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**ASBURY CHURCHWELL LATIMER**

Twenty years ago next Monday, Belton, S. C., and the United States lost a great citizen and one of its truly great men. Elsewhere in this issue we have tried to crowd into several columns a brief summary and appreciation of his useful life, services to the public, and remarkable achievements.

Asbury Churchwell Latimer was one of America's and the people's noblest campions. He was modest, tireless, cheerful worker for his fellow men. His was a fruitful life of honorable service and usefulness for mankind, the South, and the Nation. For almost 16 years he was a Member of the Congress of the United States, and many are the splendid legislative proposals he started or helped start on their way to enactment that mean so much to us or this generation and that will mean so very much to our children and our children's children and their children.

The welfare of the farmers was especially close to his heart. In Congress he showed exceptional foresight. Among many other things he was a pioneer in the good-roads movement, blazing the way for the very plan now law, and as result of which we now have better roads and better streets, and are destined to enjoy still better ; and as a result of which we cannot help most respectfully and most earnestly suggesting that one of the most important of these wonderful highways bear his name and be a monument to his memory.

Among the successful men who have gone before stands the life achievements, and character of the Hon. Asbury Churchwell Latimer: of Belton, S. C.

His name was well 'known, not only in upper South Carolina but throughout the State and Nation a little more than one-third of a century ago, Space permits only to recall some of the construction  work he placed ine1l'aceably upon the pages of this country's history. It is well to remind those who are now living of the debt this generation owes to the past, so that It may profit by the worthy example of such good and useful citizens and statesmen as was A. C. Latimer. His entire life illustrates America's equal opportunities and ought to be an inspiration to every earnest, ambitious youth of the land.

He was born July 31, 1851, near Lowndesville, Abbeville County, S. C., and died on Thursday, 9.15 a. m., February 20, 1908, in Providence Hospital, Washington, D. C., leaving to mourn his loss a wife, one son, William Carroll Latimer, and four daughters, Mamie, Anna, Olive, and Sara, ·all of whom have been a credit to their parents. The son died last March in Atlanta.

Asbury Churchwell Latimer was a son of Clement T. and Beulah Young Latimer, being one of seven children; four boys and three girls. Brought up on his father's farm, he devoted most of his life to agricultural pursuits and the welfare of the farmers and the people generally. His education was limited to the common schools of that day when farmer boys rode or walked sometimes as far as 5 miles morning and afternoon and were glad to have such a privilege.

At an early age we find him actively engaged in public affairs, taking a prominent part in the memorable campaign of 18-16 as an ardent supporter of Gen. Wade Hampton for governor. Hampton appointed him on his gubernatorial staff, but be declined to serve for business and for personal reasons.

On June 26, 1877, he was happily married to Miss Sara Alice Brown, a daughter of Dr. W. Carroll Brown, of Belton, who was prominent and a leader in all affairs for the good of the town, country, and State. Doctor Brown was a brother of Joseph E. Brown, Georgia's famous war governor and postwar United States Senator.

His wife brought to her husband beauty, refinement, inspiration, counsel, and culture. She still survives Wm and lives at the old homestead at. Belton, doing good and enjoying the fruits of a well-spent life, within the shadows of her father's and mother's home, where she recalls the happy days of her girlhood and sees, with pride and sati • faction, her children and grandchildren take their places in busy walks of life, without fear of the future. Such 1s the useful life, and one worthy of emulation by those who must take on the work of our churches, schools, and civic affairs.

A. C. Latimer moved from Abbeville County to Anderson County in 1880, where he built at Belton a splendid home, which is still maintained by his widow, and where she continues the generous hospitality be dispensed while. devoted to farming and public affairs.

He was considered by his friends and neighbors a safe and sane advisor on public problems and a prudent and thrifty farmer, with practical ideas, and plenty of energy, all of which brought to him success in his agricultural and other undertakings.

Renewing his interest in public affairs in 1888, he opposed the third party movement, urged getting control of existing party machinery, and was elected county chairman of the Democratic Party of Anderson County in 1890, and was reelected in 1892. He declined candidacy for lieutenant governor in 1890, when the reform movement swept the State from center to circumference, but in 1892 was forced to become a candidate for Congress against the Hon. George Johnstone, of Newberry, one of the ableist lawyers and best speakers in the State, and whose reelection was conceded. Mr. Latimer's appeal was forceful and direct to the voters themselves. Even in that campaign Mr. Latimer outstripped Mr. Johnstone and proved to be one of the best campaigners this State has produced, and was elected to. the Fifty-third Congress and reelected four successive times~ and in 1902 he offered for the Senate and was successful in a hotly contested race with Senator John L. McLaurin, Gov. John Gary Evans, and others, and began his term of service as United States Senator on March 4, 1903. His work in the House of Representatives at Washington was noted for his perseverance and aggressiveness in the interest of the farmers and the people.

