

MW BRO. REV. DR. JAMES SUTHERLAND HENDERSON

By R.W. Bro. J. G. Brown, J.G.W.

"A life well spent in acts of piety and virtue" is truly the highest masonic ideal. Yet these words come naturally to our lips as we contemplate the life and record of the late Most Worshipful Brother, the Reverend Doctor James Sutherland Henderson.

"With long life will I satisfy him and show him my salvation", was the hope of the servant of the Most High as expressed in the Volume of the Sacred Law. Such was MW Brother Henderson's portion. The allotted span was transcended to within a few months of eighty-two years. Born on 11 June 1858, he passed to the Grand Lodge above on 19 March 1940.

The place of his birth was the enterprising community of Newmarket in the historic county of York in the Province of Ontario. The first forty-five years of his life were spent in his native province. His father, Magnus Henderson, and his mother, Christina Henderson, hailed from Caithness, Scotland, and were of the Covenanting stock. They settled first in Newmarket where James Sutherland, the eldest of the family, was born. Later, they moved to Glenallan in Wellington County.

Here our late Grand Master received his early public and high school education. At nineteen he began his studies for his life's work in the University of Toronto and in Knox College. In the year 1883, he was ordained to the Christian Ministry in the Presbyterian Church. Twenty years were spent in two charges in Ontario--five years in Melbourne, Middlesex County, and fifteen years in Carmel Church, Hensall, in Huron County.

Then came the call to the west. In 1903, MW Bro. Henderson became minister of St. Andrew's Church, New Westminster. Ten years, rich in service rendered and full of abundant activities, were passed in the Royal City. The athletic spirit of New Westminster was always a vigorous spirit and our Most Worshipful Brother found it very attractive and congenial.

In his youth, for two years he had been a member of the champion football team of Ontario. Now lacrosse stirred his blood. For several years he was a member of the executive of the New Westminster Lacrosse Club--familiarily known as "The Salmonbellies," and in the year when this team won the World Championship he was its honored president.

Another five year period of his life, begun in 1913, was spent as a Field Secretary for Social Service work for his church--having the four western provinces for his territory.

Then St. Andrew's Church, Vancouver, called him to be its minister and for eight years he carried on that work until the time of his retirement in 1926.

The fourteen years of retired life were very full. It frequently happens that men in the years of their retirement keep on working to a degree almost equal to their active days. Public service engages their attention rather than private enterprise. Experience enables them to give leadership, and both their abilities and time are heavily drawn on to keep many interests of the community going. It was so with MW Bro. Henderson.

His church interest never slackened. In the United Church of Canada he took a very active part, even in his years of retirement, in committee work and in all the courts of the church. A popular preacher, no minister was more frequently called on for special services and no one was heard with greater acceptance. It continued thus to his life's end.

In these later years his interest in Freemasonry grew apace. He had been initiated, passed and raised in Zurich Lodge No. 224, of the Grand jurisdiction of Canada in Ontario in the year 1900, and served as Chaplain there for a year before his removal to the West.

In this Grand Jurisdiction of British Columbia, he was a member of Union, No. 9 [affiliated 15 March 1905, demitted 2 January 1918] and of Acacia, No. 22 [affiliated 7 July 1921, Chaplain from 1927-1940]. Honour and responsibility rapidly fell upon him. In 1926-27, he was Master of Acacia Lodge. In the year 1933-34, he held the post of District Deputy Grand Master of District 13. Then, in 1936, Grand Lodge elected him to the Chair of the Deputy Grand Master, and, in 1937, he became Grand Master of this Jurisdiction. His term of office was a very fruitful one. The high idealism and the noble standards of character and conduct he held before the Craft caused him to be looked up to by all the brethren.

Numerous also were the honours and official responsibilities thrust upon him, by the community and its institutions. In the Year 1917, the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Divinity was conferred upon him by Westminster Hall. In the same year, he was also Moderator of the BC Synod.

During his residence in New Westminster, for four years he was Chaplain of the 104th New Westminster Regiment with the rank and honour of Captain.

The Terminal City Bowling Club, of which he was an Honorary President, furnished an avenue for his athletic interests.

He became a director of Abbott House and of Central City Mission, devoted to relief and encouragement to those who might have found life's pathway hard.

In the Canadian Club and in the Kiwanis Club, he was a very prominent figure and faithful attendant. The Independent Order of Odd Fellows knew his loyalty and fellowship.

Not least of all was the distinction conferred upon him by Post No. 2 of the Native Sons of British Columbia as the citizen whose unselfish endeavours had contributed to the progress of the city and the welfare of its inhabitants. Their bronze medal with its inscription "A Good Citizen" was presented to him by the Mayor of the city. No selection ever met with more general approval. All felt it was a suitable climax to many public honours.

The beloved partner of his life was Margaret M. Grant, whom he married in 1885 and whose death was a heavy blow in his advancing years. Together, they had celebrated their Golden Wedding in 1935. Their only son is Mr. Roy Grant Henderson of the city of New Westminster.

The Craft will always remember MW Bro. Henderson as he moved among us, especially in his latter years. Venerable in appearance, his silvered hair crowned a live and vigorous body. His spirit was blithe as a skylark. No one ever thought of him as aged. Such an abundance of energy emanated from him both in his movements and in his utterances. We will ever think of him, too, as a leader in masonic education. It was the report presented by MW Bro. Henderson to the Grand Lodge in the year 1936 which led to the setting up of the Committee on Masonic Education and Research. For three years, the column "Gems From My Reading" contributed by him delighted the hearts of Craftsmen and stirred men to nobler endeavours. Truly as a minister and a Freemason we can speak of him as one who ever "allur'd to brighter worlds and led the way."

"As some tall cliff, that lifts its awful form
Swells from the vale, and midway leaves the storm,
Though round its breast the rolling clouds are spread,
Eternal sunshine settles on its head."