

Our War Governor's Portrait

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OUR WAR GOVERNOR'S PORTRAIT.

On a certain Sunday morning during the session of the last Legislature, one of the Des Moines daily papers had an editorial article urging that it would be "a most graceful thing" for the Legislature to place in the hands of Governor Horace Boies, \$1,000, with which to give some artist of high repute a commission to paint a portrait for the Capitol, of our illustrious War Governor, Samuel J. Kirkwood. The next morning a bill to that effect was promptly introduced into the Senate. With but little friction, and the slightest possible opposition, it was speedily and "gracefully" passed by both houses and approved by the Governor, though the amount was reduced to \$800. Really, the act seemed to be endorsed by everybody.

When it came within the province of Governor Boies to "execute" this law, two thoughts seemed to be uppermost in his mind: 1st, To secure an artist whose name should be a guaranty of the highest success; 2d, To select one who would be entirely acceptable to Governor Kirkwood and his friends. He was not long in deciding that Mr. George H. Yewell, N. A., formerly of Iowa, but now a resident of New York, would meet both requirements. Mr. Yewell soon after came here, pursuant to an invitation, and entered into an engagement to paint the portrait. He had known the aged War Governor many years, but he nevertheless spent two or three months in Iowa City, studying his subject from every possible standpoint, even painting a preliminary portrait, in addition to securing many photographs. It was fully a year before he finished the painting, for Mr. Yewell is one of the most painstaking artists, as well as one of the severest critics of his own work. The portrait was finished in May. It was sent to Iowa City about the 1st of June, where it was placed upon exhibition for a couple of weeks. It was often and carefully examined by Governor and Mrs. Kirkwood, as well as by the citizens generally, and the verdict was on all hands most favorable. Everybody agreed that the artist had achieved a distinguished success. The portrait was then forwarded to the Capitol.

At this stage of the proceedings several of Governor Kirkwood's friends in Des Moines determined that the painting should be unveiled at a public meeting, with simple but appropriate ceremonies. Tickets of invitation were issued and sent to the War Governor's old friends throughout the State. The time fixed was Tuesday, June 20, at 2:30 P. M. The portrait had been placed upon the north wall of the Executive Reception Room, and draped with two American flags. At the time fixed Ex-Chief Justice George G. Wright, of Des Moines, took the chair. Seated on his right hand were Governor Horace Boies and Ex-Governor John H. Gear; on his left Hon. Peter A. Dey, the friend and representative of the artist. The chair introduced Judge Dey, who paid a brief but eloquent tribute to Mr. Yewell, leaving others to speak of Governor Kirkwood. We do not copy from this very excellent address, for the reason that we hope to present it in full hereafter. At the conclusion of his remarks the Stars and Stripes fell gracefully away from the portrait, and the form and features of Governor Kirkwood were revealed to the audience amid hearty applause. Judge Dey added: "In the name of the artist, I present to your Excellency this picture, and ask you if the contract for painting the portrait of Governor Kirkwood has been satisfactorily executed?"

In well chosen words Governor Boies accepted the portrait, paying a tribute to the great qualities and patriotic services of his illustrious predecessor. Brief addresses were made by ex-Governor Gear, Judge C. C. Cole, Judge Charles C. Nourse, Hon. H. W. Lathrop (Governor Kirkwood's biographer), and Hon. W. T. Smith. In closing the exercises, Judge Wright took occasion to express the high sense of appreciation, entertained by the friends of Governor Kirkwood, of the action of Governor Boies in the selection of the artist, who had executed this great work.

The portrait shows Governor Kirkwood as he appeared about the time he was Secretary of the Interior, in the full vigor of health, and before age had begun to tell upon him. He is seated at a table, with such accessories as books, docu-

ments, library shelves, etc. That it is a most faithful likeness, is the opinion of all who have known Governor Kirkwood. It shows him as he was, in splendid physical health, a man of great mental power, to whom firmness and decision would be easy and natural, but who was withal kind and benignant in the highest degree—one whom the humblest citizen could meet on equal terms. As an artist, Mr. Yewell has achieved more than national fame, but there can be little doubt that this is his master-piece, the crowning work of his life.

TWO VISITORS.

In one of the early days in May, the Historical Department was honored by a call from the venerable widow of Mr. N. H. Parker. Possibly very few of our readers will recall the name, but Mr. Parker was a man whose memory should be preserved in the Annals of Iowa as one who "did the State some service" long ago. Away back in 1856 he wrote a little book entitled "Iowa as It Is." This volume gave only a partial, but yet a very just statement of the resources of our State. So far as it went, the account was a glowing one. The book was widely advertised, and well known at the time, and without doubt was the means of inducing thousands of people to settle within our borders. This was at a time when every Western State, by reason of necessities real or imagined, needed immigration. Mr. Parker's book had a large circulation in the East, and in its time was productive of much good. But it soon went out of print, and at present copies are only found in the houses of pioneer settlers, or in second-hand book stores. At one time the author edited a paper in Davenport, but removed to St. Louis, where he attempted to issue a work relating to Missouri, similar to his Iowa venture. But from a combination of unforeseen circumstances, it did not prove a success. He died probably twenty years ago, and is well nigh forgotten in this State, where his labors were most useful. Mrs. Parker came to Des Moines to visit old friends, with whom she remained several weeks. She is apparently upwards of seventy years of

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