



# THE OTTAWA NATURALIST

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## **JAMES FLETCHER, LL.D.**

As mentioned in the December number of *THE OTTAWA NATURALIST*, it is with great regret that we have to record the death of our very dear friend Dr. James Fletcher, which occurred at the Royal Victoria Hospital, Montreal, on Sunday morning, November 8th, 1908. There are many sad hearts among the members of the Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club, owing to the demise of him who has been styled its "Father". For the past three years his health had been gradually changing, and becoming undermined by intermittent hemorrhages resulting from a malignant tumour which caused his death. Four years ago, when, with the writer and some others, he was tobogganing near his home at the Experimental Farm, he met with an accident which confined him to his house for two months. Since then he often said that his health was not what it was before, and it may be that the trouble which brought his useful life to a close had its origin then. During the last year particularly he suffered much, at times, but his was not the nature to complain, and very few, even of his more intimate friends, really knew that his life was undergoing a serious change. The writer, who was constantly associated with him in the official work of the Division of Entomology and Botany knew what aches and pains he bore. Often, especially of late, as we were working together he would say that his head was thumping as if it would break, but it was only during such attacks towards the end of the afternoon that he would say he would have to stop and get away from the office.

On Thursday afternoon, October 29th, he left Ottawa for Montreal, to consult a specialist, saying that he would be back again on Saturday, or Monday. On November 1st the writer received a letter from him with regard to the annual meeting of the Entomological Society of Ontario, in which he said: "I find it is no use, I cannot get to the meeting. In fact, I only got here just in time. I shall probably not be back for another fortnight at least....." On the following day he wrote again saying: "I am very comfortable, everything so far is going well," and,



referring to the eggs of a rare butterfly which had been sent to him, he said: "The eggs of *Dorcas* are in my cellar in a black cardboard box, you had better get track of them." He asked me to acknowledge these eggs saying that he would write himself in a week or so. This was the last letter from him which we received at the Division.

It was decided soon after his arrival at the Royal Victoria Hospital that he would have to undergo an operation, but, owing to the serious nature of this, it was delayed from time to time, hoping that he would get stronger. This he did not do, however, and the operation had to be performed on Saturday, November 7th. Owing to his very weak condition, he failed to rally and died the next morning. During the whole time he was in the hospital he was very happy and had no fear whatever of the result of the operation. Even here he was looking forward to the near enjoyment of larger quarters for his Department, and of further help to carry on the important work about which he knew so much and which he did so well. The funeral was held on Tuesday, December 10th, from his residence at the Experimental Farm, to St. Barnabas' Church and thence to Beechwood Cemetery.

The Rev. Professor Bethune, in the *Canadian Entomologist*, December, 1908, has expressed our feelings so well when he says: "Few men ever made so many loving friends in all walks of life; every one who came to know him did not fail to become warmly attached to him. There are many sad hearts grieving at his loss all over the Dominion of Canada, and many too in widely scattered places in the United States. Old and young, rich or poor, learned or ignorant, children and their elders, it made no difference—he had a kindly word for each one, and most can treasure in their memories a kindly deed as well. When he addressed a meeting he captivated his audience at once, and when he joined an excursion of nature students all were eager to be with him, and learn from him some of the secrets of the woods and fields that he knew so well. We shall not see his like again, but we may all feel that it was good for us to have known him—his memory will long live in our hearts—his noble words and generous deeds will be happy recollections for many a year to come."

Dr. Fletcher was born at Ashe, in the County of Kent, England, on March 28th, 1852. He was educated at King's School, Rochester, and came to Canada in 1874 as a clerk in the Bank of British North America. Two years later he left the bank and became an assistant in the Library of Parliament, Ottawa. All his spare time he devoted to entomology and botany and soon became a recognised authority not only on these subjects but on other branches of natural history as well.



While he was continually busy with his official work, he yet found time for many other things. He was a loyal member of the Church of England and a generous supporter of all her works. He attended St. Barnabas' Church, of which at the time of his death he was a warden. His special aptitude for teaching and his love of children made him an ideal Superintendent of the Sunday School, in Holy Trinity Church, Ottawa East. In this capacity he acted for over twenty years, seldom missing a Sunday when he was in Ottawa. He was an active and enthusiastic member of the Brotherhood of St. Andrew, a member of the Board of Governors of St. Luke's Hospital, and a member of the Rideau Club.

At a meeting of the Council of the Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club, held on November 10th the following resolution of condolence was passed: "The members of the Council of the Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club desire to place on record their profound sorrow and sense of deep personal loss in the death of Dr. James Fletcher, and to express their sincerest sympathy to his widow and family in their bereavement. Dr. Fletcher was one of the founders of the Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club which is now nearly 30 years old. It is peculiarly sad that he, who was so often referred to as the 'Father' of the Club, should be the first member of the original council to be removed from our midst."

At this meeting it was decided to hold a Memorial Meeting in the large assembly hall of the Normal School.

