

school. He had worked out on the neighboring farms to secure money to pay his expenses. He made rapid progress for he squandered none of the precious hours for study. He knew the value of his opportunities for they were the result of his own plans and efforts. At the end of his school year he came home and passed the County Superintendent's examination and secured a position as teacher in a county school. He continued teaching for ten years and served one school four and another three years. During the summer months he followed farming, and it was always been his motto to "never be idle". In 1890 he was appointed Government Mail Weigh-er on the Vandalia Railway and again in 1892 was appointed to the same office on the main line of the B & O S-W Railway.

In December, 1894, he was appointed Deputy County Clerk, and while serving in that capacity, the Republicans of Clay County in 1896 nominated and elected him Circuit Clerk. His nomination was peculiarly gratifying, as he had no opposition and was nominated by acclamation without a dissenting voice. His term expired the first of December 1900, and was re-elected as his own successor. He has been a very popular officer and it is one of his positive convictions that no politics shall be discussed in his office for he believes that a man once elected by any party at once belongs to everybody and his duties no longer lie in the region of political discussion.

Qualifications for an office and not mere influence in a political party will some day be demanded of every aspirant of public honors. It is a standing menace to our free institutions that adventurers without education, training even moral character may push themselves forward into the light of public notice, and by bribery and misrepresentation, seat themselves in office for which they have no natural or acquired qualifications.

We are able to say without fear of successful contradiction that not ten per cent of the county or circuit clerks in the entire State of Illinois are able to keep as neat and accurate sets of books in their offices as can be found in Mr **Erwin's** work in both of the above offices in this County. In his calculations and transcriptions he is absolutely correct, while in his assiduous attention to his duties he is untiring,

Mr **Erwin's** penmanship is a marvel of skill and beauty. From childhood he has always been a lover of fine writing and this accomplishment alone puts him far in advance of his opponents for any office to which he may aspire.

Mr **Erwin** is an enthusiastic believer in the principles and doctrines of the Republican party, at the same time nothing of selfish partisan enters into his nature. He is too generous for that and he willingly accords to every man the