

the steep, wet, narrow, brier-grown path. It was a wonder the horses' legs were not broken a dozen times. As we approached the top, Big Tom, the guide, pointed out the direction, a half a mile away, of a small pond, a little mountain tarn, overlooked by a ledge of rock, where Professor Mitchell lost his life. Tom was the guide who found his body. That day as we sat on the summit he gave in great detail the story.

"The first effort to measure the height of the Black Mountains was made in 1835, by Professor Elisha Mitchell, professor of mathematics and chemistry in the University of North Carolina. Mr. Mitchell was a native of Connecticut, born in 1793; graduated at Yale, ordained a Presbyterian minister, and was for some time State surveyor; and became a professor at Chapel Hill in 1818. He first ascertained and published the fact that the Black Mountains are the highest land east of the Rocky Mountains. The estimates of altitudes made by different explorers varied considerably. The height now fixed for Mount Mitchell is 6,711; that of Mount Washington is 6,285. There are twelve peaks in this range higher than Mount Washington; there are some twenty in this State higher than the granite giant of New Hampshire. Professor Mitchell (then in his sixty-fourth year) made a third ascent in June, 1857. He was alone and did not return. No anxiety was felt for two or three days, as he was a good mountaineer, and it was supposed he had crossed the mountain and made his way out by the Caney River. But when several days passed without tidings of him, a search party was formed. Big Tom was with it. They explored the mountain in all directions unsuccessfully. At length Big Tom separated himself from his companions and took a course in accordance with his notion of that which would be pursued by a man lost in the clouds, or the darkness. He soon struck the trail of the wanderer and, following it, discovered Mitchell's body lying in a pool at the foot of a rocky precipice some thirty feet high. It was evident that Mitchell, making his way along the ridge in darkness or fog, had fallen off. It was the ninth (or the eleventh) day of his disappearance, but in the pure mountain air the body had suffered no change. There was some talk of burying him on the mountain, but the friends decided otherwise, and the remains, with much difficulty, were got down to Asheville and there interred.

"Some years afterwards, I believe at the instance of a society of scientists, it was resolved to transport the body to the summit of Mount Mitchell; for the tragic death of the explorer had forever settled in the popular mind the name of the mountain. The task was not easy. A road had to be cut, over which a sledge could be hauled, and the hardy mountaineers who undertook the removal were three days in reaching the summit with their burden. The remains were accompanied by a considerable concourse, and the last rites on the top were participated in by a hundred or more scientists and prominent men from different parts of the State. Such a strange cortège had never before broken the silence of this lonely wilderness, nor was ever burial more impressive than this wild interment above the clouds.

"After a struggle of five hours we emerged from the balsams and briers into a lovely open meadow, of lush clover, timothy, and blue grass. The