
Levi Pennington

People

1960

Friends I Have Known

Levi T. Pennington

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Recommended Citation

Pennington, Levi T., "Friends I Have Known" (1960). *Levi Pennington*. 23.
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FRIENDS ~~WHICH~~ I HAVE KNOWN

This is much too large a subject for a ^{book} work of this kind, for my work has taken me to all the principal centers of Quakerdom, in England, Ireland and the United States, and I have met personally thousands of Friends -- I am sure that is not an exaggeration -- and among them some of the most famous of them, most notable in very many and very widely different fields. And how widely different some of them have been from others. If I could know just what a normal human being is, I could say that I have had friends who were doubtless sub-normal, some that were super-normal, and some that were just ab-.

Herbert Hoover was a man of vast achievements, who could handle mighty enterprises as readily as an ordinary man could handle a quarter acre garden plot. Rufus M. Jones could read a book a day for years and get more out of each of them than some men would get out of a book a year; could (and did) write so many books that long before he laid down his pen he had ^{produced} more than a book for every week in the year -- one of the broadest minds not only in Quakerdom but in Christendom, probably the ^{most} widely admired and ^{most} widely criticised than any leader in the Society of Friends. Elbert Russell was one of the keenest minds among Friends, who could split an intellectual hair into four pieces and make any man with brains see just why it should be split that way, and what each quarter of the hair really meant. Ira C. Johnson was as good as he was queer and as queer as he was good, and both qualities were in the superlative. Allen Jay was a man whose speech was so defective after surgeons and dentists had done all they could for him that anybody with sense would have known that he could not be a public speaker, yet he became one of the ablest preachers among Friends -- he made even his handicap work in his favor. He lived up to the requirements of the adage so often quoted in England, "If you have nothing to say, you should avoid giving verbal evidence of the fact." Allen never spoke unless he had something to say -- he was one of the best "keeper-quieter" ^{persons} anywhere; but when he did have something to say he said it so well that you soon forgot that his enunciation was not as clear as that of the best trained elocutionist.

It's a thankless task to try to select some few of the many fine friends I have had for a bit of special comment. There will be so many that I shall hate to omit, but I can't include more ^{than} one in a hundred. ~~that~~ I'll tell you about ^{if you'll} give me a chance to do it face to face. I'll guarantee you an hour apiece for the first hundred.

HERBERT HOOVER

~~notwithstanding~~ I had learned enough about Herbert Hoover so that I did not disagree when David Starr Jordan said in an address in Pacific College and later in the Newberg Friends church during World War I, "This war has produced thus far just one world hero.....and that one is Herbert Hoover." And at that time he had barely begun his vast service for the world.

My first meeting with Herbert Hoover was when he was Secretary of Commerce during the Harding administration, when Teapot Dome was boiling with the big scandal that sent a member of the president's cabinet to federal prison. I had an appoint^{ment} to meet this Quaker cabinet secretary just after a cabinet meeting, and

his personal problem, I was told afterward, though he did not tell me, was whether to resign in protest against this corruption in high ~~circles~~ *places* or to remain on the cabinet and help to clear up the mess.

When he came from that cabinet meeting to meet me, I was shocked by the look on his face. I never saw a face so drawn except the face of an athlete who had just put everything he had into a two mile run, for instance, and was just crossing the line and breaking the tape with the last ounce of energy he had. It had been a very strenuous cabinet meeting.

Rufus M. Jones, at that time chairman of the American Friends Service Committee and well acquainted with Herbert Hoover, ~~said to me when he knew I was going to see him, with a strange mixture of the plain Quaker language and slang, "Don't let him get thy goat. He'll sit there and hear thee talk, and so far as thee can tell thee might just as well be talking to a stump or a stone; but he'll not miss a thing."~~ said to me when he knew I was going to see him, with a strange mixture of the plain Quaker language and slang, "Don't let him get thy goat. He'll sit there and hear thee talk, and so far as thee can tell thee might just as well be talking to a stump or a stone; but he'll not miss a thing."

How right Rufus was I was to learn quickly. Herbert sat down on one side of a great flat-topped desk (it was not an acre in area) on which was nothing except a letter sized scratch tablet. On the other side of the big desk I sat to tell him of the situation at his boyhood school, and saw him drop his eyes to that tablet, from which he never raised them once while I talked. On that ~~sheet~~ *of that* scratch tablet he drew an equilateral triangle. Then he drew another over that one, and he had a six-pointed star. He drew a set of little triangles in the points of that star, and then through the tips of those star points he drew lines that made another and larger six-pointed star, the points of which he also filled with triangles. Through the tips of these star points he drew lines again and had a star so big that one of its points did not have quite room enough on the pad. Having filled these points with triangles he tore this sheet off and dropped it into the waste basket and started another "doodle." *(How I wish that I had had the nerve to pick up and save that "doodle.")*

By this time I had finished my speech. When I stopped, he looked up; asked me two or three questions; told me what he would do to help the college in the campaign we were planning -- and I had had my first interview with Herbert Hoover, the man who had so impressed a clever woman interviewer that she thought of him as a mighty machine, winding up her high praise of his matchless ability and marvelous achievements with the remark, "The only human thing about him was the dandruff on his collar."

