

THE BENTON DEMOCRAT.

CORVALLIS, JUNE 21, 1873.

The Story of the Senator with Two Lives.

(From the Pittsburg Leader of May 14th.)

BUTLER, Pa., May 15, 1873.—Jno. H. Mitchell, newly elected United States Senator from Oregon, as yet but little known to fame, has lately been made the subject of a sensational story, which shows him to have had quite a history, with incidents in it redounding not wholly to his credit. When he was plain John H. Mitchell, his story possessed no interest for any one outside of his own immediate circle, but now that he has become a member of the august United States Senate, his antecedents and past life become of public interest. In the position of a Senator, exposed to the thousands of temptations incidental to that high place it is highly important that each Senator should start out virtuous, at least, as Henry Wilson did when he went out of the shoe business and into legislative cobbling.

So, when the breeze gently whispered in Pittsburg that the new Senator from Oregon was an old Pennsylvania man, and that he was present under an assumed name on account of an unfortunate past life, the matter became at once a proper one for investigation.

A SENATOR WITH AN ALIAS.

The object of the inquiry was not only to rake up any past scandal against Mr. Mitchell, but as an United States Senator with an alias a suspicious character, and if for no other reason than in justice to the Senator himself, an explanation was sought. Then the charge made against him of being a defaulter to a large amount was worthy the most careful attention. Your correspondent went to Butler, the former home of Mr. Mitchell, yesterday, and there in conversation with the old law partner, received the history of the new Senator's early life. His Butler experience was a bitter one.

THE OLD, OLD STORY.

With a woman as the principal character as a promoter of misery, seems to have been his. In Butler he was known as John Hipple. One day his burden became too heavy for him, and he fled without word of warning, taking with him some \$4,000 of his partner's money, for which he left what he said in a letter was to be used as an equivalent. From this his partner realized about \$2,500. The balance was afterward made good to him. For years, however, Hipple remained unknown to his former Butler friends. Occasionally, Mr. Thompson, his old partner, heard from him, but the letter was always enclosed to him through a third party, so that the runaway's whereabouts remained unknown. The real name of the new Senator is John Mitchell Hipple. It appears that when he went to Oregon he dropped his surname, or rather transposed his name, so that it stood John H. Mitchell. This was for the purpose of more effectually concealing his whereabouts. The unhappy marriage which he contracted in Butler was the main cause of his misfortunes. Three children were had by his wife, one conceived outside of wedlock, and two born after his marriage. The first he took with him in his flight. The others he left in this county, and has since supported. Further particulars of this story were given in an interview which your correspondent had with Col. Thompson, of the firm of Thompson & Scott. Thompson was the preceptor of young Hipple, as I shall now call him, and afterward took him into partnership.

THOMPSON'S STORY.

Your correspondent found Col. Thompson in his office early last evening and, upon the announcement of his business, Mr. Thompson at once expressed his willingness to talk. Mr. Thompson is a man in the prime of life, of an active, energetic type. He is well known in Pennsylvania politics, having served several terms in the Harrisburg Legislature, and acted one or two terms as Speaker of the House of Representatives. The conversation began at once upon the subject of Mr. Hipple, alias Mitchell.

THE PITTSBURGH INTERVIEW.

C.—About that interview you had with him in Pittsburg last month? Col. T.—I went to Pittsburg at his request. I took dinner with him at the Union depot hotel on Sunday the 20th of April last. I had been in correspondence with him for some time, and had seen him several times since 1867. There was no money difference between us then. All that was settled in 1867. Hipple felt that the one great indiscretion of his life was the assumption of a false name. Probably he wished to talk with me about it. At any rate we did talk over his position, and the certainty of his story finally coming out now that he had arisen to a position of public trust. I advised him to meet the story boldly, and tell the real truth of the case. I saw him but a brief time, as after dinner he went on his journey.

Col. T.—For years you never knew where he was?

