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We judge ourselves by what we feel capable of doing; but the world judges us by what we have already done.

Longfellow.



DR. J. F. DEMERS,
A Pioneer of Independent Telephony.

De Tocqueville has said, that—"The general hatred of an institution by persons living under it, is conclusive proof that the institution deserved hatred."

We were forcibly reminded of this dictum recently, as we stood in the City Hall, Toronto, listening to the fervid oratory of the champions of independent telephony, as with stern invective they exposed to view the alleged "grasping policy, masterly inactivity, and predatory tactics of the greatest of all monopolies in Canada"—The Bell Telephone Company: carrying on business (as their charter declares) "for the general advantage of Canada." At that memorable convention of earnest business men from all parts of Canada and the United States, one striking personality stood out in bold relief. Upon the invitation of the president, a short, stout, French-Canadian of Napoleonic build, stepped out on the floor with firm measured tread, and told in broken English, the story of how eight years ago, down in a small Quebec village, he had set the ball of opposition rolling, by laying down a private line between Metis and a neighboring parish, and how this small venture had grown into a private telephone company, with 3,000 miles of pole construction, a paid-up capital of \$200,000; no debts, no bonds, and which, since last autumn had built 900 miles of pole line, and added 600 subscribers: the greatest increase made by any private concern in the Dominion. And this success had been achieved in spite of the tremendous opposition which a strongly entrenched monopoly, of the Standard Oil type can exert. With commendable restraint of statement, begotten only of conscious power, the sturdy hero of a hundred fights in far Québec, calmly told his interesting tale, which was received with the proverbial generosity that a true Canadian audience knows how to mete out to the man who does things.

One cannot travel east or west over this great land without finding footprints everywhere of men of French origin, who have "done things:" and it is a pleasure this month to have the privilege of incorporating in our gallery a French-Canadian of distinction in the domain of telephone engineering.

J. F. Demers was born at St. Henri, County of Levis, in the Province of Quebec, May 16th, 1872. He was educated for the medical profession, and received his diploma as doctor of medicine at Laval, Montreal, April 1st, 1896. In 1898, at Ste. Octave de Metis, finding the need of quick communication with a fellow practitioner in an adjoining parish, he built a private telephone line. The success of

this little enterprise, led the same year, to the organization of a corporation known as The Metis Telephone Company, with a capital of \$2,500, operating between Ste. Octave de Metis and Ste. Flavie in Mantane County, P.Q. Success crowning their efforts, the capital of the concern was increased, and within two years, the three counties of Mantane, Rimouski and Temiscouata were networked with telephone wires, the farmers paying an annual rental of \$12. In 1900 the little company bought in Bellechasse County the charter of the Bellechasse Telephone Company, and straightway invaded the city of Levis, together with the towns and rural communities in the vicinage; extending the line even into Lotbiniere County, west of Levis. At this stage, Dr. Demers determined to abandon the active practice of medicine and devote his energies to telephone engineering. This enabled him to concentrate his well-trained intellect to the solution of telephonic engineering problems, and to undertake the management also of three other private companies, operating in the counties of Champlain, Portneuf, St. Maurice and Maskinonge. The last mentioned systems have built over 800 miles of pole construction, and the Bellechasse Company, some 3,000 miles; all accomplished in eight years. Lately he succeeded in securing a franchise in the city of Quebec, for the Bellechasse Telephone Company (capitalized at \$1,000,000), and expects shortly to construct a modern telephonic service for 6,000 subscribers, connected to all his system on the other side of the St. Lawrence.

It may be all true that racial sentiment has contributed largely to Dr. Demers phenomenal success, for all his work had been achieved in the part of Eastern Canada where the *Fleur de Lis* reigns supreme. Be that as it may, he has done wonders where others had practically failed, hence is entitled to well deserved honor. At 34 years of age, he has eight years of invaluable experience in practical telephony, a sound physical constitution, trained executive powers and indomitable courage, and is heart and soul in the rising movement against telephone monopoly. Theoretically, he believes in Governmental and municipal ownership, but has publically declared that until the time is ripe for the realization of this ideal, he will rest not until the village communities, townships and cities, mining camps and prairie farmsteads of Canada, are connected with a cheap telephone service.

That he may continue to prosper in the good work is the sentiment of "The Canadian Engineer."