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In Memoriam:

ALEXANDER COPLAND.

THE efflux of time inevitably creates gaps in the senior ranks of the Club, and with the departure of each old comrade those who remain behind experience a renewed pang of grief. Much more than the customary sense of regret, however, must be felt by the loss of Mr. Alexander Copland, whose death occurred somewhat suddenly, from a sharp attack of pneumonia, on 16th August last.

Mr. Copland, who was in the 87th year of his age, was in many respects the Grand Old Man of the Club. Venerable in years, a veteran pedestrian, an enthusiastic mountaineer, a mine of information about hills, a vigorous writer on topographical subjects, he occupied a very distinctive place within the fellowship of the Club, and outside it was widely recognised as perhaps its most representative member. With the formation and active working of the Club he was particularly identified. He was one of its founders, being among the patriotic half-dozen who ascended Ben Muich Dhui on the night of 22nd June, 1887, to discharge fireworks in celebration of Queen Victoria's Jubilee, and who, on the following morning, amid the "stern and wild" surroundings of the Dairymaid's Field at the head of Loch Avon, mutually agreed that a mountaineering club should be started. While thus at the initiation of the Club, Mr. Copland was also present at its latest gathering—that at the opening

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of the bridge over the Allt-na-Beinne Moire, on the way to the Larig Ghru, on 3rd August, just a fortnight before his death, and, according to the report of the proceedings, he made "a breezy little speech." On that occasion he walked a good part of the way from Coylum Bridge to the site of the new bridge and back—no inconsiderable feat for a man of his age; and only a year or two ago, when on a visit to Grindelwald, he astonished his friends by accomplishing a walk of some distance in that region. In view of the continuance of his pedestrian predilections and prowess until the last—as indeed of his faculties generally—there might almost be applied to him the familiar lines—

"Age could not wither him, nor custom stale  
His infinite variety."

During the twenty-three years' existence of the Cairngorm Club, Mr. Copland has held a conspicuous place in its councils. He was elected its first Chairman, holding that position for two years, 1889 and 1890 (the three years' tenure is a modern innovation). He presided at the Club's first excursion—to Cairngorm and Ben Muich Dhui—and was duly in attendance at the other excursions that took place during his term of office; and otherwise he rendered much valuable assistance in the organisation of the Club, and in guiding its course in its early days. On demitting the chairmanship he became a member of the Committee, and served in that capacity for a number of years, his ripe experience and sage advice being placed at the disposal of his colleagues as readily as when he presided over them, and being as highly appreciated. When Mr. Alexander Cruickshank, LL.D., died in 1897, Mr. Copland was elected a Vice-President, and on the resignation of Rev. Dr. Lippe in 1902 he became the senior "Vice." His portrait was prefixed to the number of the *Cairngorm Club Journal* for July, 1900 (Vol. III.), and thus, happily, the features are preserved to us of a man who must ever be held in grateful recollection by the members of the Club.

Mr. Copland was a warm advocate of the institution of a magazine in connection with the Club, and when the *C.C.J.* was started in 1893 he became a contributor to its columns, and proved a fairly steady one for several years, a round dozen of articles (as noted below), now standing to his credit. The most noticeable of these articles, of course, are the four delineating "The Horizon from Ben Muich Dhui" (Vols. II. and III.), which were accompanied by outlines of the distant hill views from the summit as regarded from the four quarters of the compass, these outlines being issued as supplements. They were prepared by Mr. Copland himself, and the supplements, when put together, formed a complete and most accurate map of the numerous mountain tops visible from the cairn on Ben Muich Dhui. In addition, Mr. Copland furnished tabular lists of these mountain tops and their respective heights, and altogether we have, in the articles, outlines, and tables, a thorough and authoritative conspectus, forming perhaps the most important contribution the Club has made to what may be termed the science of mountaineering. As can readily be imagined, the task which Mr. Copland undertook, necessitating as it did repeated ascents of Ben Muich Dhui, involved great labour and, occasionally, no little discomfort. It was, as he himself humorously expressed it, "no joke," and he had to put up with disappointment after disappointment, owing to capricious weather conditions. During one July, for instance, he ascended the mountain three times—once during the night—but his purpose was baffled by the heat haze, and a subsequent ascent in October was rendered nugatory by heavy mist. But the work of delineation was successfully carried out in the long run—a monument to Mr. Copland's patience and perseverance, and to his untiring enthusiasm as well. He prepared a similar outline of the singularly fine mountain view obtainable from the Blue Hill, Banchory-Devenick, which accompanied a joint article by Dr. Cruickshank and him in the first number of the *C.C.J.*

