

THE LATE MR. JAMES "SNYDER" BROWNE

Says the Wellington Evening Post of recent date:—"We regret to record the death at the age of 87 of Mr. James Browne, of Gisborne, one of the oldest and most popular journalists in the colony. Like that of all who pursue the profession in these colonies, Mr. Browne's career has been a chequered one, and there are few journalists who possess greater experience or have used it more freely for the good of their fellows than did the deceased gentleman. Born in London—his father being the late Viscount Montagu Browne—he came to the colonies when about 17 years of age landing at Hobart, where he gained those experiences of convict life in Tasmania, which his pen has so graphically described in his "Reminiscences of a Colonial Journalist." In the same sketches he has also written a touching account of the struggles of Bent and others for the freedom of the press in the early days of military despotism in the colony. Mr. Browne soon after his arrival joined the staff of one of the Launceston papers, and afterwards became editor of the Geelong Chronicle. In 1861 he came to New Zealand, where he joined the staff of the Otago Daily Times. Subsequently he owned several papers in Dunedin, Hokitika, and Greymouth, and was for some years editor of the Auckland Herald, in which paper his genial sketches under the name of "Snyder" of colonial domestic and social life, displaying a vast knowledge of human nature, attracted considerable attention throughout the colony. Indeed, they have frequently been copied into English and American papers, being full of quaint humour and pointed, but not ill-natured, satire. He was ever kindly hearted and generous, and his principle as a journalist, was to attack evils but not individuals. Among pressmen he was extremely popular, and many a young journalist has profited by his kindly advice. For the last eight years Mr. Browne had been a resident of Gisborne, where he was much esteemed. During a great part of that time he conducted one or other of the Gisborne papers. Altogether he has served half a century as a colonial pressman. About a fortnight ago he was attacked with jaundice, and gradually sank till he expired at his residence last night. The deceased gentleman leaves a widow and nine grown-up sons and many grandchildren to deplore his death, which will leave a blank in Gisborne, as well as in the ranks of colonial journalism, not easily to be supplied.

Referring to the death of Mr. James Browne, the N.Z. Times says:—"He belonged to a very old titled family, but he seldom spoke of his pedigree. At 17 years of age he became connected with one of the Tasmanian papers, and up to the time of his death he was more or less intimately associated with journalism. During a portion of the time that Sir Julius Vogel was editor and proprietor of the Otago Daily Times Mr. Browne acted as his sub-editor; but when the Wakanui tush broke out he was sent there as mining reporter. He afterwards proceeded to the West Coast, where he was instrumental in starting papers at Hokitika and Greymouth. Then came a lull, and Mr. Browne proceeded to Auckland, where he accepted the editorial control of the N.Z. Herald. He owned a paper at Coromandel in course of time, and in later years found his way to Poverty Bay, where he edited and managed the Herald. He started a bookseller's business in Gisborne, to which he devoted his attention during the past four or five years. The late Mr. Browne wrote some exceedingly clever things, and "Snyder's" wit and humour were at one time copied into half the journals of the colony. He was a very genial character; young and old enjoyed his society, and no figure will be more missed in Gisborne than that of James "Snyder" Browne, as he was latterly called.

We would add our tribute of respect to the memory of the deceased journalist, with whom we were intimately acquainted. Mr. Browne not long ago contributed a series of letters to the GUARDIAN, and his racy descriptions of Poverty Bay matters, written in a witty, humorous vein, caused the articles to be highly appreciated.

It may not be generally known that the Wairoa GUARDIAN plant was originally owned by the late Mr. Browne when he was living at Coromandel, and used by him in the publication of the Coromandel Mail, the last newspaper owned by the deceased gentleman, which flourished during the palmy days of that mining settlement, but subsequently came to grief when the production of gold failed.

The announcement of the death of Mr James Browne, better known by his nom de plume "Snyder," will cause a widespread feeling of regret amongst colonial journalists. The deceased gentleman was for many years a contributor to the columns of "The Daily Southern Cross," and as a humorous writer he was head and shoulders above any of his contemporaries on the New Zealand press. For some years past Mr Browne has been conducting a stationer's and bookseller's business at Gisborne. He leaves a large family of grown up sons and daughters, and the former have been connected with their father's profession. Mr Montague Browne, one of his sons, is, perhaps, the most successful theatrical agent in Australasia, and Mr James Oakley Browne, another son, is Parliamentary reporter on the staff of the Wellington "Post." The latter has prepared for the press a collection of his father's humorous writings, which, we understand, will shortly be published.