How wrong she was about the matter of his humanity I was to learn in fuller and fuller measure as the years passed, and our friendship grew. For -- believe it or not -- it was a mutual friendship. I was his friend, and he was mine. The correspondence during the many years that came between that first meeting and our last, or meetings in the White House, in the Hoover home ~~in~~ the Stanford campus, in the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel Towers, in our own home in Newberg and in other places, my sympathy with him when his wife died and his with me when Rebecca ~~died~~ died, all these memories are very dear to me.

Our last meeting was not a joyous one. It was in January before his death. I was invited to have lunch with him -- it was only days before that he had had the first meal that he shared with anyone else since his serious ^{illness} the previous June, from which illness he never really recovered. He was very feeble physically, though not mentally. Two nurses were in continual attendance --

they assisted him, one on each side, from his room to the table and after the meal and our visit from the table back to his room. Our conversation? Never mind that. It was our conversation.

I was invited to the funeral, but we had already planned a memorial service in the Newberg Friends Church, of which Herbert had long been a member, and I had promised to be one of the speakers, so I did not attend the funeral service.

At this memorial service ^{in Newberg} ~~in Newberg~~ Dr. Arthur O. Roberts of the George Fox College faculty was the first speaker, his address dealing with the achievements of Herbert Hoover. I was asked to speak on "Herbert Hoover, the Man", dealing with his character rather than his achievements. I ~~spoke~~ ^{speak} as follows:

RUFUS M. JONES

"When I was on earth the first time", as "Uncle George" Vallean used to say, when referring to his youth, there was a saying that if it had not been for Moses, Paul would have been the greatest man that ever lived, and if it had not been for Paul, Moses would have been. Well, if it had not been for Herbert Hoover, Rufus M. Jones would have been the most widely known Quaker in the world, and if it had not been for Rufus M. Jones, Herbert Hoover would have been. Hoover was a great world character, but a Quaker; Rufus M. Jones was a great Quaker, but a world character.

And what a vast difference between the two men, not in basic character, for both men were ~~somehow~~ ^{splendid} examples of keenness and cleanness of body and mind and soul, and ~~neither~~ both were men who literally poured themselves out in service to humanity.

Hoover was a master of the practical, in the handling of mines or men. The greatest life-saving enterprises that the world had ever known followed the accomplishment of the impossible in the "overturning of the mountains by their roots"; exploits in the feeding of the world; the climb from the humble beginning in West Branch to the White House and far beyond that -- it is a saga hard to duplicate in human history.

Jones, too, could deal with the practical, with material things, as witness his wonderful leadership in the work of the American Friends Service Committee, of which he was head for so many years. But the world in which he principally lived was the non-material, the intellectual, the spiritual, the religious, the moral, the social.

He wrote a library; he traveled over much of the whole earth, presenting to men of every race the God of love and grace as he knew Him; he taught decade after decade philosophy, the love of wisdom; he was one of the most outstanding of the leaders in the Five Years Meeting of Friends; he was perhaps the most widely known and admired ^{of all Friends} by Christian leaders outside of the Friends circles, as he was the most vigorously castigated by many Friends who did not see theological matters as he saw them.

~~What he was personally, as a human being, made him a man of mark, whether among Friends or enemies. Earnestness, friendliness, tolerance, charity for others, these and other delightful qualities endeared him to his friends, and those who knew him best loved him best. His sense of humor was an outstanding quality -- he was one of the three best story tellers that I have ever known. And he could laugh at a joke on himself quite as heartily as anybody else. When an elderly and much-concerned Friend, her face like leather and her voice like filing a saw, though that these discourses had been "over the heads" of these students, arose when the second speaker had taken his seat, and said in her loud and harsh voice, "Jesus said 'Feed my lambs', not 'Feed my giraffes'." While he took the criticism to heart, nobody laughed harder than Rufus Jones~~

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after the meeting was dismissed, speedily, fortunately.

After the death of this notable friend, these words seemed fairly to say themselves:

RUFUS M. JONES

And he is gone who seemed eternal youth.
Past four score years yet looking toward the dawn,
His mind still open, eager for new truth.
It seems impossible that he is gone.

He had no enemies among the poor.
Millions of starving almost worshipped him.
The wolf of hunger by the hovel door,
The specter of disease, the monster grim
Of freezing cold, ogre of pestilence,
The loneliness of lack of love, 'gainst these
He and his sturdy comrades made defence,
On foot by day, by night upon their knees.

Master of thought, philosopher was he.
He drained the springs of learning of the past.
Great Aristotle's realm he held in fee,
Socrates' keenness, Plato's wisdom vast;
Reasoned with Stoics, laughed at Schopenhauer,
Dwelt with the Mystics, with Aquinas soared,
Sought truth with Darwin, yet each busy hour
Lived by the Golden Rule taught by his Lord.

He had no enemies but those he loved,
Friends who with him at some points disagreed.
All of their poisoned words he took unmoved,
Holding life more important than a creed.

Palace or peasant cottage, White House, slum,
India, China, Haverford, New York,
In Gandhi's silence, where the swift wheels hum,
A thousand places saw this man at work.
A world he knew, a library he wrote,
Honored by many universities,
He dwelt among a folk of little note,
Plain speech, plain dress, plain living -- things like
these.

"Giants in those days"? Yes, and in our day.
We had among us one of Plutarch's men.
How shall we think that he has gone away,
That we shall never see his face again?
But he is gone who seemed eternal youth.
Past four score years, yet facing still the dawn,
His mind still open, eager for new truth --
It seems impossible that he is gone.