

# LeRoy Long, Doctor and Educator

By Dr. L. A. TURLEY

LIKE the fall of a great tree—a tree beneath whose protecting branches we have played and worked, whose beauty and majesty we have admired, a tree which grew where it sprouted, accepting and withstanding the forces and vicissitudes of its environment by the inherent power of its vitality until it became a giant of its kind, at once a landmark, an inspiration, and a symbol of triumphant life—like the fall of such a tree is the passing of a sincere and consecrated man.

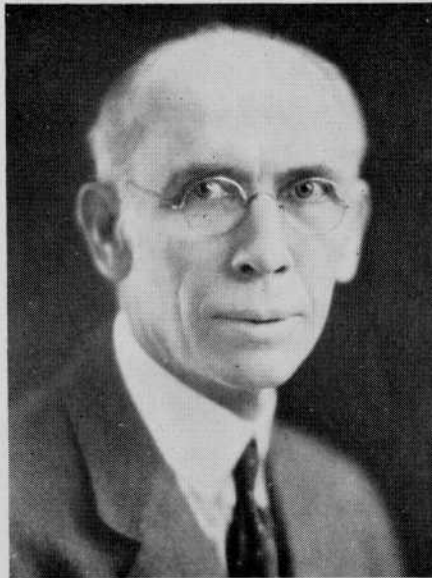
And such was the passing of Dr. LeRoy Long from the medical service and the medical life of Oklahoma. A skillful physician and surgeon is missing from the ranks of those who wage the fight against disease, and a guide and pillar of strength is gone from the councils of organized medicine.

Dr. Long was born in Lincoln County, North Carolina, January 1, 1869. He was the son of William Thomas and Mary (Burch) Long. He received his early education from private tutors and the high school of Lowesville, North Carolina. He took his medical training in Louisville Medical College from which he was graduated, with first honors, in 1893. After a year as house officer in a hospital, and a year as a teacher in his alma mater, he decided to practice his profession. He chose the last frontier rather than a more established locality as his field, so settled in what was then Indian Territory in a part known as the Choctaw Nation, and began his work as a country practitioner.

In 1896 Dr. Long married Martha Downing at Atoka. Two sons, LeRoy Downing Long and Wendell McLean Long, were born to this union. Both sons have studied medicine and are practicing their profession in Oklahoma City.

After a few years as a general practitioner, Dr. Long moved to McAlester and specialized in surgery. He continued to practice in McAlester until he was appointed dean of the Medical School of the University of Oklahoma in 1915, a position which he held until he resigned in 1931. This office necessitated his moving to Oklahoma City where he brought his family and continued to practice surgery until his death.

As a physician Dr. Long regarded his patient's welfare above all considerations, even family relations. He had the hap-



*Dr. LeRoy Long*

py faculty of regarding a patient as a case, and at the same time having a profound respect for the patient as a human being. When he walked into a sick room, his gentle manner and great human kindness, combined with an air of mastery, inspired confidence and hope in the patient.

He became a Fellow of the American College of Surgeons in 1913. He was a member of various local and national medical societies.

Dr. Long was a skillful surgeon. He knew exactly what he intended to do. He was master of procedures. He worked slowly and surely. He had a profound respect for living structures. He handled them with a touch as delicate as a caress, but with a sureness that was final, and avoided unnecessary manipulation.

Dr. Long did not seek prominence nor position yet he was often called upon to assume responsibilities, and when he did so he discharged them efficiently. He was chairman of the Choctaw Board of Health from 1899 to 1904. He was a member of the committee of the Indian Territory Medical Association which arranged the consolidation of this society with the Oklahoma Territorial Medical Association to form the Oklahoma State Medical Association. He served on the council of this society and later was president of the so-

ciety. He was a member of the State Board of Medical Examiners, 1911-1915.

In 1915 Dr. Long was appointed dean of the School of Medicine of the University of Oklahoma. It would have been difficult to have found a man better qualified to take charge of the situation. The state, newly formed from two more or less envious and in some ways antagonistic territories, was trying to find itself. The medical profession, while outwardly united, was nevertheless in a state of adjustment. Medical education throughout the United States was in a state of transition from private or denominational to institutional schools, and from a heterogeneous to a more uniform character with higher standards. This school, as a four-year school granting a degree of Doctor of Medicine, was in a formative period. It was a situation when, amid fast moving events, progress had to be made surely if not slowly. Conservatism and a firm grip were the qualities necessary at the helm. These qualities Dr. Long possessed to a remarkable degree.

To know an ethical principle was for Dr. Long to make it part of his life, an element of his thinking and a guide of his actions. He was uncompromising with any deviation from rectitude as he saw it. He had an unquestioning faith in those he trusted; he accepted what they told him as the truth which he did not investigate, and nothing but personal experience could shake this faith. This trait made him a loyal friend who could be relied upon at all times.

He thought things out for himself and came to his conclusions after deliberation, rather than after consultation, and seldom gave reasons for his decisions, yet he was capable of quick decisions in cases of emergency. He was extremely conservative and accepted nothing in medical practice, or outside it, that was not proven and time tested. He had a reverence for the great men of the past—Louis Pasteur was his patron saint.

Dr. Long was a great reader, not only of scientific writings, but also of philosophy and literature, especially French which he read in the original. This gave him not only a great fund of knowledge but an insight into the interpretation of knowledge which gave a character and an authority to his public utterances and a charm to his private conversation. When Dr. Long entered a room his presence created an atmosphere more eloquent than a sermon.

A skillful physician and surgeon, a man of the highest ethical standards and one who lived his convictions, an inspiring teacher, an efficient administrator, a learned counselor, an active partisan for the solidarity and elevation of his profession, a loyal friend, a man who with modesty and humility built for himself a high place in the medical world, Dr. Long's chair may be occupied—but his place will not be filled.