

and more than one foreign scientific society gave his name a place on the roll of their membership. Had he possessed more ambition and been burdened with less modesty, there is scarcely any position in the paths of science to which he might not have successfully aspired. He had what one might almost characterize as a morbid shrinking from publicity. He was out of his element in a crowded room. He loved not the busy haunts of men; but, charmed "by the breath of flowers, he fled from city throngs and cares, back to the woods, the birds, the mountain streams." Much to the regret of his friends, he could never be induced to take prominent part in any public enterprise. As a striking instance of this, and as confirmatory of what is now stated, it may be mentioned that when he was President of the Ottawa Natural History Society—an office to which he was elected as a recognition of his acknowledged ability—he could never be persuaded to preside at any of the meetings. He uniformly, on some pretext or other, always managed to shirk the distasteful duty. Nor did this arise from any want of interest in the proceedings, for he was one of its warmest and most active supporters, and contributed many valuable Botanical and Entomological specimens.

Mr. Billings was born at Billings Bridge, a small village in the immediate neighbourhood of what is now the city of Ottawa, on the 19th of January, 1819. He was descended from a Welsh family that came to America about the year 1740. His grandfather, Dr. Elkanah Billings, after graduating at Harvard University, served for some time as surgeon under Washington, during the Revolutionary War. His father removed to Canada sometime previous to the year 1804, and engaged in lumbering operations on the Rideau River. At this time there was only one house, on the south side of the Ottawa River, within 50 miles of his clearing. The whole of the Ottawa valley was then a comparative wilderness, with few indications of the material prosperity which has since become everywhere so apparent. It might be interesting to glean some of the incidents connected with the first settlement of this part of Canada, but as this would be foreign to the purpose of this paper, we forbear.

Of the early years of Mr. Billings little need be said; although, by this time, considerable progress had been made by the various settlements that had been gradually formed in this section. Still, as can be easily imagined, he experienced his full share of the trials and hardships incident to a life in the backwoods. Access to books must have been a favor which few enjoyed, and the facilities for education were of the most meagre description.