

## TRIBUTE TO THE LATE FRANK CHENEY.

### Interesting Letter from the Inventor of the Spencer Rifle.

The following tribute to the late Frank Cheney of this place, appeared in this morning's Hartford Courant.

I wish to offer my tribute to the late Mr. Frank Cheney, sr., whose loss cannot be more sincerely felt outside of his immediate relatives than by myself. It was my good fortune to be associated with him in the beginning of my career as a mechanic. His generous and manly traits of character, his advice, instruction and mechanical skill, were factors in the determining of my career in life. At the age of eighteen I came under his influence and direction in the machine shop of the original silk mill, which under his guidance, has so steadily grown to be the chief silk industry in the United States. No one, not with him daily at his work, can appreciate the indomitable energy and patience which enabled him to perform the herculean tasks which he undertook and accomplished. He encouraged energy and improvement, and readily discarded obsolete methods.

My first patented invention, made under his supervision, was an automatic silk spooling machine, which was adopted by the Cheney Brothers. My spare time while in their employ was devoted to the invention of the repeating rifle which figured so prominently in our Civil War.

Through motives of patriotism the Cheney Brothers took up the invention and organized a company, which included some of their friends in Boston, and secured one-half of the Chickering piano factory for the business. The building of a forging shop and the installation of the requisite machinery in the shortest possible time brought out the wonderful resources and executive ability of Mr. Cheney as well as the financial capacity of the Cheney Brothers. Not only were their mechanical difficulties to overcome, but the opposition of the war department to what the chief of ordinance (General Ripley) termed "new fangled Jim Cracks." Hundreds of thousands of dollars were absorbed in works before any orders for rifles were received, except the initial order from the navy department which was secured by Mr. Charles Cheney through the Hon. Gideon Welles, then secretary of the navy. At a most critical time in the finances of the company, the Cheney Brothers were able to secure the attention of the secretary of war. The chief of ordinance was overruled. The accumulated rifles at the works were soon put into the hands of the troops, and their effectiveness brought unlimited orders.

It is a high tribute to Mr. Cheney that he built additions to the factory, installed the machinery, and had the works turning out completed guns within the year of commencement. The drop hammer for duplicating forged parts, and now universally used by all manufacturers of drop forgings, was the invention of Mr. Cheney and one Goulding of Providence. Mr. Cheney's interest was sold to the Pratt & Whitney Co., who made hundreds of the hammers. The Billings & Spencer Co. has been built up on this method of forging, and they have made these drops for the U. S. government and many foreign countries. Mr. Frank Cheney, sr., Mr. Rush Cheney, a natural mechanic and able assistant, Mr. Ward Cheney, the business manager, and Mr. Charles Cheney, the financier, made a combination which was always a unit in action for the steady growth and upbuilding of their great industry.

My chief interest of late in visiting my native place has been to meet Mr. Cheney, whom I shall always remember with deepest affection.

C. M. Spencer.

Windsor, Ct., March 3, 1904.