

ELIAS C. LAYCOCK.

Elias C. Laycock was born in May, 1846, in Pitt street, New South Wales, near the spot where Trickett's hotel now stands. He is 6ft. 1 1-2in. in height, and rows at 175 lbs. His father was the son of Capt. Laycock, one of the first of colonial pioneers, and in true English style we may claim for Laycock a good old ancestry dating back to the "conquest of the island." Capt. Laycock, as was usual with officers of the British army serving in the new colony, received several extensive grants of land, but, little anticipating their future value, considered them little else than unnecessary encumbrances. Thus it fell out that one grant of over 300 acres, with an extensive water frontage to the harbor, was actually the stake played for at a game of cards, and lost. Of the remainder but a small portion came to the hands of Laycock's father. The increasing value of land, however, coupled with a keener sense of business than the old Captain's soon gained for Mr. Laycock, Sr., a comfortable independency. During the time of his father's prosperity our sculler made his first appearance in the world, according to his own statement "with a silver spoon in his mouth." On arriving at a sufficiently mature age to "learn to shoot," he was consigned to a boarding school at Newtown, supervised by the Rev. Mr. Kemp, and after remaining there for a few years he changed to the Cleveland House School, Cleveland Paddocks. He had been at the latter place but a short time when an event occurred which not only had the effect of influencing the whole course of his future life, but compelled him at brief notice to strike out a course and trust to his own resources for a livelihood. It appears that his father, a much respected citizen, and at one time a member of Parliament, owned the Prince of Wales Theatre and surrounding buildings, on the site of the present Theatre Royal; in them he had invested his fortune. The property had always been fully insured, but, whether intentionally or not it is hard to say, the policy of insurance at this particular time was allowed to remain unrenewed for a couple of weeks. During this fatal period a dreadful fire first totally consumed the theatre, and then the surrounding buildings. Next day Mr. Laycock found himself a ruined man, his losses being estimated at £40,000. Young Laycock then commenced life on his own account. First on a station in the Clarence district, where he was soon initiated into the arts and shifts of rough country life. Then as a sailor to England; as a gold miner away upon the Gilbert diggings, Gulf of Carpentaria. Then as a stockman with cattle to Gippsland, Victoria. Then he returned to Sydney to ship as second mate on a coasting schooner, making trips to Adelaide, Melbourne and New Zealand. He again tried his hand at gold mining, but gave it up to commence rowing in 1874, at a time in life when most rowers think of retiring and making way for younger men, his idea being that as he could "ride a buck-jumper, or work in a saw-pit or gold claim with most people, he should be able also to hold his own on the water with most fellows."

His opening engagement of importance was in 1874, when on the Clarence River at Grafton, a regatta was organized, in which a prize of £200 was offered for a champion sculling race. Success did not crown Laycock's efforts on this occasion, the victor being Rush, who was followed home by the now celebrated Edward Trickett, Laycock getting third place, and beating Hickey and Green,