After a long abstention, Mr. Copland renewed his contributions to the *C.C.J.* in the issue for January of last

year, furnishing the first of three articles on "My Introduction to the Cairngorms," and readers will be pleased to see that the third and concluding article appears in the present number; Mr. Copland having prepared it prior to his fatal illness. The tour described in these articles—what Mr. Copland termed his "first pedestrian Highland tour"—was not only made "more than sixty years ago," but also at a time when "there were no railways in Aberdeenshire." This takes us back to 1850 at least, so that Mr. Copland must have been in his early twenties when he "first met the Highlands' swelling blue." During the whole of his long life he never ceased to "love each peak that shows a kindred hue;" and having a remarkable fondness for outdoor life, he spent his holidays for many years in succession in the cottage at Luibeg, at the base of Ben Muich Dhui. From this vantage ground he made extensive peregrinations among the Cairngorms, acquiring a thorough acquaintance of the peaks and plateaus, the corries and precipices, the lochs and tarns, and the other natural features of the range, his rambles being rendered all the more fruitful by the wide knowledge he possessed of geology, botany, and cognate sciences. He was an accurate observer, with a highly commendable regard for exactitude. His vast stores of well-digested information rendered him a competent and sometimes a severe critic, and he wielded a fluent and virile pen, albeit it proved on occasion exceedingly caustic. It is to be regretted that he left no literary work of a distinctive character which would have ensured permanence for his reputation—no monograph, say, on Ben Muich Dhui, for the execution of which his "horizon" articles showed that he was singularly well-equipped.

A couple of little—and little-known—books exist, indeed, to serve as indications of what Mr. Copland might have accomplished on a larger scale. They are—"Two Days and a Night in the Wilderness," published in 1878; and "Our Tour" (to Loch-an-Eilein, Loch Eunach, Braeriach, etc.), which appeared in 1880. They professed to be by "Dryas Octopetala and Thomas Twayblade."

"*Dryas Octopetala*," the botanical term for the mountain avens, was well understood to be a cognomen assumed by Mr. Copland; the other fanciful name faintly disguises a prominent official of the Club. Both works consisted of reprints of articles in the *Aberdeen Journal*, descriptive of wanderings in the Cairngorms, the narratives in each case being freely interspersed with pleasing digressions and humorous "asides," which Mr. Copland was wont to introduce into most of his writing. A local bibliography also credits Mr. Copland with "*The Cairn o' Mount and Clochnaben*," published in 1892, but of this work the present writer has to confess himself ignorant; presumably it is a reprint of four articles that appeared in the *Aberdeen Journal* of that year over the initials "D. O." It would really seem as if we were left with his *C. C. J.* articles as the chief output of Mr. Copland's undoubted powers. The quantity, unfortunately, is quite incommensurate with what might have been expected from his topographical knowledge, general information, and critical acumen; but these articles, at all events, abundantly exhibit the nature of the qualities with which our deceased friend was endowed, and the remarkable intelligence and no less pronounced literary skill he brought to bear in his many and felicitous dissertations on mountain topics.

Little need be added concerning the man himself. The foregoing has been written to small purpose if it has failed to convey the impression that Alexander Copland was a very striking personality. Bluff and hearty to casual acquaintance, the slightest intercourse with him of a more intimate nature sufficed to reveal exceptional brilliancy of intellect and forcefulness of character. To walk alongside him up a mountain path was, in its way, a liberal education, so animated was his converse, so varied the subjects that would be introduced, so abundant the information imparted, so fresh, vigorous, and independent the opinions expressed. Alas! that one has now to reckon such delightful companionship among the things that were!

ROBERT ANDERSON.

## MR. COPLAND ON THE CLUB.

As an appendix to the foregoing sketch of our deceased Vice-President, we reproduce the characteristic speech he made at a dinner following the first annual meeting of the Club, held in the Palace Hotel, Aberdeen, on 19th February, 1890—the only dinner that has been held in connection with the Club except the dinners following on an excursion. Mr. Copland presided, and, in proposing the toast of the evening, "Prosperity to the Club," said—

"On this, the occasion of our first annual dinner, I may be allowed briefly to advert to one or two of the objects which justify the existence of the Club. It was formed, in the first place, 'to encourage mountain climbing in Scotland.' Putting that no higher than a kind of recreation, it is recreation of the choicest sort, conducive alike to the development of bone and muscle, and the enlargement and the education of the observant and other mental faculties. 'Travelling enlarges the mind,' was the sententious verdict and conclusion of a worthy Aberdeen bookseller, whose somewhat rare holiday—before the advent of the Iron Horse—extended no farther from Aberdeen than to the fish town of Stonehaven, though albeit a county town. This extensive flight, apparently, was his first one, and no doubt left pleasant memories. The recollections of the first pedestrian tour come back upon all of us with a freshness and calm enjoyment which only the purest pleasure can give. As a mere matter of discipline, the pedestrian tour among the hills—knapsack on back—justly ranks much higher than a trudge along the road. It requires more consideration, planning, resource, and self-reliance, where devious paths perplex; and, beyond the reach of inquiry, the mountain climber is thrown entirely upon his own judgment and resources, and is compelled to exercise these to their limits. He is educated in the best of all schools—that of experience—and impelled, it may be, by self-preservation. He is disciplined to steer by compass and map—it may be strongly against his own imagination. On occasion, it may be, he is befogged on the summit or in the recesses of the mountains, and emerges—to the wonderment of the world and to his own astonishment—in a region unexpected and strange. But the lesson is not lost, nor are the circumstances devoid of amusement and enjoyment to himself and others. Then, what enjoyment can compare with the feelings of independence and freedom which natural vagabondism among the hills engenders? It is a return—for a too brief space, but for a long distance—towards primeval existence softened by civilisation. It is the getting outwith and beyond the limits of the telephone, the telegram, and the torments incident to business of every kind. Some misguided poet wrote—'Solitude! where are thy charms?' I reply emphatically—'Among the Cairngorms!' That is the solitude we delight in. For forty years, as occasion permitted, I have wandered among the mountains by day, slept upon them by night; have experienced heat, cold, hunger, the fatigue of healthy exertion; but I never grudged it, or felt as if I would not do it again. Then the scenery of the mountains and glens comprising the Cairngorm range—what district of our country can

