

People We Hear About.

The composer Verdi celebrated his eighty-sixth birthday on October 9.

Midshipman Huddart, of the flagship Doris, who was killed at Grass Pan, South Africa, last week, was a native of Sydney, and a son of Mr. James Huddart, well-known in shipping circles.

The death of Mr. E. Byrne, F.J.I., late editor of the *Daily Independent*, Dublin, which took place at Tuam about the middle of October, is deeply regretted, especially by his brother journalists. Before 'the split' for many years he edited the *Freeman's Journal*. Under his control it became a great power; in fact, its word was stronger than law with Irish Nationalists.

A picturesque figure disappears from the English Church Congress and the ministry of the Anglican Church in 'Father' Ignatius, who announces his intention to retire into 'lay communion.' In a lengthy manifesto he asserts that the Archbishops and Bishops, while they will not tolerate any species of heresy or unbelief, are 'very energetic in suppressing Catholic worship to gratify ignorant, godless bigots; and even forbid incense to be used during the Eucharistic offering, though God Himself demands it.' Under these circumstances, he feels that he 'cannot, as a faithful Christian, take part in the ministry' of the Church of England.

The Right Hon. R. J. Seddon, P.C., who has just been elected unopposed as member of the House of Representatives for Westland, was born at Eccleston, near St. Helens, Lancashire, and is now in his fifty-fifth year. He came out to Victoria in 1863, and later on he was attracted to the New Zealand goldfields, and settled down on the West Coast, where he very soon came to the front as a local politician. He became a member of the Westland Provincial Council, and after a time was elected chairman of that body. He was the first Mayor of Kumara. He was returned to the House of Representatives for Hokitika in 1879, and represented Kumara from 1881 to 1890, when he was returned for Westland. In 1891 he accepted office as Minister of Mines in the Ballance Ministry, and on the death of Mr. Ballance he became Premier of the Colony. Since then he has held, at intervals, nearly every portfolio. Mr. Seddon went to England at the time of the Queen's Jubilee, when he was made a Privy Councillor and an LL.D. of Cambridge.

The most popular man in the House of Representatives is the Hon. Captain Russell, who never forgets under the greatest provocation that he is a gentleman. Captain Russell has just been returned without opposition for Hawke's Bay. He is the son of Lieutenant-Colonel Russell and was born at Sandhurst, Berkshire, England, in 1838. He came to New Zealand when seven years of age, but later on returned to England to be educated. Having joined the army he was successively captain in the 14th and 58th regiments, revisiting New Zealand on military service in 1851 and again in 1861. In the latter year he left the army and settled down in the Hawke's Bay district. Captain Russell was formerly a member of the Hawke's Bay Provincial Council, and having entered the General Assembly as M.H.R. for that district, was Postmaster-General and Commissioner of Telegraphs in the fourth Atkinson administration in 1884, and Colonial Secretary and Minister of Defence and Justice from October, 1889, to December, 1890.

The Hon. John McKenzie, Minister of Lands, has been returned unopposed for the Waikato electorate. Mr. McKenzie is a native of Ardross, Ross-shire, Scotland, where he was born over 60 years ago. In 1860 he came to this Colony, when he soon became manager of Paketapu Station, near Palmerston South. Later on he took to farming on his own account in the Shag Valley. In 1865 he was made clerk and treasurer to the local Road Board, and secretary to the local School Committee. In 1868 he contested Waikouaiti for a seat in the Provincial Council of Otago, but was defeated. In 1871, however, he was successful, and retained the position until the abolition of the provinces. In 1881 he was elected to the House of Representatives for Moeraki, and has sat in the House for various constituencies ever since. When the Ballance Government came into office in 1891 he got the portfolio of Lands. Mr McKenzie was absent from the House during the whole of last session, having gone to England to undergo a serious surgical operation, which, happily, was very successful. Prior to his departure for England he was the recipient of several presentations from admirers in all parts of the Colony.

In an article entitled, 'My Father as I knew Him,' and contributed to *Temple Bar* by Mr. Daniel O'Connell, there is the following story illustrative of the great Liberator's marvellous power of keeping an audience in hand: Many instances have been related, both in the pages of my father's biographers and those of other chroniclers of his times, concerning the wonderful personal influence he wielded: a magnetic force of will whereby he was enabled to control the many thousands of rugged peasants gathered to hear him on the wild hillside as easily as he swayed the more civilised crowds assembled in public halls. Each and all obeyed his directing will with an unanimity little short of marvellous. The following example of this has not, I believe, been previously published. On a certain occasion a meeting had been convened, and a crowd assembled in a large room on the first floor of a building in Kingstown. My father was about to address the people, when a gentleman, pale with fear, made his way to the platform, and hoarsely whispered: 'Liberator, the floor is giving way! the beams that shore it up are cracking, and we shall all fall through in a few minutes.' 'Keep silent,' said my father quietly; then, raising his voice, he addressed the assembly, saying: 'I find this room is too small to contain the number who desire to come in, so we must therefore leave it and hold the meeting outside the building.' At this a few rose and went out, but the majority retained their seats. 'Then,' said my father, 'I will tell you the truth; you are Irishmen, and, therefore, brave men. The floor is giving way, and we must leave this room at once; if there is a panic and a rush to the door we shall all be precipitated into the room below, but if you obey my orders we shall be safe. Let the dozen men nearest the door go quietly out, then the next dozen, and so on till all have gone. I shall be the last to leave.' His instructions were obeyed to the letter, and he waited patient and calm till all had left in safety. Then he walked quietly across the sundering, cracking floor, reaching the door just as the shattered beams gave way. And thus, by the force of his strong will, was a fearful accident mercifully averted.

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