

INTRODUCTORY

WITHIN its twelve chapters this book presents a group of leading American inventors of the past. First in time, and, in many respects, first in talent, is Colonel John Stevens, who built a successful screw propeller, and who devised a sectional boiler of a model which, duly modified, is in wide use to-day. Beside him stands his son Robert, who devised the T-rail and much other equipment for railroads and workshops. Fulton comes next with his *Clermont* and his torpedoes, an inventor with a statesman's breadth of mind, with the outlook of an artist no less than that of an engineer. The mastery of land and sea is continued by Ericsson with his *Novelty* locomotive, his *Monitor*, and his caloric engine. These four great engineers are succeeded by four mechanics, each the leader of an industrial revolution. First Whitney, with his cotton-gin; then Blanchard, with his copying lathe; McCormick, with his reaper; Howe, with his sewing-machine. Then, all alone, stands Charles Goodyear, who came to the vulcanization of rubber by dint of a courage unsurpassed in the annals of peace or war. A final quartette are inventors who broadened the empire of the printed word: Morse, who gave electricity a pencil to write its messages a thousand miles away; Tilghman, who derived paper from wood so as to create a new basic industry for mankind; Sholes, who built a typewriter to replace the pen with the legibility and swiftness of printing; and last of all, Mergenthaler, who took a Sholes keyboard, and bade it compose both the columns of newspapers and the pages of a book.

The sketches of these heroes and their exploits include much information never published before. Inventors are apt to be a silent race, more given to experiment than to