

## An Agricultural Moses

By John Temple Graves in *Cosmopolitan Magazine*.

One of the American dreamers who has practicalized his ideals into glorious usefulness is Charles Simon Barrett, of Georgia, president and idol of twenty-six hundred thousand American farmers, molded, in great part, by his genius and energy into the mightiest and most influential agricultural body that the world has ever known.

Forty-six years of age, trim, compact, with a pair of black eyes as brilliant and blazing with Spirit as John Marshall's or Aaron Burr's—an American farmer to the tip of his labor-roughened fingers or to the square toes of his heavy shoes—with the permanent tan of the sun on his clear-cut features shaded under his soft slouch hat, and with the spring and grace of courage and confidence in his strong free stride—this is Charles Barrett, a romantic figure of power and achievement.

Union City, fourteen miles out of Atlanta, is five years old. It was builded by Charles Barrett and his official fellows of the Georgia Farmers' Union. It is the bright little capital of Farmerdom—the Mecca to which stalwart agriculturalists and quasi-stalwart politicians from all over the land wend their way in pursuit of counsel or consolation. For the Farmers' Union now numbers two and one-half million members. It stretches from Georgia, Virginia, and the Carolinas in a triumphant sweep across the Middle States and the West to the Pacific. Their ballots are millions. Their bosoms are one.

Ten years ago Charles Barrett was a young farmer struggling with the new methods on his Georgia farm. The farmers of America, coming out of a long line of lost battles and battered entrenchments behind organizations stranded upon politics, had reformed their broken ranks in a new and hopeful organization born in Texas under the name of the Farmers' Union. Barrett, with the quick eye of genius, saw the strong points and the great possibilities of the new organization at a glance. He joined it at once, was elected president of his county Union, and two years later was the unanimous choice for the presidency of the State Union. The young Georgian's powerful grip on men and affairs pushed the Georgia Union to astounding success in members and power. The fame of him spread. The farmers had found a leader, and they knew it. Thirteen months later, without a dissenting voice, they voted Barrett into the presidency of the National Union. They have re-elected him unanimously every year for seven years. He has tried to resign. They would not let him go. He has pleaded the demands of his own business affairs. They raised his salary and voted him a bonus.

A few years ago in Birmingham, he tried to quit, and a remarkable scene ensued. The salary of the president then was a mere pittance, scarcely more than that of a competent clerk in a store. It was characteristic of Charles Barrett that he should go ahead, pinching himself and his family for a cause, with no word of complaint.

No man would ever have known from him that he was square up against a financial wall and, sorrowfully, saw that he must yield the ambition closest to his heart, in order to labor for the loved ones dependent on him. By sheerest accident leaders of the organization heard of his straitened financial condition, and then one of those wonderfully generous things occurred which bind strong men together.

Mr. Barrett, after being renominated, rose to address the convention, his voice husky with the depth of his feelings. He stated that he could not accept re-election, but was ready to work and pull as a humble follower in the ranks.

They sent him from the hall, and in half an

hour the thing was done. They called Barrett back, while a solemn hush fell over the great gathering. Then a grim gray farmer rose and said:

"Charlie Barrett, we are not going to give you up. We know your trouble, and we are going to back you as we should have done long ago. The farmers of America need you. We have increased your salary to a living figure, and we have voted you a thousand dollars to relieve your immediate pressure. And as a still further token of our love, our faith in you, our regard for your services, we present you with this silver service."

The scene that followed was never surpassed outside of a Methodist camp-meeting.

It was with no soft-spoken diplomacy that the young Georgia farmer of blood and iron runs the Farmers' Union. He can be as silken soft as a courtier if he wants to, but he is wise enough to know it does not pay. He rules his mighty army with as fierce a challenge to every farmer to do his duty as he rushes at their enemies to battle in the open. He does not hesitate to ridicule them, scold them, criticize their methods and their mistakes and hard-headed, daring common sense. He caught the great gift from the former Georgia evangelist, Sam Jones, and learned how to flay the farmer sinner and make him feel that the castigation is for the benefit of his soul and pocket.

A time ago in a far western State a man who had been trusted in that State organization betrayed the trust. The farmer president with all his worldly-wise ways, his knowledge of humanity, his patience with human frailties, is singularly trusting in his own nature. He believes men to be honest and on the level until they prove they are not. Perhaps it is because there are no crooked kinks in his own make-up that he has faith in men—and perhaps this is why so few try to deceive him or to deal dishonestly in his places of trust.

Barrett trusted this man, and when news reached him of the official's sheer dishonesty, white-hot anger seized upon him. He rushed west as fast as limited trains would carry him, many telegrams preceding him with imperative demands on State Union officials to meet at one point on a given day. And they were there to the man when Barrett arrived, for they knew a storm was brewing.