C.—No this was doubtless only another one of the many precautions that John took to prevent his wife following him, a subject upon which he is perfectly morbid. His wife remained at home part of the time. She worked also about in families. She was at one time a charge upon this township. The occasion of this was her being with child, as was alleged, by some one unknown to me. The two children left were placed in the care of John's

Col. T.—In part what has been concerning him is true, but the stories have been highly colored, and unless viewed from a standpoint of a full knowledge of the case may lead to the prejudice of Mr. Mitchell, or Hipple, just as you please. I will tell you his story as I know it, and trust you will publish my account as I give it to you.

Their parents owned adjoining farms, for you must know John was a farmer's son. Her family was a respectable one, but one not remarkable, certainly, not in an intellectual way. John and this girl, Sarah Hoom, were much together, and about this time

UNPLEASANT GOSSIP

Was aroused. Whether John ever did any wrong to the girl I am unprepared to say. At any rate, while yet unmarried she became with child, and instituted proceedings against John upon a charge of bastardy, claiming him as the father. The result of this was that John married the girl.

Col. T.—Would he have married her if he had not really been her seducer?

Col. T.—You can settle that as you like. You are asking me for facts that I know in the case. John married the girl in 1857, I think; this was upon the advice of his father. Of course the marriage that followed was a

MOST UNHAPPY ONE.

It could hardly have been different under the circumstances. Two children were the result of this marriage. The first child the cause of the action against John, was a girl named Jessie. I really believe that my old partner tried to live with his wife, but her tastes were of such a nature that there was nothing in common between them. He was educated, studious, and possessed a vaulting ambition. She could not sympathize with him, and there was a perpetual discord. He said but little of this to me, and seemed resolved to bear his burden in silence. During the winters of 1859 and 1860, I was Speaker of the House of Representatives, and was away most of the time. John looked after my business entirely. In April, 1860, I returned to my office. A day or two after my arrival home, John left the office to go to Pittsburg, merely saying that he was going away on business.

HE NEVER RETURNED.

As my partner. A short time after his departure I received a letter dated "The Wide World." It had no postmark by which I could tell where he was. This letter stated his reasons why he had gone away. He said in it that he could not live with his wife; that he was going away where he would remain undiscovered, and begin life over again. He enclosed assignments to me of all his property here, in satisfaction of some \$4,000 which he took with him. He said if this was not enough to make the \$4,000 good he would make it so to the value of every cent.

A POSSIBLE DEFAUCATION.

C.—Colonel, was that really in the nature of a defalcation? Col. T.—It might be.

C.—That is, if you had found Mr. Hipple at the time, and had wished to have an action for him upon the ground of defalcation, there might have been a case made out?

Col. T.—There might have been, if I had so desired. But I am well satisfied there was no intention to defraud. Mr. Hipple has since made good to me the discrepancy of \$1,500. Right here I want to make one point clear. There was never any compromise made by me with creditors occasioned by my partner's flight. The creditors of Thompson & Hipple were paid in full all their claims against the firm.

WHY? OR, WHY?

C.—Why was it, if Mr. Hipple had confidence in you, he did not reveal his plans to you, instead of running away as he did, without giving you any warning of his intent? Col. T.—He was young and inexperienced. He was made morbid by his unhappy marriage, and doubtless was afraid of some obstacle being laid in the way of his leaving.

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any fear of his wife, who procured a divorce from him (not he from her, as has been stated), some three or four years ago, from Mr. R. P. Scott, the then Commissioner. The ground upon which the divorce was granted was desertion. The Oregon Senator has since contributed at intervals money for her support, as well as before her divorce. This seems to be the real facts in the case so far as they can be elicited here. That John Hipple Mitchell, committed grave indiscretions in his youth, and has since been severely punished, is quite certain. He stands in the anomalous position in the United States Senate as a Senator with an alias. Whether this will redound to his credit, in connection with the cause that led him to assume it, will hardly be asserted by the most enthusiastic of his friends.

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Any irregularities on the part of waiters should be promptly reported to the Proprietor.

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October 28, 1872. 2:28th

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March 8, 1872. 2:49th

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CORVALLIS.

August 2, 1872. 2:15y1

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SOL. KING, Proprietor.

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