

## Lost and Found

One June morning in 1853 a carriage drew up to James and Ellen White's home. They had hired a man to take them to Vergennes, Michigan; now the man waited outside. Mrs. White came to the door and called to him, "Will we need to pack a lunch? It's eight o'clock now--will we get there before lunch?"

"It is only fifteen miles" (24 kilometers), the man replied. "We are getting an early start, so we should be there before lunchtime."

The driver helped his passengers aboard and they started on their way. At first all went well. Of course, there was no paved road. They followed the double wheel tracks through the forest. Someone had laid logs over the worst holes, and the driver assured the Whites that he had traveled this way several times and was certain of the road. No signposts marked the way. Many sets of double wheel tracks crossed theirs through the forest. Mrs. White thought they all looked alike.

On and on they traveled. The June sun grew warm, then hot. Finally James White asked the driver, "Are we almost there?"

The man pushed his hat back from his sweating brow and answered, "Brother White, I'll have to admit this trail doesn't look familiar. I must have taken a wrong turn. But never mind, we'll cut right through the forest to the trail."

So away they went through the woods, between logs and fallen trees where Mrs. White could see no trace of a road. She felt thirsty, but all the water seemed to be murky marsh water. "Do you suppose," she asked the driver, "that we could get some milk from one of these cows?" She pointed to several cows grazing in the grassy spots. The driver stopped the team, got out, took a tin cup from the carriage, and started to stalk one of the cows. The cow seemed to understand his intentions and had ideas of her own. When he approached a second and third cow, they behaved the same way. Finally Mrs. White told the man, "Never mind, I'll just go thirsty."

After a while the travelers saw a small clearing, and in the middle of it a log cabin stood. They drove close to the cabin and clambered down from the carriage. A woman came out to meet them with a warm and hearty welcome. Evidently she seldom saw visitors. She set out food and drink and while the travelers ate the food and drank the milk, they talked. After the woman learned they were going to Vergennes to conduct meetings she asked them, "Won't you please come and hold meetings in our neighborhood? It doesn't look like many people live around here, but if you came to preach at our school house you'd be surprised how many would come. We need you! The Spiritualists are very active here. I have been to some of their meetings and I'm afraid of them. Please come and give us some good preaching." She continued to beg earnestly, and then she began to weep.

The Whites tried to comfort her. Mrs. White thought of all their pressing appointments and how urgent they all were. They couldn't promise to come at any time in the near future, she explained to the woman. "I'll tell you what we will do," she said. "We'll leave you one of my

books and some papers." The woman dried her tears, accepted the book and periodicals, and told them how to find the way to Vergennes. The new friends parted, hoping to see each other again soon.

The carriage drove on for several hours more. The journey, which should have been only fifteen miles (24 kilometers), bumped along for forty miles (64 kilometers), but at last they reached Vergennes. Mrs. White said to her husband, "Why did this have to happen to us? The Lord knows how precious our time is. Why this long wandering through the forest?"

James White patted her hand and said in a comforting voice, "Always remember that He plans our lives, and someday we'll know why this strange experience happened to us."

Twenty-two years later at the Michigan campground a lady hurried up to Ellen White. She shook her hands, greeted her joyously, and asked, "Do you remember being lost in the woods many years ago? Do you remember the log house in the clearing? You were lost and tired, hungry and thirsty. While your horses rested I got you food and drink. You astonished me because you didn't waste any time gossiping or complaining about the trip. You just talked about Jesus and the beauties of heaven, and you gave me a little book, Experience and Views, that you had written. Well, I read it over and over. I still have it. It's about worn out now. I lent it to the neighbors and they read it. Since then, Seventh-day Adventist ministers have come to our area. But you were the ones who prepared the soil and when those ministers came, many were ready to receive the seeds of truth. So we have quite a company of Sabbath keepers in our area." Then the woman threw her arms around Mrs. White in an exuberance of joy. "Oh, I am so glad that we are Seventh-day Adventists." The woman stopped long enough to take a deep breath. Her face beamed. She didn't need to tell Mrs. White of her joy in the Lord. Everything about her proclaimed it.

Ellen White's heart thrilled with joy, too. At last she had the answer to the question she had asked twenty-two years before, when they took that long and troublesome detour through the forest that day in June of 1853. They were on God's errand. He had sent them to this woman who longed for truth, to bring the little book and to speak the words of courage and truth that set her feet in the way to heaven.

A special beauty and the power of the Holy Spirit attend Ellen White's writings. She has said, "My writings will constantly speak and their work will go forward as long as time shall last." She knew the source of her writings, and she explained, "They contain the precious comforting light that God has graciously given to His servant to be given to the world. From their pages this light is to shine into the hearts of men and women, leading them to the Saviour."

So whether in the marshy forests of Michigan, amid the towering Andes Mountains of South America, wherever Ellen White's books are distributed, the mighty power of God goes with them and His Spirit speaks through them to hungry souls the world over.