

A LOSS TO THE NORTHWEST

DEATH OF ALEXANDER MITCHELL IN THIS CITY.

THE CAREER OF AN HONEST BANKER, A FAR-SIGHTED RAILROAD MANAGER, AND A CONSERVATIVE POLITICIAN.

Alexander Mitchell, President of the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad, and one of the wealthiest men in the Northwest, died at his rooms in the Hoffman House just before 2 o'clock yesterday afternoon. He had been gradually losing strength for two months, but the illness which resulted in his death began only a week ago.

Mr. Mitchell some months ago determined to withdraw from active business pursuits, and Dec. 1 last, accompanied by the Rev. Dr. Kean, his old Pastor, he started from Milwaukee in his private car for a trip to his Winter home in Florida, whither Mrs. Mitchell had gone some time before. At his magnificent place, "Villa Alexandria," just at the head of the St. John's River, he devoted himself to the pleasures of a Winter resort, spending much time out of doors and getting far more exercise than he had ever had before. Yet, although he seemed to be in the best of spirits, he steadily lost flesh. He had always been one of the most methodical of men and the change told upon him.

Three weeks ago Mr. Mitchell and Dr. Kean left Florida, reaching this city April 2 and going immediately to the Hoffman House. Two days later Mr. Mitchell complained of feeling unwell and developed feverish symptoms, but he soon recovered and was able to go down town, although the feverish condition returned at intervals. His son, John L. Mitchell, had joined him in the meantime, and, with his son and a party of friends, Mr. Mitchell heard Patti sing at the Metropolitan Opera House last Wednesday night. Sitting in the front of the box, he was probably exposed to a draught, for before the last act he complained of illness and left the opera house. So weak was he when his carriage reached the hotel that he had to be assisted to his room. After that he never left his bed. Dr. Edward Bradley, his physician, found that he was suffering from a malarial trouble and bronchial pneumonia, from which he failed to rally. Dr. M. Mackie, his nephew by marriage, was summoned from Milwaukee and reached this city Sunday. Then a consultation was held with Dr. Janeway, but medical skill failed to help the patient, who sank into a state of coma Monday evening and never recovered consciousness. Death resulted from asphyxia, caused by bronchial pneumonia. At the deathbed were John L. Mitchell, the Rev. Dr. Kean, and Drs. Mackie and Bradley. News of the death was sent to the physician attending Mrs. Mitchell, who is ill at her Florida home.

The body was embalmed yesterday afternoon. It will be taken to Milwaukee to-night in Mr. Mitchell's private car, and the burial will take place in Forest Home Cemetery, in that city. The arrangements for the funeral services have not yet been made.

Alexander Mitchell was born Oct. 18, 1817, on his father's farm in the parish of Ellow, in Aberdeenshire, Scotland. After studying at the parish school he spent two years in a law office in Aberdeen and was later a clerk in a banking house at Peterhead. In May, 1839, the Northwest was drawing many enterprising young Scotchmen from their native land, and Mr. Mitchell joined the tide and went to Milwaukee, where he took charge as Secretary of the Wisconsin Marine and Fire Insurance Company, which had just been organized by George Smith, of Chicago, also a native of Aberdeenshire, who knew him there and induced him to come to America. It was the era of Western wildcat banks, but the banking business which the insurance company under Mr. Mitchell's management was authorized to conduct was carried on in accordance with the sound principles of the Scotch system.

When the season of severest pressure came, after the local banks had gone under, a run upon Mr. Mitchell's bank began. He was on hand, and, greeting the frightened customers with a hearty "Come on, boys, and get your gold," he stood by while his tellers handed out the specie with which the bank's vaults were plentifully supplied. Confidence was soon restored, and the bank's success in weathering the storm alone gave Mr. Mitchell a reputation which proved largely the foundation of his wonderful business career. More than a million dollars of certificates bearing only the signatures of George Smith, President, and Alexander Mitchell were out at one time, but they were always paid in gold on presentation, and it has been Mr. Mitchell's proud claim that if any are still in circulation they can be redeemed in coin at the Wisconsin Marine and Fire Insurance Company Bank, which was organized in 1852 under the State banking law, and is still a powerful financial institution of Milwaukee.

Mr. Mitchell, who became a Director of the Milwaukee and Waukesha Railroad in 1848, turned his attention more directly to railroads about 18 years ago. At this time he consolidated the Milwaukee and La Crosse, Milwaukee and Prairie du Chien, and Milwaukee and Watertown Railroads into the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul, which, with extensions through Iowa and Minnesota, has become one of the most important in the United States. The success of Mr. Mitchell's railroad management is shown by the fact that the shares of this railroad, which sold at \$10 each when the reorganization took place, are now quoted at 92. During the financial troubles of 1873 the affairs of this railroad were never obstructed or even seriously embarrassed. In 1869 Mr. Mitchell was elected President of the Chicago and Northwestern Railway Company, but he held the office only a year, having decided that public policy rendered it inadvisable that the two great parallel and competing lines of railway should be under the same management.

