the Upper Canada College. Before leaving College he decided that his profession should be that of a Civil Engineer. With what intuitive genius he made the choice his works achieved and publicly acknowledged bear testimony.

In 1838 he commenced his profession at Lockport, State of New York, on the Erie Canal, where extensive works were then in progress. In 1840 he returned to Canada and was employed by the Welland Canal Company under the late J. S. Macaulay, Colonel in the Royal Engineers, and Engineer-in-Chief of the Canal. In the following year Upper and Lower Canada were united and the Canal was made a public work of the united Province. Mr. Keefe, then only in his twentieth year, was charged with the enlargement of the feeder and continued in charge until 1842. He remained a Division Engineer of all work south of the Welland River until 1845, when he was appointed to the charge of the Ottawa River Works, and thus, in his twenty-fourth year, ceased to be an Assistant Engineer. At the close of 1848 he was dismissed from the Government service with a flattering letter from the Government, ostensibly on the score of retrenchment, but in reality because he had as Engineer in charge successfully opposed proposed expenditures in which some members of Parliament having influence with the Administration were interested.

In 1849 Mr. Keefe wrote the "Philosophy of Railroads," a pamphlet which was reprinted by several railroad companies, and republished in many newspapers. It contributed more than any other to give vigour to the railway agitation which secured the completion of the Great Western, the Toronto Northern (now Northern of Canada), Port Hope, Prescott and Ottawa, and the Grand Trunk, all of them arteries of industrial vitality. It was also a text book for the press of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, in advocating their railway policy.

In the same year, His Excellency the Earl of Elgin, Governor-General, offered a premium for the best "Essay on the influence of the Canals of Canada upon her Agriculture." For this Mr. Keefe was the successful competitor, and the announcement, in 1850, immediately after the success of his "Philosophy of Railroads," at once gave him the position of an authority on



THE EASTERN WAR.—STORMING THE TURKISH POSITIONS NEAR SOFIA.