DEATH
BROWNE.—On 5th November, at his residence, Gisborne, James Browne, journalist, fifth son of the late Lord Viscount Montagu Browne, and father of Mr. J. Oakley Browne, of this city—1885

It will be seen by a cablegram from Adelaide, published elsewhere, that Mr "Monty" Browne, theatrical agent, who was well known throughout

son. But Monty was loyal to the father, and thus the "Herald" lost the services of two of the best men it ever had on its staff. For years afterwards, Monty Browne was known throughout the colonies as a successful theatrical manager, but evil days overtook him in the end—N.Z. Observer, January 26th, 1896.

Monty Browne, who died the other day in South Australia, was one of the best-hearted of pressmen in his time, and many a kindly action is still remembered in Auckland to his credit. Yes, in Auckland, for Monty Browne was sub-editor of the "Auckland Herald" and back in the twenties, when his father, good old "Snyder," was editor. "Snyder" and the late Mr W. C. Wilson, the founder of the "Herald," had a misunderstanding over some little matter, and "Snyder," in a fit of passion, voiced "them sentiments" of his facile language, and submitted his own and Monty's resignation without consulting the

well known in New Zealand. He was for some time Sub-Editor of the "Guardian" in Dunedin, and was also connected with the "Southern Mercury." He also acted for a few weeks as Sub-Editor of this journal, and on leaving decided to engage in the business of a Theatrical Agent. He leaves a widow and family, some of whom are connected with the stage.—"Otago Daily Times," January 15th, 1896.

Mr James Browne, better known under the nom de plume of "Snyder" has, we learn, given up the proprietorship of the Coromandel Mail to take the editorship of the Poverty Bay Standard. The proprietor of that journal, in securing the services of Mr Browne will, we feel sure, not be long in discovering that he has obtained one of the most experienced and versatile journalists in the Colony. As a humorist and descriptive writer Snyder has no equal, certainly no superior in New Zealand. As editor of the Auckland Herald, in which journal he commenced and continued to write for nearly three years a series of most humorous articles under the title of "My Sentiments," he succeeded in very largely increasing the circulation of that very old established journal. "Old Snyder," as he is generally called by all those to whom he is known, is never offensive, never personal, and never wounds or hurts the feelings of those whose acts or words it may be his business to comment on. In private life Mr Browne is very much respected, and from his genial nature and large fund of anecdote and personal recollections, extending over a life period in the several Colonies of the Southern Hemisphere, his society and companionship are always welcomed.

A POPULAR PRESSMAN.

THE Melbourne Bulletin of December 29 gives an excellent portrait of Mr Montagu Browne, brother of Messrs Browne Bros., of the TAURANGA GUARDIAN, and eldest son of the well-known humorous writer, "Snyder," whose contributions are so much admired by the readers of the GUARDIAN. Of Mr Montagu Browne the Bulletin thus writes:—"The subject of our illustration to-day is the above gentleman. He is, however, more familiarly known in press and professional circles by the less grandiose, but more familiar title of "Monty." Mr Browne is a native of Geelong, where he was born in 1849. His own expression is that he is a Geelong goose. There is, however, little of the latter character about him. Since his ninth year he has been connected with the press, broken only by intervals in which he has been running successful shows. For sixteen years he was editor or sub-editor of one or other of the leading morning papers of New Zealand, and by pressmen there was considered the smartest all-round newspaper man. He was also sub-editor of the Melbourne Daily Telegraph, and was on the Argus reporting staff. During all that period he has always retained the esteem of his fellow pressmen. Mr Browne is, however, best known to the Melbourne public as a business manager of theatrical companies. In New Zealand he has run some of the premier companies, and, to use his own expression, he knows every bill board in Maori Land. He was the manager there for the Soldene's, the Italian Opera Company, Chaplin-Osborne Company, Wellington Opera House, and made all Bland Holt's preliminary arrangements for his "World" and "Babylon" season, receiving from that gentleman a handsome memorial gift, besides untold miscellaneous "trifles." Throughout Australia he was Bland's right-hand man. He pulled Ada Ward out of the Jenny Allison row with credit to her and himself, and became a favourite with the Adelaide public over it. He was manager for Mr George Coppin's Exhibition Fair, and is now the business manager for Messrs Dunning, Wallace, and Co., the lessees of the Melbourne Opera House, having made all their preliminary local arrangements for them. Mr M. Browne is thoroughly up to every move in front of a house; can stick a bill as well as any bill-poster, is not above his work, and, in short, he is at the top of the tree in his profession, and is a valuable acquisition to any company. He is a general favourite with the theatrical profession, and the pressmen are always ready to do him and his show a good turn. We wish him a prosperous New Year, and many of 'em."

