

ADVENTURES OF A DEAF-MUTE

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Adventures of a Deaf-mute by William B. Swett

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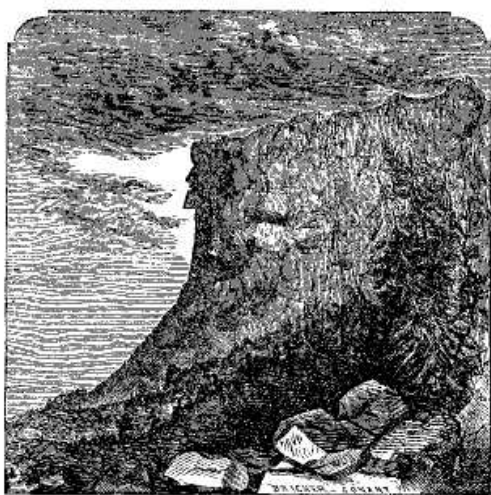
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WILLIAM B. SWETT

**ADVENTURES OF
A DEAF-MUTE**

ADVENTURES
OF A
DEAF - MUTE.



THE OLD MAN OF THE MOUNTAIN.

TWENTY-SEVENTH THOUSAND.

PUBLISHED BY
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INTRODUCTION.

MANY persons who visited the White Mountains of New Hampshire, and particularly the Profile House, in 1866, and later years, will readily recognize the hero of these adventures, and the incidents connected therewith, and will doubtless bear testimony to their truth. The measuring of "The Old Stone Face," and the placing of the images of the "Panther" and the "Indian" upon Eagle Cliff, will be remembered as hazardous adventures successfully accomplished, and Mr. WILLIAM B. SWETT has the honor of their achievement.

Born at Henniker, N. H., in 1824, with the full use of all his senses, but losing his hearing while yet a lad, he was sent to the Institution for the Deaf and Dumb at Hartford, Conn., and after completing the usual course of studies there, returned to his home, and for awhile pursued the calling of his father,—that of a carpenter and joiner. His capacity as a ready and faithful workman procured him permanent work at the Mountains, where his restless and adventurous spirit brought him into many awkward and dangerous positions, from which, however, he always emerged right-side up.

A ready thinker, and fluent in the use of the sign language, his talents have brought him, of late, into other pursuits, having in view the welfare and improvement of his fellow-unfortunates. Prominent in all such movements, he became interested in several societies of Deaf-Mutes, among which are the BOSTON DEAF-MUTES' LIBRARY ASSOCIATION, and the BOSTON DEAF-MUTE MISSION.

The profits of the previous editions of this volume — aggregating 15,000 copies — were devoted to the purposes of the above-named Societies; but since they were issued, Mr. Swett has been taken ill, and disabled entirely from any work whatever, besides losing the sight of one eye and being uncertain of saving the other; and his only resource, at present, is to issue a new edition, — the previous ones being exhausted, — and trust that the profits thereof may help him along through this present affliction, peculiarly unfortunate to one who had already lost hearing and speech. All purchasers of this book will understand that they are aiding a deaf-mute, who, while able, actively devoted his energies to the welfare of his fellows in misfortune, and deserves some return therefor in his now darkened days.

H. W. S.



WM. B. SWETT,
White Mountain Adventurer.

ADVENTURES

OF A

DEAF-MUTE IN THE WHITE MOUNTAINS,

FIRST SUMMER.

HOW I HAPPENED TO GO TO THE MOUNTAINS.

EARLY in the year 1865, the proprietors of the Profile House, in the Franconia Mountains, finding repairs and additions necessary to their hotel, advertised for a large gang of workmen.

I received a pressing invitation to go up and work. The wages were good, and expenses paid both ways.

I hesitated,—there was work enough at home; I had never been out of work a single day, having always been sought for to do all kinds of work both in and out of town. I was acknowledged to be a skillful and steady workman. I hesitated, also, because my family and myself had been thrown into deep mourning by the recent death, from diphtheria, of two of our children, our only boy and a girl; but after a few days of reflection and consultation with my family, I decided to go.

I may as well say here, that, while the wages offered were very acceptable, they had not so much to do with my decision as had a desire to see a place of which I had heard so much, and an idea that there would be some chance to gratify my love of adventure.

Of adventure I subsequently had a good deal, as will be shown in the course of my story.

I notified several persons, who were waiting for me to do some work for them, that they must find some one else to do it, as I must go. They told me that they would wait until my return; and, bidding my family good-by, I was whirled away over the iron track.

At Concord, N. H., while waiting for the train from Boston, I noticed a strange-looking old man in the depot. His hair and beard were long and white, giving him a very patriarchal look.

