

MT. WILLIAM

(By C. W. D'Alton.)

When Major Mitchell discovered the Grampians in 1836, he ascended the highest peak and named it Mount William, after the then reigning monarch, King William the IV. As the month was July, the weather was wet and cold, and two of his companions were permanently injured through exposure, having spent a miserably cold night upon the summit.

The mountain, which is 3830 feet above sea level, is situated about the centre of the Grampian ranges, Mount Zero is 32 miles distant on the northern end, and Mounts Abrupt and Sturgeon about 30 miles distant at the southern extremity, and is also the dividing point where the water on one side runs towards the Murray and on the other south towards the sea. To those lovers of nature who wish to encounter adventures, explore what is practically unknown regions, a trip from the weir to the summit of Mount William will be found to be strenuous enough for the most exacting. From this point to the Fyan's creek may be followed through primeval forests and along huge gorges, till a tiny stream may be found trickling from beneath some rocks at the foot of the great peak itself. To climb this eminence, which has been called the King of the Grampians, is a task not to be lightly undertaken, but those who traverse the nine miles from the weir, through country scarcely ever trod by the foot of man, will pronounce it to be the crowning feat of Grampian alpine undertakings. By starting from the Borough Hut in the early morning, the Bovine and Fyan's creeks are crossed, and the weir of the Stawell water-works is reached. From this point all tracks and guide marks are left behind, and one literally plunges into the forest and traverses rising ground for several miles. Just when one begins to imagine that the summit must be near at hand a great deep

must be near at hand a great deep valley appears in front, with giant cliff faces below, and Mount William in sublime majesty towering up on the further side. A winding kangaroo track has to be then followed till the bottom is reached, and upon looking back at the heights from which we have descended, we find we have just passed the famous Cathedral Rock. Once more the ascent begins in zig-zag fashion, and after another strenuous climb of several miles in length, we find the summit is close at hand, this time in reality. A curious feature is noticeable at this point, and one that does not occur on the other peaks, is that before reaching the top a great ledge of loose stones is met with, which are of such a depth that tops of trees can be seen just peeping through. Two or three other layers have to be crossed over, and each layer contains smaller stones than the preceding one. Geologists, to whom I have described this curious feature, declare that large snow drifts are the cause of these layers, but do not know why the large stones should be in the bottom layer and become smaller in each succeeding layer higher up. A cairn with the remains of an old flag staff in its centre marks the highest point in the Grampian range, and when this is reached one pauses in wonder, feeling awed by the grandeur of the scene before or rather beneath him as the mountain appears to literally hang over the plains below. Stretching away into the fertile plains of Western Victoria, outlined by the faint blue of far-off mountains, while on the other side and seemingly beneath one's feet are crowded in gigantic confusion, hundreds of other rugged peaks of the Grampian and Serra ranges.

In the spring a great variety of nature flowers bloom profusely in the shady gullies or upon the mountain slopes. As the flora around Mount William received considerable attention by the well-known botanist, Mr. Sullivan, who resided at Moyston, near the foot of the mountain, it is

near the foot of the mountain, it is not surprising to find one beautiful shrub named *Calycotrix Sullivani* after that famous collector and lover of native flowers. Other well-known varieties such as *Thrytomenes*, *Grevilles*, *Boronias*, and *Epicrias* (beaths) are very numerous, while in the deeper gullies tall tree ferns and many other varieties of smaller ferns grow luxuriantly. In the summer time one has to be very careful when getting through the undergrowth that a black or tiger snake is not concealed therein, and a stout stick is generally carried in case of emergency. Porcupines are sometimes met with, but soon burrow out of sight at the approach of danger.

The Tourist Department has not yet attempted to form any track up the Mount William slopes, but no doubt when more easily accessible points have received their due consideration, some effort will be made to make this great mountain more easily ascended by tourists. When that is accomplished there will be no finer or more interesting trip than the climb to the top of the mighty Mount William.—Stawell "News."