ARTHUR GIBSON.

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## MEMORIAL MEETING

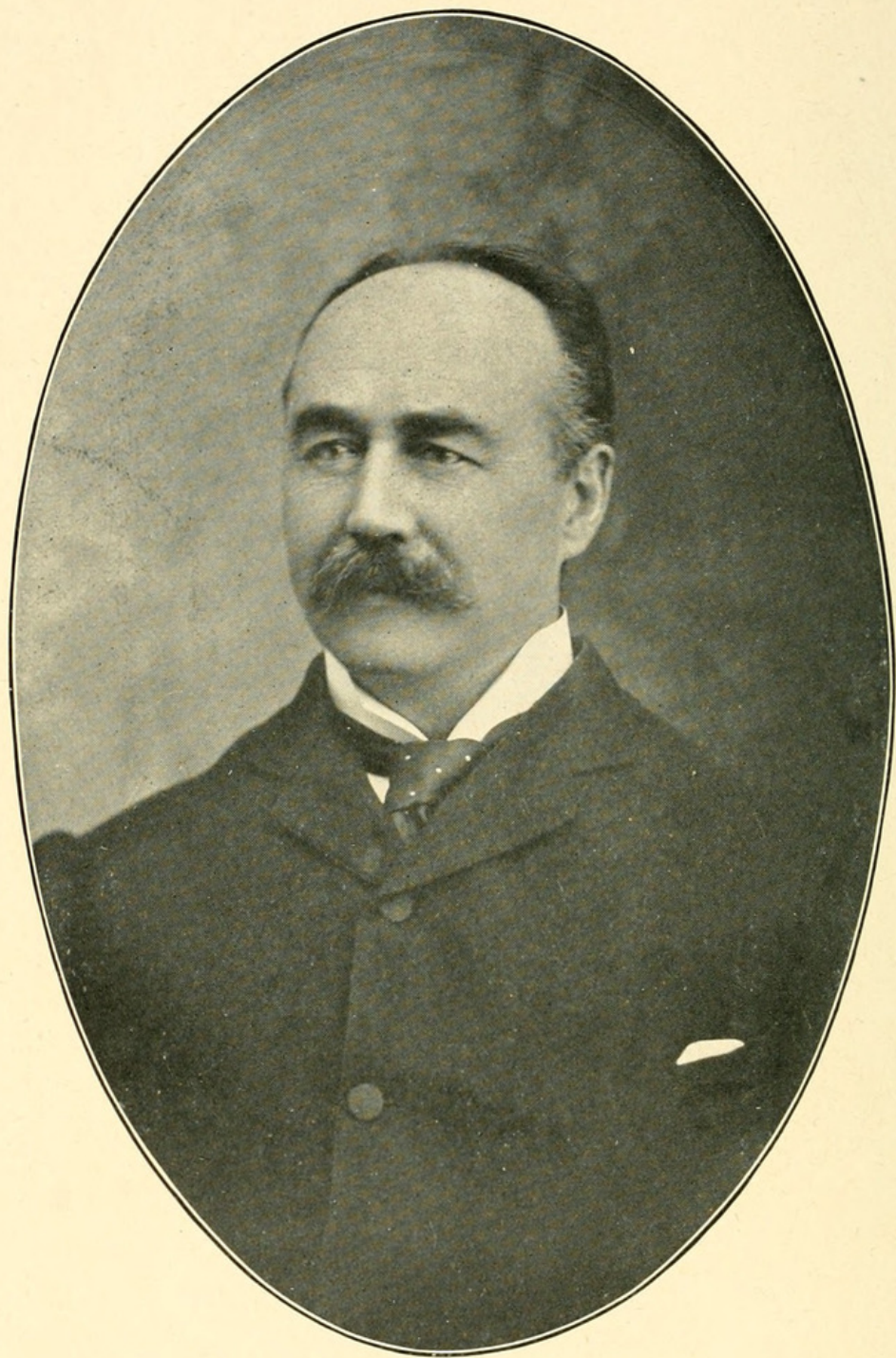
DECEMBER 1ST, 1908.

The President of the Club, Mr. A. E. Attwood, M.A., in asking Lieut.-Col. Wm. White, C.M.G., to act as Chairman for the meeting, spoke as follows:

Members of the Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club and friends of the late Dr. Fletcher:—It has been a time-honoured custom of the Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club to begin their series of winter soirées with an evening's programme somewhat informal in its nature. The sudden death of the member who was one of the founders of the Club has rendered it appropriate to make a change this year at our initial soirée. It is hoped, however, that in its informality, to-night's programme will resemble those of former years, and that many will feel free to speak a few words expressive of their regards of the late Dr. James Fletcher.

Speaking as a teacher, I naturally regard the work of an edu-





*James Fletchery.*



Gibson, Arthur. 1909. "James Fletcher [Obituary]." *The Ottawa naturalist* 22(10), 189–191.

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