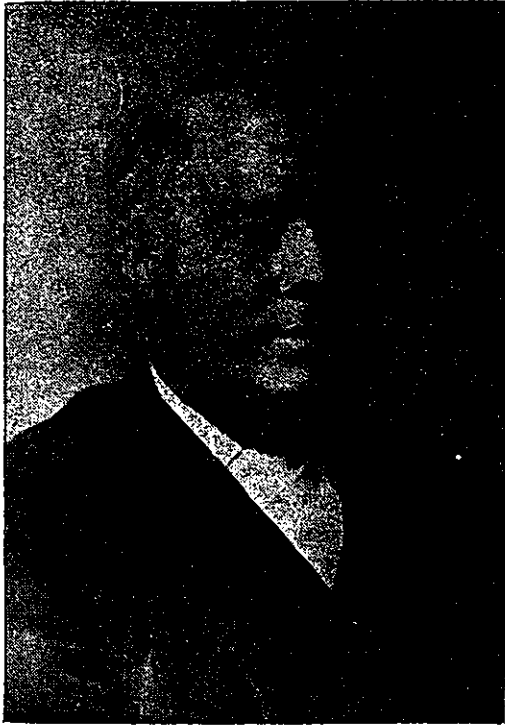


Fair Play

## INTERVIEWS.



Dr. C. Lemon.

The subject of our sketch is probably one of the most popular as well as the most able men in the branch of the civil service with which he is connected, and his retirement from the position of Superintendent of Telegraphs is regretted by his colleagues as well as by the general public. Dr. Lemon is an exceptionally excellent electrician, a civil and mechanical engineer and an ardent experimentalist, and to him, in a great degree, New Zealand owes the extension of her telegraphic communication, and the introduction of the telephone under more favorable circumstances than in any other colony in Australasia. An enthusiast in his profession, he has been that *rara avis*, an intelligent, reasoning officer of the Government, whose heart was in his work, and who was scarce ever at his ease when he was away from it. To give our readers an idea of his constant application, we may mention that for nearly 30 years Dr. Lemon has not known what it was to enjoy a holiday we can scarce wonder then, that now that he has reached the autumn of his life he desires to retire on his well-earned pension, and enjoy the leisure which he can devote to scientific investigation and much-needed rest. Dr. Lemon, both as a public man and on account of the complications which have followed his resignation, is at present a prominent figure, and with a view of giving our readers some information with reference to his past life and work, a representative of this journal called on him early in the week.

The doctor, who is the personification of geniality, received the visitor in his work room, or what would perhaps more properly be termed his electrical laboratory. "Come right in, Mr. FAIR PLAY," was his first remark as he held out a movable electric light to show the way, "we can talk here, and I can show you something that will interest you at the same time."

Our representative entered the engine-room, which was fitted up with dynamos, a gas engine, lathe, galvanometers, and other paraphernalia necessary to the pursuance of electrical experiments.

"You have a fine plant here, doctor," was the first remark.

"Yes, and I put every bit of it up myself. You see I am a practical mechanical engineer as well as an electrician, and many of the improvements which I have been able to make while in the Government service have been the fruits of experiments made here. The flooring, as you see, is on a cement bed, which permits scarce any vibration. This gas engine, which is about one and a half horse-power, gives me all the power I need, and the other machinery and paraphernalia are necessary appurtenances to an electrician's laboratory."

"The house and grounds, I suppose, are lighted from here, are they not?"

"Yes, I supply about sixteen lights throughout the premises, some of lesser and some of greater magnitude, regulated according to the capacity of the carbon. The lathe which I see you looking at so curiously is a very useful article to me, as if any repairs or alterations in the machinery are necessary, I make them myself, and then it comes in very handy."

"Your 'studio,' if I may use the term," said the interviewer, "seems complete in every respect, but we would like to know something about yourself, doctor, so with your permission, I will commence with a few stereotyped questions about your early life; you are an Englishman, I presume?"

"I suppose I may call myself such, but I was not born in England, my birthplace was in the island of Jamaica, in the West Indies, and I first saw the light of day in 1838. In 1837 I went with my parents to England where I remained until 1850. I was always fond of mechanics and was never so happy as when amongst machinery. I had a natural leaning towards electric science and when quite a young man made myself one of the old fashioned electric generators, which you have probably seen used for experimental purposes. In 1850 I came to New Zealand by the ship *Cresswell*."

"Did you come direct to Wellington?"

"No, I landed in the southern part of the colony where I remained for some time, doing nothing in particular. In 1858 I went to Sydney by the '*Scotia*' and thence to England by the '*Plantagenet*,' returning to New Zealand in 1864. I was engaged in the timber trade in the South for some years, and made another trip to England in 1862, returning in 1868."

"When did you enter the Government service, doctor?"

"On the 1st of August, 1868. I accepted a position in Oamaru, and in 1867 was transferred to Wellington to take charge of the Telegraph Department."

"I suppose there is a great difference between telegraphic communication then and now?"

"You may well believe that. When I first took charge of the Telegraph Department there were only 17 stations and 1,000 miles of wire, now there are 10,000 miles of single wires, and 2,000 of the 'duplex,' besides 7,000 telephones, used through the exchanges, and over 400 telephones used to connect outlying places with Government telegraph stations."

"When did you first commence extending the lines?"

About 1871; from 1867 to 1871, I was busy mastering the details of the telegraphic business then in existence, studying the topographical features of the country and planning extensions. In 1871 we were ready for practical work, and being allowed discretionary powers by the Government, I commenced to rapidly lay lines throughout the country. From 1871 to 1880 we were busy at this work, and then came the introduction of the telephone."