"Practical Politics," As Experienced By An Iowa Pioneer Legislator

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"PRACTICAL POLITICS," AS EXPERIENCED BY AN IOWA PIONEER LEGISLATOR

Daniel Kerr
W. G. Kerr
KERR & KERR
Attorneys-at-Law
Office in New Kerr Block
Grundy Center, Iowa,
July 18, 1906.

Johnson Brigham, a
My dear friend:

Your very kind letter of the 16th came to hand Saturday. I am seventy years old today and it was a pleasant surprise to receive your letter, and there are very few living from whom such a letter would have been a greater pleasure. You had about as fair a chance to examine my record and to judge of my motives as any one and hence your commendation is a sincere pleasure. In looking back over my life, I mean my political life, in view of the recent reawakening of the public conscience, I sometimes almost wonder where I got the impulses that determined my action, and I think a sentiment my mother often gave me as a rule had as much influence as any other, namely: "Avoid the appearance of evil."

In my first legislative session as a member of the Illinois legislature a gentleman who was president of a mutual insurance company which had been changed to a stock company said to me that they desired some amendments to their charter, and that if I would assist them to have them made he would be pleased to favor me with some stock in the new company. I was under some obligations to the gentleman as he was president of a school board and had given me a position in a city school, and as examiner had given me a certificate some years before, but I said to him that if they were proper amendments I would be glad to favor them but that I would not think of taking any stock for my services. He told an old friend, the editor of the Alton Telegraph, that he was afraid he had offended me, but he never mentioned the matter to me again. I had many offers to introduce bills for charters in which my name was proposed as one of the members, but in every case I refused and would introduce no such bills unless assured that it was to accomplish some good public purpose, and none in which I was named as a member.

I never used a dollar in a way that I was not willing it should be

1 Johnson Brigham, state librarian since 1888, was editor of the Cedar Rapids Republican, the leading newspaper of the Fifth District, during Mr. Kerr's political career, and was, as indicated in this letter, a loyal supporter of the Congressman. Mr. Brigham kindly allows the Annals to publish this letter.—Editor.
published. One very disturbing case occurred. I was informed by the
editor of the Belle Plaine Union, then editing the paper at Dysart, that
a certain man in Genesee Township, Tama County, had been hired to
work for the Democratic candidate for judge and for Congress, but
that if fifteen dollars was given him he could be bought off. I said I
would use no money for any such purpose, but the rascal changed about
ten votes and the Republican candidate for judge was beaten by only
three majority. In my first campaign in Illinois I was told if I did not
treat I would be beaten, but I said I would not pay any such penalty
for an election, and was elected over an old Democratic politician who
spent money in all the saloons, by about 1200 majority in a close dis-

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for lieutenant governor would be offended because I did not retire, but
I met Mr. Poynner afterwards and I found he did not care.
Thanking you again for your kind remembrance, and also again for
the uniform support you gave me while in public life, and wishing for
you many years of life and usefulness, I have the honor to be

Very truly yours,
DANIEL KERR.

GOVERNOR GEAR WRITES HIS PRIVATE SECRETARY

Washington, D. C., February 10, 1894.

Wm. H. Fleming Esq.
Des Moines, Iowa.
My Dear Fleming:

I am in receipt of the three copies of the paper with sundry articles,
evidently written by yourself. Wm. Thompson of the First Cavalry
was never anything but a major. Fitz Henry Warren was its first
colonel.

Apropos of the election between Miller and Thompson, you may have
forgotten that the poll books of the Kanesville precinct were stolen
and a contest ensued for the seat. Charles Mason, late Chief Justice
of the Territory, was counsel for Thompson. In a discussion in a law
office in Keokuk on the case the question was raised "What has become
of the poll books?" Mason had on an overcoat and in rising from his
chair a bundle dropped out. On investigation it proved to be the stolen
poll books. Such is the truth of history.

I notice the flags are to be moved to the State House and put in
cases prepared for them. I wish that you would write an article to
Lafe Young's paper, calling attention to the fact that if it had not been
for the six months' hard work of my wife those flags would not have
been in a state of preservation at this time. You know all about it.

Yours truly,
JNO. H. GEAR.