EULOGY

Eulogy

on the late

I. W. POWELL, ESQUIRE

M. D., C. M.

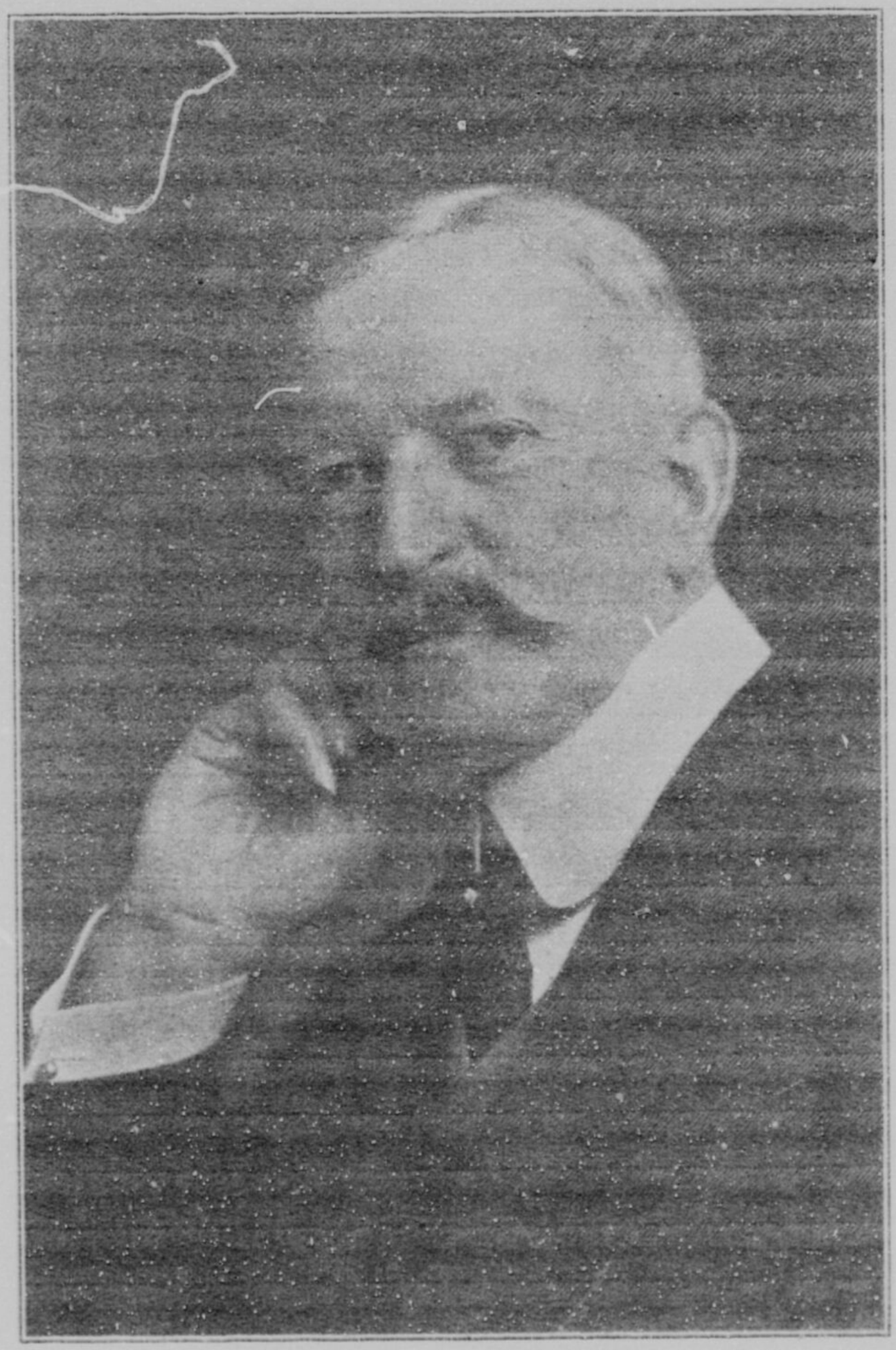
First Most Worshipful Grand Master
of Ancient, Free and Accepted Masons
of British Columbia

DELIVERED IN

THE GRAND LODGE OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

THURSDAY, JUNE 17TH, 1915

193043



Very truly Yours
J. W. Powell

Eulogy.

THE following eulogy on the life of M. W. Brother Dr. I. W. Powell, prepared by M. W. Brother E. B. Paul, was, in the absence of the latter, read by the Grand Secretary:

"The man who without blemish performs his duty as a man, a subject, a husband and a father."

These opening words of the "Ideal of a Freemason" in our Installation Ceremony are singularly appropriate as a summary of the character of our late Brother Powell, whose death, since the last Communication of Grand Lodge, is mourned by not only the friends and Brethren who had the privilege of his acquaintance, but also by all Freemasons in British Columbia who know the large part he played in the early history of this Grand Lodge.

The life of Brother Powell may be very properly described as a life of service—service to Canada, service to British Columbia, service to Freemasonry, and, last, though not least, service to his family and friends. To few men who have reached, as Brother Powell did, the ripe age of seventy-eight years, is granted, in the evening of their lives, the satisfaction enjoyed by him in looking back to a life full of work for his fellow men—work crowned by successful achievement.

