

**A BIOGRAPHICAL
SKETCH OF EMILY
SANFORD BILLINGS**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649487646

A Biographical Sketch of Emily Sanford Billings by Edward C. Billings

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Cover @ 2017

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EDWARD C. BILLINGS

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A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH
OF
EMILY SANFORD BILLINGS

BY HER HUSBAND

[Billings, Edward Coke, 1829-1893.]

"Thy voice is on the rolling air,
I hear thee where the waters run,
Thou standest in the rising sun,
And in the setting thou art fair."



NEW ORLEANS
PUBLISHED BY THE AUTHOR

1887

H. S. G. A.

NEW YORK
PUBLIC
LIBRARY

DEDICATION

TO MY SWEET MOTHER,

HEPSEY DICKINSON BILLINGS,

I dedicate this Sketch, with the hope that, even by a tie so frail and perishable as words of mine, may be linked the memory of her, who first revealed to me the sacredness in woman's character, with that of her who, in all the relations of life, so conspicuously and endearingly illustrated that sanctity; that these two beings who had, as typical mother and wife, successively stood by my side, like angels, inciting to all that was good and repelling all that was bad, and who first met as seraphs in Heaven, might each occupy her own fitting relations to the worth herein recorded, the one having prepared me by the hints and suggestions from the depths of her own serene and loving nature, to regard as possible, and appreciate, when found, the more broadly unfolded and more brilliantly beautified excellencies of the other. Thus may there be a remembered association between her who foreshadowed and prefigured and her who also attained to and embodied in a shining life, such unworldliness, such affinity with goodness, such steadfastness for the right, and such purposes born of Heaven.

PREFACE

This sketch was undertaken for several reasons.

Upon the death of the fondly loved, there abides for the survivor an everywhere-diffused, ever-present sense of loss, of the oppression of pain and solitude, a void co-extensive with mental associations,—almost an absence of what made existence personal.

Slowly, sometimes not till life on earth becomes nearly all a retrospect,—its chastening all wrought into character,—comes to the mourner from out the "ashes" of the grave the promised "beauty"—comes that ideal presence of our cherished dead which to the Spiritual Senses brings something of the look and fellowship, the high and brave encouragement, the restfulness, the assuagement, and the beckoning upward of their living selves.

"The prospect and horizon gone," every landscape is dreary, every shore barren. Our being, which yesterday was full of vigor and crowned with verdure, is to-day withered as if smitten by the killing frost; so that the utterly bereaved seems to be separated, far away, from

his own life. The connection between the soul and interest in external objects is paralyzed.

"As deep has thus called unto deep," "His waves and billows going over me," every phase and incident of the life herein outlined has won me to its contemplation, as, in some sense, to a communion with that vanished life. The labor of the sketch, therefore, has afforded some little relief amid the distraction of grief and the desolation of loneliness.

Also have I felt that the events of a life which had been one high, unbending resolve to be and to do what was pure and good and noble, wherein had been combined an intellect of such comprehensiveness, equipoise, and brilliancy with a disposition so sweet and joyous and loving and faithful, wherein had been reflected such love of justness and such generosity, and wherein acquirements had been gained with such sincerity and worn so unostentatiously,—a life that had engaged the interest and won the affection of so many gifted people,—should, along with her letters, so rich in thought, so elevated in sentiment, and so splendid in diction, with suitable grouping, have commemoration and permanence, which arrangement in a published volume could alone secure.

I knew, too, that her friends would find solace, and all would derive encouragement, in reading of the grace and sweetness with which she continued to invest life, as with a garment, under greatest trials, to the very last; of the

heroism with which she encountered dangers, the resignation with which she endured pain, and the faith with which she triumphed in death.

Since a noble life transcends all other sources of human power for good, it has been my wish that, through faithful and appreciative narrative, the life of Emily Sanford may, with all its high consecration and pure affiliations, still flow on, a perpetual stream of beneficent influences—unceasingly reflecting tribute to the dead and incentive to the living.

As to the manner in which this purpose has been executed, provided only it shall have been accomplished and the record shall fittingly present the exquisite beauty and rare virtues of the life committed to it, I have a single ambition,—that it may in all respects be exactly such as her taste would approve. Not exactly will the asperity of criticism be softened, but rather the spirit of criticism will withdraw itself, where what has been written has been the spontaneous, well-nigh involuntary product of sorrow, born of a fullness of love between the subject and writer, which made them the whole world to each other, and makes what used to seem his worth towards her now to seem to need forgiveness.

EDWARD C. BILLINGS.

New Orleans, April 23d, 1886.