Among other things, he worked for the advancement of the Free Rural Delivery Service, and extended it in every way possible. In fact, he may be considered the father of this enterprise.

At the same time, he advocated parcel post, direct election of United States Senators, the direct primary, and many other Democratic measures which are now law In the Senate he continued his efforts directing his attention, among other things, more particularly, to good roads. He was such a strong advocate of good roads that he was sometimes called "Good Roads Latimer." The country now enjoys the fruit of his labors, far and wide.

When he was sent on the immigration commission to Europe he gathered information and made a study of European roads, with a view to arousing further interest here in the good-roads movement. While traveling out there he also observed the various qualities of soil and their adaptability to the growth of certain crops.

The remarkable thing about A. C. Latimer was that he had no legislative experience when he went to Congress, but succeeded in all his legislative activities remarkably and to a degree almost without any parallel. One of his neighbors once told me he doubted whether Mr. Latimer bad ever spoken publicly except at a Sunday school or religious meeting when he orated for Congress.

Many nice things have always been said about him by his neighbors. All agree he was a man of splendid habits ; that he always exercised deference and consideration for others; that he was a good man; a practical man; an ideal husband and most thoughtful father.

Some with whom I have talked felt he must have bad more of an education in his early days than he let on or has been credited with, arguing that he always expressed himself so well and forcefully and correctly; and always showed all the niceties of an educated gentleman.

But I doubt his having more of the meager education than practically all boys of his particular time had. Coming along into manhood just at the close of the great war, with slave property swept away, his father was almost ruined, and he, like all other boys bad to buckle down to the day's work. The fact that he did not have literary training only attests the fact of his wonderful native or mother endowment. His son told me on one occasion that his father seemed to see through a proposition quicker than any man he knew. We remember once when going out west of Belton to make a survey for him that we came to a huge pile of wood of various lengths on one of his farms that had been hauled out. He jumped out of the buggy and with a short tape line began to measure to ascertain the number of cords in it. We saw his intentions and got out our surveyor's chain, and be immediately turned the job over to us and went about something else.

His pastor, after his death had this to say of him: "In the death of Senator Latimer, South Carolina Methodism has lost one of her most prominent members and staunchest friends. The Belton Church has lost a tower of strength. Brother Latimer was not only a liberal contributor to the church, both at home and abroad, but he was its wise counselor and sincere friend. The people had confidence in his religious life. His public prayers were very earnest and touching. Often have I seen him and many of the congregation bathed in tears -after what might be called one of his face-to-face talks with God. He loved to talk with his friends on religious subjects. His conversion was clear-cut and unquestioned. He never lost his bold on God." One of his distinguished congressional colleagues in paying tribute to his memory said on the floor of Congress : "In the beginning of his career in Congress Senator Latimer was far more familiar with Clark's Commentaries on the Bible and the rules of the Methodist Episcopal Church, than he was with the Constitution of the United States and the rules of the House of Representatives."

The late Hugh Wilson, editor of the Press and Banner, of Abbeville, S. C., who knew him from his birth to his death, wrote, editorially: "Senator Latimer's biography would read like a romance. Left, as a result of the war, with little means, he did not have the advantages of a collegiate or even a good high-school education, yet with this handicap he attained the highest position within the gift of the people of his State. He knew the channel of his adaptability, and he broadened the scope rear by year. Heedless of the small talk of his unfitness that was indulged in by many in the early part of his political career, he bent himself to the task of improving himself, and how well he has done it, the record shows."

His neighbors loved him, as was evidenced by the great number who gathered .at the depot at Belton and awaited in silence the arrival of the special congressional train that bore his body from Washington, and then through the intervening hours viewing his body as it lay in the church so quietly and so much like his former self; and through the ceremony as provided in the book: of discipline and at the grave until the. last word was said committing his body to the grave, "Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust." Another touching scene was the more than 50 negroes at the church, who were permitted to take a last look at his remains.

This is but a brief history of the life of one whose activities were so great and numerous. His father, Clement T. Latimer, was born on Hogskin Creek, not far west of the town of Due West, Abbeville County, in 1818, and was one of 11 children, whose descendants are scattered far and wide, many of whom rose to high positions of trust and honor. Doctor Latimer, who was president of Davidson College; Doctor Burts, o! the Baptist Church; Dr. C. E. Burts, who was born and reared ne.11r Honea Path; and many others too numerous to mention all had a common Latimer origin.

To those of us who remain to look back down the dim vista of time it is pleasing to remember men who have overcome such handicaps 11nd have climbed the ladder of distinction, fame, honor, and public services, as did A. C. Latimer, and all of whose family have done so much In maintaining his high ideals in all matters pertaining to the common good of the country. His name will long be remembered by people of this section and the Nation .