In politics Mr. Mitchell was a Democrat, but with strong conservative instincts. As a practical banker he became a Whig, which was the bank party in his early days. When the question of slavery created sectional lines he became a Republican, and was a firm supporter of the Government's war policies during President Lincoln's Administration and until after the war closed. He then supported President Andrew Johnson's measures for the rehabilitation of the States which had been in rebellion, and in 1868 he supported Horatio Seymour, the Democratic candidate for President, and was himself defeated in a race for Congress in the First Wisconsin District. In 1870 he was elected from the same district by a large majority, was re-elected in 1872, and declined the nomination in 1874. Two years later he took an active part in the Tilden campaign, and upon the defeat of his candidate retired permanently from politics, declining in 1879 the Democratic State Convention's nomination for Governor of Wisconsin. During his Congressional career Mr. Mitchell was prominent and zealous in his support of such financial measures as were adopted for the protection of the public credit and for the restoration of specie payments. Among his strongest efforts before the House was a speech he made in 1874, setting forth his arguments against an inflated currency and the evils attending a deranged monetary system and arising from any but a specie basis for the circulation of the country. He made another speech on the subject of American shipping, showing that it could be revived as a successful industry only by removing the burden of tariff taxation which rested upon it.

Mr. Mitchell was married in 1841 to Martha Reed, daughter of Seth Reed, a pioneer of Milwaukee. He had one son, John Lendum Mitchell, now 44 years of age, who, it had already been arranged, was to succeed to the Presidency of the bank in August of the current year, and whom the unfortunate occurrence will now invest with far wider responsibilities.

Mr. Mitchell was the wealthiest man in the Northwest, and his estate is believed to be worth \$20,000,000. It consists, besides his railroad and banking interests, of large investments in Milwaukee real estate, which were made with rare foresight many years ago and have increased enormously in value. He had several friends in this city, among the closest of them being Russell Sage, Walter S. Gurnee, and N. H. Cowdry. His death was announced on the Stock Exchange just before its close yesterday, and Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul fell off about half a point. The question as to who will succeed him in the Presidency of that railroad is of interest. The general belief is that the position will fall to either Frank S. Bond, an experienced railroad man, who was lately elected Vice-President of the road, or to Phil Armour, the well known Chicago millionaire.

Mr. Mitchell was a man of captivating social qualities within the circle of his intimate friends. He never forgot the fact that he was a Scotchman. In 1859 he became the first President of the Milwaukee St. Andrew's Society, whose annual picnic and games are still held in the grove on his farm in the Eighth Ward of Milwaukee. His residence is one of the finest in the West, and the grounds surrounding it are the most beautiful in the country outside of the State of New-York. Among the monuments to his public spirit in Milwaukee is the beautiful building of the Chamber of Commerce in that city, for whose erection he was responsible.

MILWAUKEE, April 19.—It was not until nearly 4 o'clock this afternoon that credence was given the news of Alexander Mitchell's death, though rumors to that effect had been in circulation since noon. David Ferguson, Cashier of Mr. Mitchell's bank, who had been associated with him for nearly half a century, was prostrated by the news and it was feared at first would not recover, as he is very feeble. The crowds that gathered at the bank to make inquiries as to his death were so large that the doors were closed early in the afternoon and guards stationed to admit only intimate friends. The first authentic dispatch came from John L. Mitchell, his son, who was reported to be suffering from the malady

that proved fatal to his father, and came as a surprise even to the bank officials, although it was known that he was ill and that immediate relatives had been summoned to his bedside last Saturday. The gossip among merchants here is centred principally about the successorship to the Presidency of the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad, and the Presidency of the Marine and Fire Insurance Bank, of which Mr. Mitchell owned 99 of the 100 shares.

Mr. Mitchell's death has led to the knowledge that he had about completed arrangements to retire permanently from business by July 1, transferring the responsibility of his immense banking business jointly to his son, John L. Mitchell, his brother-in-law, John Johnston, and David Ferguson, and stepping down from the Presidency of the St. Paul Road. It has been rumored that the general offices of the road would be removed to Chicago upon Mr. Mitchell's demise. The charter of the company, however, stipulates their location in Wisconsin, and the President must also be a resident of this State. It is thought that John Plankinton, of Milwaukee, or Phil Armour, of Chicago, both of whom are heavily interested in St. Paul, will succeed Mr. Mitchell. A magnificent residence being built here for an unknown owner has been thought to be designed for Mr. Armour in anticipation of his succession to the St. Paul Presidency, thus establishing his residence here in conformity with the charter provision of the road.

Mr. Mitchell is survived by a wife, who is at present at her Floridian villa, a son, John L., and an adopted daughter, Mrs. Dr. Mackie, of this city, and a sister and brother living in Aberdeenshire, Scotland. He is known to have left a will. It was made three years ago, but B. K. Miller, who drew it up, refuses to divulge its contents.

CHICAGO, April 19.—P. D. Armour was asked this evening if he could state who would be the probable successor of Alexander Mitchell as President of the St. Paul Railroad. Mr. Armour answered no, and to a suggestion that he himself might be the man, replied emphatically that he would not accept. The law requires the President to be a resident of Wisconsin, a condition with which Mr. Armour would not comply.