

The Books That Changed Hearts

Adapted from *Angel Over Her Tent*, by D. A. Delafield and Gerald Wheeler
(Southern Publishing Association, 1969), pp. 107-109,
and *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 1, pp. 146-150.

When Ellen White lived in Australia, a family lived nearby who owned a large fruit farm. She had a great interest in the family. The father raised excellent oranges and lemons, as well as other fruit. He liked to read, and by doing so he had learned much about Adventist doctrines and accepted them as true. Yet he had not committed himself to follow them and live for God. Although he knew better, he clung to many of his old habits. Mrs. White was disappointed that the farmer and his family did not join the church.

On one of her visits with the family, Mrs. White turned the conversation to spiritual things. Speaking to the father as she would to a Seventh-day Adventist church member, she said, "You have great responsibilities. Here are your neighbors all around you." She motioned to the distant farms with her hand. "You are accountable for every one of them because you have Bible knowledge they don't have. If you love what you know and follow it, you will help convert many to Christ."

He looked at her strangely. The expression on his face seemed to be trying to tell her that he had long ago given up those points of Adventist belief that he had once accepted. But Mrs. White knew it already. Ignoring his expression, she continued to talk to him as if he were an Adventist. "We are going to help you to begin to convert your neighbors." She asked him if he had some of the books that she had written. The farmer politely replied, "No, but we have a local library from which to get them," trying to think of a way to change the subject.

Soon after this Mrs. White had a vision one night in which an angel stood by her bed and directed her to visit the fruit grower again and to take him copies of her books. The angel said that the books would help convert him. Obeying the instruction, she collected a few of her larger books, put them on the buggy seat beside her, and drove over to the fruit farm. Although the man was working out in the orchards, he came up to the house when he learned that she had stopped by. "I have brought some books for you and your children to read," she said. Again he replied that he could get such books at the library. She looked around the room. "I don't see any library books here. Perhaps you feel reluctant to take out books from the public library." By ignoring his protests, she overcame them, and he finally accepted the books.

Before she left, Mrs. White knelt and prayed with him. When they stood again, tears rolled down his leathery cheeks. "I'm glad you came to see me. I thank you for the books," he repeated over and over.

The next time she visited the fruit farm, the man told her that he had read part of *Patriarchs and Prophets*. "There is not one syllable I could change," he commented. "Every paragraph speaks right to the soul."

"Which book do you consider the most important?" she asked.

"I lend them all to my neighbors, and the hotelkeeper thinks *The Great Controversy* is the best." Suddenly his lips began to quiver. "But I think *Patriarchs and Prophets* is the best. It is the one that has pulled me out of the mud."

Mrs. White understood human nature. She knew that a person becomes most interested in those things he is actively involved in. Getting the farmer to work for his neighbors by lending them books made him interested in the Adventist message again. Reading Mrs. White's books also touched his heart and changed it. He and his family joined the church, and together they helped bring in several neighboring families. Mrs. White's influence on one man had far-reaching results.

Those books still change hearts and draw people to Jesus. We can read them ourselves and gain a blessing, and like Mrs. White, we can encourage others to read them, too, and experience God's blessing for themselves.