excel it for rugged grandeur and beauty? Who can say he has exhausted its various aspects—the changeful beauties of sunrise, or the calm of the summer twilight after the golden glory of sunlight has crept to the mountain summits and has vanished into air? Did you ever lie on the mountain's breast gazing on the constellations as they, in the magnificence of their silence and gorgeous setting, circle in the sky, and not feel that you were looking on the glory of God, and be the better for it then and ever after? Such experiences are to the mountain climber frequent and delightful."

Mr. Copland went on to speak of the interesting features of mountain climbing enjoyed by men—and they had such in their Club, he was glad to say—who cultivated natural history, geology, and botany; and even the unscientific members could hardly indulge in the pastime without considering and discussing the natural phenomena to be met with—how moraines were formed, how corries were scooped out, how lakes came to be left in the bosoms of the hills. He hoped the Club might yet follow the example of the Scottish Mountaineering Club and publish a journal; he thought Dr. Roy, for instance, especially well qualified to contribute a paper on the botany of the Cairngorms, while Mr. Thomas Jamieson would also add to the scientific articles, and many other members could furnish attractive accounts of their various personal expeditions and adventures. In the meantime, he thought the Club was to be congratulated on having already secured a membership of 100; and while he regarded the Club as in some sense a reserve force in questions affecting rights-of-way to and on mountains, he hoped no member would ever give occasion for fault-finding on the part of proprietors or others.

We may also reproduce an interesting passage from an article on "Scottish Mountaineering and its Dangers" in the *Scotsman* of 25th June, 1907, which was quoted in the next issue of the *C. C. J.* (Vol. V., p. 281)—

It might be invidious to mention names of Scottish mountaineers after the contemporaneous parson (Grierson), and geologist (Forbes), but one may be given without offence. Mr. Alexander Copland of Aberdeen had taken up the pastime before these two gentlemen had laid it down, and has celebrated his jubilee as a hill-climber. His experiences, beginning with the Cairngorms, have induced many to follow in his steps, for, alike in newspaper, pamphlet, and book form, his mountain expeditions make agreeable reading. As one of the founders and the first chairman of the Cairngorm Club, our oldest Scottish hill club, he has left his impress both on the literature and the practice of mountaineering.

MR. COPLAND'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE JOURNAL.

July, 1893. "The Blue Hill" (jointly with Dr. Alexander Cruickshank).

Jany., 1895. "The Brimmond Hill."

„ 1897. "The Horizon from Ben Muich Dhui."

July, 1897.	"Two Days and a Night in Rothiemurchus and the Cairngorms" (over the initials "D. O.")		
" "	"The Club and the Queen's Diamond Jubilee" (report of Ben Muich Dhui section).		
Jany., 1898.	"The Club on the Cairngorms."		
" "	"The Horizon from Ben Muich Dhui"—No. II.		
July, "	"The Horizon from Ben Wyvis" (Tabular List of Mountains).		
" "	"Tabular List of Mountains and Hills seen from Ben Muich Dhui."		
Jany., 1899.	"The Club at Ben Wyvis."		
" "	"The Horizon from Ben Muich Dhui"—No. IV.		
" 1900.	Do.	Do.	—No. III.
" 1901.	"Cairn Toul and its Corries."		
" 1912.	"My Introduction to the Cairngorms."		
July, "	Do.	Do.	—No. II.
Jany., 1913.	Do.	Do.	—No. III.

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#### MR. SYDNEY COUPER.

THE Club, since the last issue of the *Journal*, is poorer by the loss of one of its most enthusiastic members—Mr. Sydney Couper, who died on 23rd July last.

Mr. Couper's ruling passion was for the hills, though music also had its place in his heart. A great part of his life was spent either as geologist or as mountaineer in the waste places of our land. So imbued was he with the spirit of the hillsman that he found it difficult to discard the garb. It was like a breath of fresh air to meet him tramping down to Marischal College with big stick and heavy boots. His familiar figure will be missed from our streets. He was fortunate in that he was able to and did visit the hills at all times. The great majority of us, alas! must be content with an occasional glimpse of their beauties. Mr. Couper joined the Club in 1904, and though not present at all its expeditions, always took a very active interest in its affairs. He took a great interest in, and subscribed very handsomely to, its latest project, the Allt-na Bienne Moire Bridge.