There has been "a great shindy entirely" in the editorial chambers of the Otago Guardian. It seems that something had been published in that journal which gave umbrage to one Captain Schwabe, of the Richardson Fusiliers. The gallant captain thereupon armed himself with a big whip, and went in search of Mr Montagu Browne, the sub-editor of the paper, whom he supposed to have been the author of the offensive paragraph. He at length found him in his office, and this, according to the narrative of our contemporary, is what followed:—"In the evening, about half-past 10 o'clock, as the editor was engaged in the sublime contemplation of sublimity things, he was aroused by the sound of high words in the ante-room, which is the sub-editor's. 'Apologise! I'll do nothing of the sort. How dare you, sir, threaten me?' were the words which fell on his ear, followed by a shuffling of feet. Opening the door and standing with his arms akimbo, he placidly surveyed the scene. His chief officer and the military gentleman were engaged in mortal combat, the assault and fence parry being exhibited with some dexterity but with great violence. Captain Schwabe was performing evolutions around the room followed by Mr Browne, who was bringing his hands with much force and rapidly into violent contact with various parts of the captain's face and head. Not being accustomed to such scenes of violence, he may not be in a position to judge, but to the editor's eye it appeared the most tremendous thrashing he had ever witnessed. He did not feel called on to interfere for several reasons, but primarily lest he might himself get hurt. At length the military gentleman lay down upon the floor in the doorway, with the literary gentleman on the top of him. 'Don't strike me when I'm down,' exclaimed the soldier. 'No, you—' improper expression—I'll not strike you when you're down,' replied the literary, 'but I'll give you in charge of a constable,' and at the same time proceeded to drag the captain along the floor on his back towards the head of the stairs. At this moment some twenty faces appeared at the door of the printing-room, being the faces of the compositors, who, alarmed at noises so unwonted in the serene atmosphere of our printing office, had rushed en masse to the scene of battle. Seeing the prostrate figure of the fallen officer being dragged along, two of those interposed and raised him to an erect posture. 'Then there was a parley. The gallant captain wanted to talk the matter over quietly;' the irate sub-editor was gradually appeased, and the kindly editor induced the combatants to shake hands and make it up. Then all was peace. The Mr M. Browne referred to is well-known in this part, and the Fusilier Captain made a mistake when he attempted to snub the sub-editor of the Guardian.

Poor Monty Browne, who died last week in an Adelaide hospital, was once well known in New Zealand. He was a son of the late "Snyder" Browne who for some years was connected with journalism in this colony, and a brother of Mr James Browne for many years a reporter on the Evening Post. In his day Monty engineered some first-class shows, but of late years his luck was clean out. 23
James, Wellington, Jan 15th 1896

Some fifteen months back, at the instance of the police, a Maori was charged by Mr J. Snyder Browne with attempting to obtain from him a case of tobacco by fraudulent pretences. For this offence, a young man, was sentenced to twelve months' imprisonment, with hard labor, in the Napier Gaol. On Friday, whilst Mr Snyder Browne was standing in front of the Post-office, a well-dressed native, with a bland look and sweet smile, betokening a heart free from all guile, came to him, and holding out his hand for a shake, asked—"You know me?" "No, I do not," was the reply; "I never saw you before that I know of." "No, know me, Brown! Why you got me twelve months in gaol! Come over and have a drink." Such an invitation, under the circumstances, was not to be resisted, and Mr Snyder Browne, accompanied by his friend, only just released from durance, visited Mr Samuel Mason Wilson's hostelry, and the result was two whiskies, for which the Maori insisted upon paying. "You put me in chokee, Brown," said the Maori. "Me felt very bad all the while" (passing his hand around the regions of his stomach, indicating thereby that want of sufficient nourishment was the complaint he had suffered from). "Me better now. Plea y to eat. No whisky in chokee. Why you send me to chokee? All right now. Come soon and buy a book of you. Good-bye. Your turn next to pay for the whisky." And the Maori crossed the road, smiles radiating from all parts of his dusky countenance.

OBITUARY.—The death is announced of Mr Monty Browne, which took place at the Jamestown Hospital, Adelaide, on the 11th instant. The deceased will be well remembered, by the old residents of this district, as a son of Mr James Browne who on the breaking out of the Wakanui gold diggings came here with his family from Dunedin, Monty being the eldest son. Mr James Browne ("Snyder") since deceased, edited the Marlborough Press for some time and was also lessee of the Riffman (now Clarendon) Hotel. Monty was also engaged on the Press for some little time. While here he married a daughter of the late Jos. Blaymires and soon after left for the West Coast. He ultimately gave up literary pursuits and became a theatrical agent in the Australian Colonies, and has for some years resided in Victoria and South Australia.

Marlborough Press, Jan 16th 96
(x 30th Dec 1896)