The day was very cold, but he wore a straw hat and thin summer clothes, and his neck and feet were bare. He walked about with great activity, taking snuff frequently from a bladder, which served him in-

stead of a box. He looked sharply at every one, and spoke to me once; but when I put a finger to my ear and shook my head, he walked away. I wondered who and what he was, and inclined to think him either insane or very odd. I have since seen him going about the streets of Concord barefooted, and dressed in thin clothes, when the snow lay a foot deep on the ground.

His name is Flagg; he lives in a log cabin at Pembroke, about fifteen miles from Concord. He professes to be a water-cure doctor, and is about seventy-five years old.

Speculation in the various forms in which human nature crops out, helped me to pass away the time till the train came along.

Before reaching Lake Village, the train stopped at a small station for a supply of wood and water. Here a very ragged and dirty little boy annoyed the passengers by passing up and down in the cars. Meeting the conductor, a large and powerful man, he pushed past him and would have gone out, but the conductor seized him and actually threw him out of a window upon a wood-car that was slowly moving in an opposite direction. This little incident made every one roar with laughter. The boy was not hurt, though he was probably somewhat frightened.

After passing Lake Village, I caught my first glimpse of the peak of Mount Washington, the highest of all the White Mountains. Its summit was wrapped in snow, and its sublime appearance gave me much food for thought.

As we rode along, I caught occasional glimpses of sheets of water, and at last the broad and beautiful Lake Winnipiseogee lay before me. I no longer wondered at the name given it by the Indians, if, as some say, it means "The Smile of the Great Spirit." It has been called the "Loch Lomond" of America.

Loch Lomond is a lake in Scotland, famous for its beauty, but it is generally admitted, by those who have seen both, that Winnipiseogee is the most beautiful of the two.

The late Hon. Edward Everett, speaking of a visit to this lake, said: "I have been something of a traveller in our own country,—though not so much as I could wish,—and in Europe have seen all that is most attractive, from the Highlands of Scotland to the Golden Horn of Constantinople,—from the summit of the Hartz Mountains to the Fountain of Vaucluse; but my eye has yet to rest on a lovelier scene than that which smiles around you as you sail from Weir's Landing to Centre Harbor."

At the Pemigewasset House, in Plymouth, where the train stopped for dinner, I met that prince of good fellows, Hiram Bell, Esq., the landlord of the hotel; formerly the well-known and popular landlord of the Profile House. It was to him that I was indebted for the invitation to go and work in the Mountains.

The deaf-mutes who composed the party which visited the Profile House and went up Mount Lafayette, in 1858, will remember Mr. Bell as a liberal-hearted man and a genial friend. I shall elsewhere give an account of the adventures of this party, in connection with my own.

As the train neared Well's River, I was standing at the car door, looking out, and saw one of the car wheels fly off and roll down the bank. The next instant there was a terrible jarring; the stove-pipe was shaken out, and the passengers were thrown into confusion. I could hardly keep my feet, and concluded that I should be killed.

Some one gave the signal to "brake up" by pulling the cord that ran through the train, and it was stopped without accident. After this we moved slowly to the next stopping-place, where the damaged car was removed and the train sped on.

In due time I reached Littleton, from which place are stages to all parts of the Mountains. I was so anxious to secure a seat on the top of the stage, that I climbed upon it first and gave orders about my baggage afterwards.

Our six stout horses carried us along at a good rate; on the way, I had a fine view of the Mountains. One of the passengers pointed out Mount Lafayette to me. The day was clear, and I could see that snow was falling on the mountain-top, while below it was the vast, black ravine in which I afterwards nearly lost my life, of which I tell in the proper place.

After passing Franconia, noted for its iron mine, and as being one of the coldest places in the country, we saw a snow-storm coming down upon us, and for a few moments it completely enveloped and blinded us; when it cleared away, Mount Lafayette looked more majestic than before, in its mantle of white.

All symptoms of life, except ourselves, soon disappeared, and for some miles the road was through a gloomy forest, and at the end of this we arrived at the Profile House.

Few of us having been prepared for the storm and cold, the fire and a hot supper were very welcome indeed.

My signs and gestures, and my little slate, of which I made free use in talking with my companions, soon attracted the attention of the company, to most of whom a deaf-mute was evidently a new thing. One man in particular, an Irishman, who was seated in a corner smoking a pipe, after eyeing me intently for some time, approached me, laid a hand on my shoulder, looked me in the face, and then, making the sign of the cross, he nodded, went back to his seat, and resumed his pipe, apparently satisfied that it was all right. I could not help smiling at his behavior, and did not know what to think of it; but have since concluded that it was his way of either getting acquainted or of expressing sympathy.

I retired to bed, but could not sleep; my new situation and my own