

**BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF
THE LATE JAMES G. COOPER
OF HAYWARD, ALAMEDA CO.,
CALIFORNIA, DECEMBER, 1902**

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Biographical Sketch of the Late James G. Cooper of Hayward, Alameda Co., California,
December, 1902 by W. O. Emerson

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W. O. EMERSON

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OF THE LATE

James G. Cooper, M. D.

— OF —

HAYWARD, ALAMEDA CO.,

CALIFORNIA.

—
DECEMBER, 1902.



DR. JAMES G. COOPER,
Born June 19, 1830. Died July 19, 1902.
FROM A PHOTO TAKEN IN 1865.

Dr. JAMES G. COOPER.

A SKETCH

[By W. O. Emerson, President of the Cooper Ornithological Club.]

IT is proper, and in accordance with the wish of the Club, that the initial number of the BULLETIN should contain a brief sketch of the life of him, in whose honor our Club is named,—Dr. James G. Cooper.

The fact that Dr. Cooper, though very feeble, is yet alive, precludes us from entering upon any detailed view of his private life, even though it be that phase with which his friends most delight. We must, therefore, confine ourselves to the scientific aspect of his life, as it is in this relation that he is best known to thousands who have never met him, and who will be pained to learn that it is almost impossible for him to receive visitors, as it is difficult and painful for him to speak.

When it became necessary for us to visit him to verify certain portions of this sketch, we noticed his evident pleasure when he learned that the Club intended to publish its own BULLETIN, and he expressed the wish to do all that he could to further its interests. To us this meeting was at once a promise and a benediction. For many years he had been to us a friend and a guide, and necessarily our mind reverted to the time when we learned of bird-life at his feet. As we looked on his kindly face and listened to the almost inarticulate words, in memory we traveled backward to

the time of our first lesson in bird-life; he sitting on a rock in the shadow of the trees, and the student watching the birds which he noted as they flew about us or jumped from stone to stone, making the air vibrate with their music.

Eighteen years ago! What a vista of time is here unrolled. What changes this period has wrought, yet in memory he is again giving his first field lesson, taking the Rock Wren for an object study as it sits on a huge blue-gray rock singing to us its song of welcome. Here he talked to us of Nature in all of her varied forms; told of the birds, their songs, their flights, plumage and their homelife; of their loves and hates, joys and sorrows! All of this was told in common language, without scientific nomenclature, and thus we saw Nature and her works through the eyes of one who loved and had long questioned and learned many of her secrets, until the setting sun found us yet worshipping in Nature's temple, and the student gaining his first glimpse into that grand arcana. This was our teacher's manner; thus he gathered around him the young ornithologists and in the field taught them the lessons of bird-life, and it was from the incentives of these field studies that our Club was formed, and in his honor named, and at the Club meeting held December 5, 1896, he was by unanimous vote placed on our roll as an Honorary Life Member.

The Secretary of the Club, Mr. C. Barlow, fully ex-

pressed the sentiments of all when, in advising Dr. Cooper of the action, he wrote: "The Club which was named in your honor was organized June 22, 1893. *

* As an organization of comparatively young workers, we all feel indebted to yourself and the few remaining veteran ornithologists for the excellent and valuable material which you have prepared in the years past."

James G. Cooper was born June 19, 1830, in New York, being the eldest of a family of six children. In the spring of 1837, his father, William Cooper, moved to New Jersey and settled at Slongha, near Hoboken, where James commenced his school life, but it was not until he was ten years of age that his school life really began, as prior to this time he was subject to many and severe spells of illness. As he was obliged to walk a mile or more through the fields, he took many of the side paths for the purpose of hunting birds, shells, snakes and other objects of natural history, thus early showing the tendency which has marked his later years. During this period and the succeeding years, he was largely indebted to his father for his education and real preparation for his after career. It may be proper that we devote a few words to the father who exerted so great an influence in the son.

His father, William Cooper, was born in the year 1798, and was the son of James Cooper, an English merchant, who, coming to New York shortly after the

Revolutionary War, accumulated a comfortable fortune, and died in 1801. William gave up all ideas of business and devoted his life to the study of Nature, inheriting these tastes from his mother, who was Miss Frances Graham. At the age of nineteen William Cooper united with a number of others and established the Lyceum of Natural History of New York, which became the school of many of our noted scientists. Senator Samuel L. Mitchell, M. D., was the first President, who with Cooper laid the foundation of its magnificent museum. Nathaniel Paulding, the poet, was its first Secretary, and William Cooper was Secretary in 1818 when it was incorporated. For many years Dr. John Torrey, who was the educator of many of our noted botanists, was the curator of the museum, and the intimate personal friend of Mr. Cooper, and to him Dr. Torrey dedicated his first real botanical work, *The Botany of the Northern and Middle States*. At this time Prof. Eaton was, under the direction of Courtland Van Rensselaer, making geological surveys. These old records of the Lyceum, which are before us as we write, vividly recall the early struggling days of science in the United States. What a list of scientific workers, do these old files of proceedings recall. Mark the time, 1818 to 1854.

In 1821 William Cooper departed for Europe in order to perfect himself in zoology, and was the first American member of the Zoological Society of London. He attended the lectures of Cuvier and those master minds of the

Jardin des Plantes, and on his return to the United States took up the study of Palæontology, being among the first in our country to engage in this science. He became the warm friend of Schoolcraft who afterwards made for himself a name as a historian of the Indian races. William Cooper was the friend, correspondent and co-laborer of Lucien Bonaparte, and edited the last two volumes of Bonaparte's works, who showed his appreciation of the assistance by dedicating to Cooper one of the finest of his new species, *Falco cooperi*, the type specimen of which was shot by Cooper in Hudson County, N. Y., and another type specimen, *Atodvornis cooperi*, was also taken by him, and it is unique in the fact that no second specimen has been secured. The result of William Cooper's ornithological work is largely incorporated in Bonaparte's works. He was the friend of Audubon, and Nuttall, and gave them the use of his specimens and notes, and assisted them in their works. He died April 20, 1864, and at this time, he and his life long friend, John Torrey, were the only surviving members of the original Lyceum, Mr. Cooper having been a member forty-seven years.

Nurtured by such influences, his education superintended by such a father, his earliest memory being of the conversations of such men, it would be impossible for the subject of our sketch to be other than that which he has been,—an authority in his own field of study. In 1851 James G. Cooper graduated from the College of Physicians and Surgeons, New York, and henceforth will be