Coming to the Colony of Vancouver Island in 1861, he was largely instrumental in securing the union of that Colony with the Colony on the Mainland, his policy being the concentration of small units into one powerful whole. This policy was manifested again when, with all his might, he advocated the inclusion of British Columbia in the Confederation of the Provinces of Canada, and the creation of the Dominion of Canada. That policy was at the time very unpopular in the

City of Victoria. But unpopularity did not deter Dr. Powell from doing what he considered his duty, and he lived to see the cause he had advocated triumph, and its opponents converted to the perception of the benefit and grandeur of the result.

After 1871, the efforts Dr. Powell had made on behalf of Confederation and his standing in the community were recognized by his warm personal friend, Sir John A. Macdonald, who offered him a Senatorship. This, owing to the time annually involved, and the consequent neglect of private interests entailed thereby, he could not afford to accept: but in 1872, at the request of the Canadian Premier, he became Superintendent of Indian Affairs in the Province, in which capacity, and as Indian Reserve Commissioner, he remained until 1890. Any one familiar with the history of Indian affairs will appreciate the difficulties incident to the settlement of the whole question of Indian lands as between the Province and the Dominion, and the Indian Commissioner's share in this was necessarily a very important and responsible one. The present satisfactory state of Indian affairs in B.C., including the system of industrial schools, is to a large extent due to him.

Another matter in which he took an initiative part was in inducing the Canadian Pacific Railway to extend its line from Port Moody to Granville, now Vancouver City, making the latter its real terminus. In this he was associated with Major Dupont, and the late David Oppenheimer, who formed the Vancouver Improvement Company, and who were mainly instrumental in getting the Provincial Government to assist by a grant of land in South Vancouver.

The above-mentioned services of Brother Powell to the Dominion and the Province serve to illustrate the ability and

energy which he brought to bear in many directions of public activity, and the success that attended all his efforts.

His Masonic career was equally brilliant. He was raised a Master Mason in Elgin Lodge, No. 348, G.R. Scotland, Montreal, at the age of 21, in 1858. In 1861, he was installed as Worshipful Master of Erie Lodge, No. 149, G.R. Canada. He affiliated with Vancouver Lodge, No. 421, G.R. Scotland, in November, 1862, and was installed Worshipful Master of that Lodge in December of that year. Five years later he was appointed Right Worshipful Provincial Grand Master of British Columbia by the Grand Master Mason of Scotland in 1867, and held that high office till 1871.

This is not the place to discuss in detail the steps that led to the formation of the Grand Lodge of British Columbia. Suffice it is to say that Right Worshipful Brother Powell, deeming the time ripe for that consummation, brought his ability and energy to the task, and with the assistance of other distinguished Brethren, succeeded in the formation of this Worshipful Body, of which we are all proud, and which is the best monument to our late Brother. Elected first Grand Master in 1871, he continued to hold that office for three years On his retirement, he virtually abandoned active service in the Craft; but, until the last, he preserved the kindest feeling towards Freemasons and Freemasonry, and never relaxed his interest in the affairs of his Lodge.

This brief account of the career of Most Worshipful Brother Powell will give the Brethren of Grand Lodge some idea of the wonderful energy that he brought to bear on many matters affecting the interests of his country and of Freemasonry. But this sketch would be cold and incomplete if it did not attempt to portray the beautiful personality of our beloved and distinguished Brother.

No one who ever came in contact with him could resist his bright, sunny disposition and the kindness and courtesy with which he invariably treated acquaintances and friends. In his own home he was an ideal host, and his numerous friends can look back with pleasure to happy evenings spent at Oakdene, and with a feeling of sadness that never again in this world will they hear his cheerful voice, or see his bright, youthful-looking face.

In the latter years of his life a great calamity, which would have wrecked the happiness of a less spiritual-minded man, threw a shadow on the life of Brother Powell. Owing to an affection of the eyes, he gradually lost his power of vision, and, for some time before his death, he lived in material darkness. But that calamity, great as it was, only served to bring into greater relief his beautiful character, which was not dependent on external blessings, but which was buoyed up by his strong spirituality. Few men have borne a heavy cross with more fortitude. The same high, almost boyish, spirits that characterized him before he lost his sight continued after he was plunged in darkness. His only fear was that he might be a source of trouble to his family, to whom he always was a pattern husband and father and by whom he was looked up to and adored as such.

Shortly before his death he celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of his marriage with the gracious lady to whose comfort and support through that long period he owed so much. Our Brother was so delighted with the letters of congratulation he received on that occasion that we may thank God that he and Mrs. Powell were spared for that crowning felicity.

Our Brother was buried, at his own desire, according to the ritual of the Craft, the Most Worshipful Grand Master officiating, and officers and members of Grand Lodge attend-

ing in great numbers. The Masonic pall-bearers consisted of six Past Grand Masters, while the honorary pall-bearers included the Lieutenant-Governor of British Columbia, the Premier, and other men of distinction in the community—all wishing to testify by their presence to the love and respect in which they held him.

As the funeral procession passed Oakdene, in which our Brother had so long made his home, the Brethren bared their heads in mute salutation, all of them thinking of the sorrowful family now left without their loving head, and praying that The Most High would especially comfort the bereaved lady who was then seeing her loved one being borne to his last resting-place. The bright sunshine of that day may be taken as emblematical of the brilliant light with which our First Grand Master was henceforth to be surrounded in that Grand Lodge Above, where there is no more darkness, and where he will forever enjoy the blessings of Light.

"Let me die the death of the righteous and let my last end be like his."

SO MOTE IT BE.