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10-24-1978

### The Loving Letter Part 4

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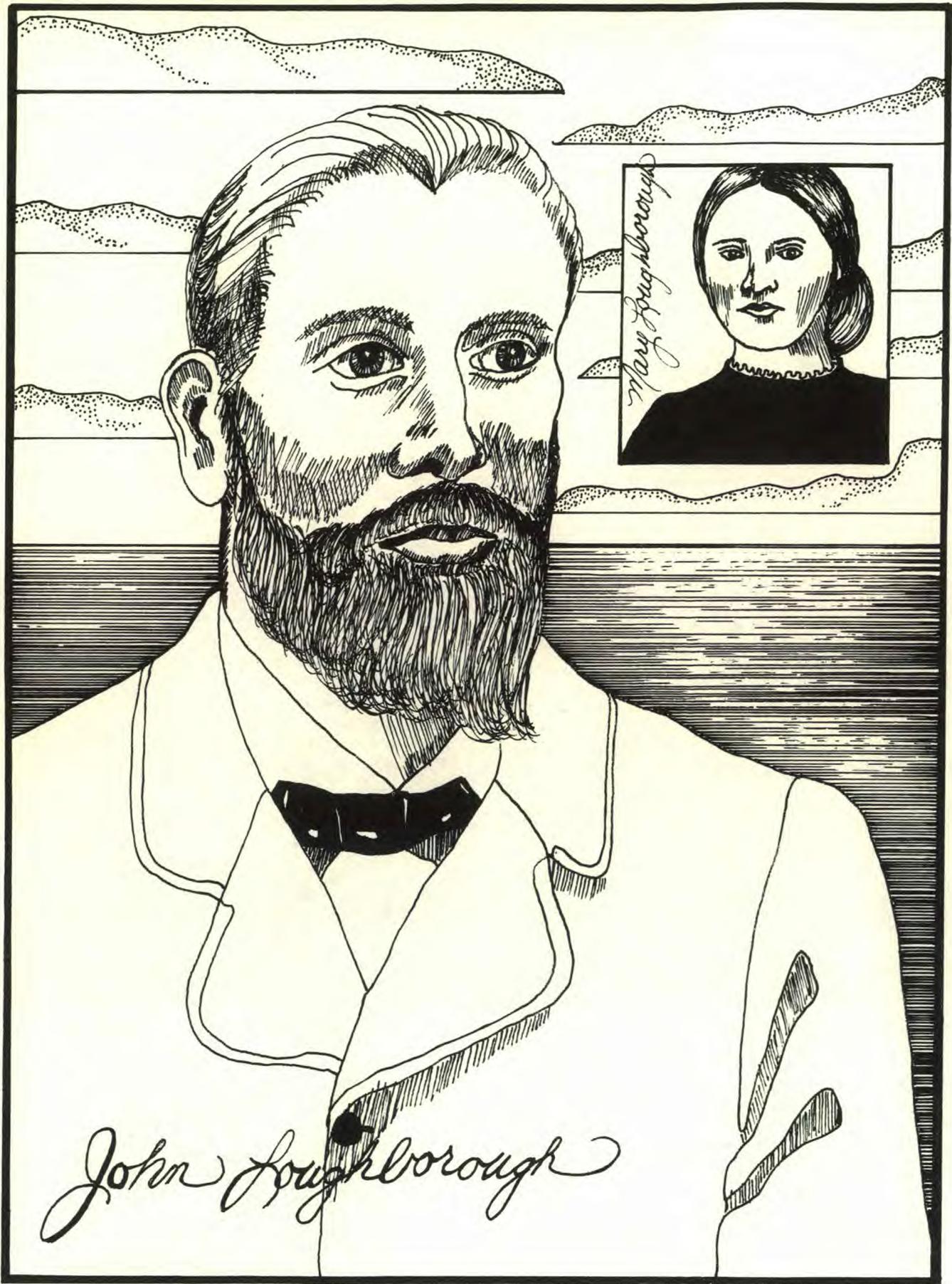
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*John Loughborough*

# The Loving Letter

by C. Mervyn Maxwell  
illustration by June Nowlin

*The story of John and Mary Loughborough and the letter to Laodicea is concluded here.*

By God's grace they made it across the Mississippi! That Friday night, James and Ellen White, Josiah Hart and Elon Everts preached to the hotel guests before retiring.

From Sunday to Wednesday they covered the remaining 100 miles to Waukon—in their open, unroofed box sleigh. Icy gales knifed mercilessly across the plains. The loving letter to Laodicea was on its way at any cost. (Jesus reached the street where we live to knock on our hearts' doors by way of the cross.)

The sleigh pulled up at the foot of a ladder. John Loughborough, former minister turned carpenter, climbed down embarrassed.

"What doest thou here, Elijah?" Ellen asked.

How could John reply? Could he tell a woman who had braved such danger and discomfort that the ministry was too hard?

Word spread. "The Whites have come!"

"Oh, no!"

Meetings were arranged each night in people's homes. Old advent hymns touched hearts inexorably. On Sabbath Elder White showed that Laodicea is the Sabbath-keeping church. Some agreed. Others asked to hear the other side.

Patiently, Elder White convinced everyone on Sunday night. Then some people said, "We've heard rumors we'd like to discuss."

On Monday night, James and Ellen

discussed difficulties they'd faced in Rochester and Battle Creek. They admitted making mistakes; but after listening, the group apologized for believing gossip. "It became a privilege," Elder White wrote later, "to confess our faults."

Hearts began to melt and flow together.

Ellen had a vision. When it ended she quoted Jesus as saying, "'Return unto Me, and I will heal all your backsliding.' Jesus," she continued, "knocks lovingly on your hearts. Do let Him in."

It was too much for Mary Loughborough. She blamed herself that she and John were there. Standing to her feet, lips atremble, she stammered, "Brother and Sister White, we thought we had gotten where you could never find us. Forgive us! We're so glad you've come. And if Jesus is outside my heart, He's not where I want Him to be. Lord Jesus, please come in!" She sat down and crumpled into tears.

The meeting continued past midnight.

On Tuesday night John Loughborough stood to his feet at last. Holding up his right hand, he spoke words that have become famous: "This hand has held a hammer to make a living for the last time. From henceforth, God helping me, it will hold the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God."

The next morning, December 31, 1856, John Loughborough accompanied the Whites back to Illinois. Mary followed in the spring. Both served faithfully as long as they lived.

Also from that group, J. N. Andrews became the first official S.D.A. foreign missionary, and George Butler became an outstanding General Conference president.

So this is the way the letter to Laodicea came to the Adventists in Waukon—through terribly cold weather to warm the lukewarm with the sweet love of Jesus.

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*C. Mervyn Maxwell is chairman of the church history department at Andrews University's Theological Seminary, and author of Tell It to the World, available at the Andrews University Bookstore and your local ABC.*