They met him at the depot, escorted him to a suite of apartments in a hotel, and solemnly seated themselves. Barrett wasted no time in preliminaries. He stripped off his fighting clothes, rolled up his sleeves, his eyes ablaze, and the words fairly shot from him:

"Gentlemen, I have come this long journey to demand that you help me put Blank behind the prison bars. I sometimes have to use diplomacy, sidestep things for the time, and use honied words. But this is one time and one place where I lay aside diplomacy and talk out in meeting. Blank is a scoundrel; he has betrayed you and the Union. I know he has political power in this State, but that makes no difference with me. You must help me punish him; your refusal to do so will make you the partners of his crime."

That man is wearing stripes today.

Barrett's strength is in the magnificent numbers behind him, and his battle-cry is unity. He holds his great organization together. He makes them do things. He makes the southern farmer hold his cotton and not rush it under forced sales to cheap prices. And the southern farmer has grown rich on the increased price the policy has brought. He does the same with the western farmer and his grain. He preaches the gospel of self-support and the establishment of warehouses and mills. Under his presidency the Farmers' Union owns and operates nearly twelve thousand enterprises of saving value to the farms.

The President of the Farmers' Union, like the majority of successful men, is happily married. While a young school-teacher in his own county and town he met and won his boyhood sweetheart, Miss Alma Rucker. Mrs. Barrett is herself a woman of culture, ambition, and purpose. She is a real helpmate, and upon no living friend does

Charles Barrett lean for counsel and inspiration as upon his loyal and devoted wife. She has brought him six stalwart, sturdy sons, all dedicated to the soil of their native Georgia. His domestic life is ideal. Barrett is not rich, but he is independent. His Upson County farm he declares would support his whole family if they should build an impassable wall about it. His tastes are simple, and his wants are few. He loves work like a glutton, and the tilling of the soil is his favorite work. He would rather plow an acre than make a speech.

There is more money in the treasury, and there are more men in the Union now than ever before—and more faith in Charles Barrett than in almost any other leader of any other American cause. If he achieves nothing more in life than now stands to his credit, he has sufficient to perpetuate his name among the big and forceful influences for humanity's welfare. If you were to say as much to him, he'd veto the statement instanter and tell you you were talking bosh. But to have held together the farming classes in a compact, adhesive, fighting force for seven years by sheer strength of character and the tremendous earnestness of his own burning zeal is something—something few men could have accomplished without breaking down or throwing up the sponge.

If the readers of this magazine ever see the boyish-looking young Napoleon of the soil, they will question the truth of this estimate of his work. But if any one of these readers will talk to any one of the two and a half million American farmers that follow Charles Barrett, he will be astonished at the moderation of this brief biography.

### WAREHOUSE PLANS.

The experience of southern farmers with warehouses for cotton has thus far seemed to point rather clearly that a local warehouse, managed by local men, and locally financed, can be made a success, while the attempt to group warehouses under an association management has invited difficulties and frequent failures.

There are in Texas for instance many successful farmers' warehouses and we believe the records will show that in each instance these successes are accompanied by a local organization which attends to its own business without outside advice or outside obligation.

Looking at it theoretically, there seems no good reason why if one warehouse is a good thing for a community a group of warehouses would not be a good thing for a State or a number of States; but the bold facts of history do not bear out this theory.

The difference between theory and fact is a good deal like the man who figured that because he had ten hens which laid five eggs every day he could get fifty eggs daily from a hundred hens, set four dozen of eggs daily and, after three weeks, hatch out forty-eight chicks every day. He forgot to figure that some of the laying hens would have to be induced to set, and also forgot a number of things which are familiar to those who have had an experience with poultry.

Sensible farmers of this day are wisely inclined to put more dependence on established facts than in any theories, no matter how rosy the latter may appear.—Texas Farm Co-operator.

### HOW TO DO IT.

**T**HERE is one sure, safe, and absolutely effective way to go far towards raising assessments on property in every township in North Carolina. It is not to send a quad of militia to the township, either, for force will not go in North Carolina.

It is to let the people themselves do it!

Don't say it can't be done. Wait and see. If you will provide in the law that the township assessor shall prepare and have printed his list of assessments, and mail one of them to every tax payer, the trick will be turned. Everybody would then see who the tax dodger was, and be sure they would talk it and report it too. Publicity would do the work. Then when the board of assessors met at the county seat you may be sure that the people who knew who was dodging would tell it. And everybody would know.

There is no medicine like publicity. A simple publication of the lists would prevent half the dodging at the outset. Now there is secrecy and nobody knows anything. Turn in the light and the people will do much themselves, and all that can be done, to correct the trouble.—State Journal.