

Levi Pennington

People

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Levi Pennington Writing to His Aunt Dora, June 23, 1946

Levi T. Pennington

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June 23, 1946.

Dear Aunt Dora:--

Just when it was that I wrote to you last I do not know and don't want to find out. I've been thinking of you a good deal lately, and here comes a letter.

First of all, I can tell you that the yearly meeting is over, following the college commencement, the most strenuous time of the year for us, though not what it used to be when I was both president of the college and clerk of the yearly meeting. Still, daily sessions from 9:30 to 12:00 and from 2:00 to 4:00, with a sprinkling of three meetings at 8:00 and an occasional extra one in the evening means plenty of heavy sitting around, and that's more tiresome than work.

On the surface the yearly meeting went pretty smoothly. There were only two matters on which there was any caustic open discussion. One of these was on the matter of the yearly meetings with which Oregon will correspond. A lot of our folks are deathly afraid we shall be contaminated by some sort of remote contact with Hicksites. And so there was criticism of our receiving, even in a summary by our own epistle committee, any "quotes" from epistles from New York, New England, Canada, Philadelphia and the Pacific Coast Association of Friends, and it looks as if presently we shall not be willing to receive anything from any yearly meeting that is still in the Five Years Meeting. Well, a committee was appointed -- or perhaps it was left to the executive committee, to pass on the yearly meetings that are of the right character for us to correspond with. I was either naughty or truthful, which is sometimes worse, for I said that if we confined our correspondence to those yearly meetings that we thought were as good as we thought we were, I doubted if there was any need for us to prepare any epistle, for we'd find nobody to send it to.

The other matter on which there was real disagreement was the deposing of Robert H. Dann (now on a mission for a year to New Zealand and Australia under the English Service Committee, I believe, but with the cooperation of the American Friends Service Committee.). They have been after Dann off and on, usually on, for the past four years. They started the proceedings in a strictly undisciplinatory way, by making an interpretation of a provision of the discipline which we all knew it could never have meant when it was adopted. And now the committee that reported recommending that he be "unfrocked" admits that it did not follow instructions in dealing with the matter. But Dann is out now, and that's all there is to it. If the proceedings had not been so unfair, illegal (according to our yearly meeting law) and in part cowardly, he could probably have been deprived of his standing as a minister with far less ill feeling than the case has generated.

Well, that's that, and it is all water over the dam now, though there may be "repercussions" of one sort and another as time passes. And the reorganization of the work of the yearly

meeting according to the discipline adopted last year may work better than I think it will. But when they combine temperance and public morals, education, peace, stewardship and literature all under one board and put at the head of it the man they did, I don't expect much. (You can't handle an ocean liner with an outboard motor.)

Well, turning from yearly meeting to commencement, that started off in a way that gave promise of being a "flop" of the most pronounced type. The commencement concert was a very poor student recital, instead of a program worthy of any institution in the country, as it used to be. But from there on things went very well. President Gulley was better than usual in his baccalaureate sermon; the class day program was good as such programs go; and the commencement address itself was fine, as was the entire commencement program. One of our girls won a \$1,500.00 scholarship at Columbia University, and a number of them have won honors of other sorts. On the whole the commencement exercises were quite satisfying.

And there was no attack on the college in the yearly meeting, as there was last year. President Gulley in his report for the year, which showed receipts of over \$60,000.00 and expenditures of over \$59,000.00, also reviewed the past five years (I retired five years ago as president), and here there was also a good showing. The endowment has been increased by over \$120,000.00, which is perhaps not quite as good as it looks, but still is pretty good. One gift, which I suppose was possibly listed as \$50,000.00, came from the will of a Mr. Roberts, and no representative of the college had ever seen him except Rebecca and I. (He left a business building in Portland to five institutions, sharing equally, and the place could be sold any time for ^{about} a million.) Another gift, which was perhaps listed at \$15,000.00, was from another will made before I left the presidency. I do not know what he did in accounting for the "living endowment" that I raised mostly. The first year of that the income was between \$4,000.00 and \$5,000.00, and most of that was an annual gift for five years, though some of it was not on the five year basis, but would have had to be resolicited each year. But at any rate, I was responsible for more than half of the \$121,000.00, and I'm glad of it.

And now to more personal matters. Rebecca and I are hoping to get out to the coast for a long rest as soon as we can do it without hurrying. There are several things that we want to do before we go, and Rebecca especially does not feel like working too hard these days.

There is our fruit, for one thing, I mean our cherries. How I wish that you could have shared with us, or could yet, in the lovely cherries from our Governor Wood tree, our Elton, and now the Montmorency and the Royal Ann. The Governor Woods were (and are, for there are some of them left) most delicious to eat right off the tree. They are pretty soft and mushy when canned, (Rebecca calls them "pusillanimous"), but I do not know of a more delicious cherry just to eat, sweet and juicy and of fine flavor. (We sold more than 100 pounds, at 8¢ a pound -- the Royal Anns are bringing 12½¢, and a tree in the next block had produced \$50.00 worth when the neighbors borrowed our ladder to get the rest of them last week.

Well, we'll not can any of the Governor Woods nor the Eltons, of which there are only about what we'll want to eat. But we have already put up six cans of Early Richmonds, we'll probably have that many or more of the Montmorencys, and we shall probably put up quite a number of the cans of Royal Anns, though we do not like them nearly as well as we do the sour cherries, that have so much more "authority."

The garden has been taking some of my time since yearly meeting, but we're about ready to leave it for a while except for the peas, which are just coming on -- we have our first mess of them for dinner today. (We got ours planted late -- other folks have been eating their own peas for a long time.) We shall have some peas to can, but we don't know yet how many, and some of them are not going to be ready to put up as soon as we are ready to go to the coast, I am afraid.

The biggest job, however, is to get the grounds here at home in order -- we have had to neglect that part of our job scandalously of late. I've had the hedge trimmed once, and now it needs another going over -- to do it now will save a lot more work a bit later. The parkway and the "lawn" need mowing again before we go. The roses must be sprayed again -- I have got that done only once this year, and the slugs and the black leaf spot are just too bad. But the biggest job is the fighting of weeds and grass among the things that ought to have thorough cultivation. If one could just mow the whole back yard, it would be easy. But it will all have to be covered with the hoe, and that's a job. Still, it will give us both wholesome exercise, and I suppose it will not take so long when we actually get at it.

Anyway, not later than next week I hope that we shall be out at El TeePee, and I am hoping that we shall catch some real fish on this trip. There may be a good run of spring chinook salmon, though that run has been "petering out" for a good many years. But we shall catch some good trout, I am sure, and maybe we shall do some sea fishing.

The latest from Parker indicates that he is now in Detroit trying to get his income tax situation straightened out -- he is sure that he is entitled to a liberal refund from Uncle Samuel. He will go back to Interlochen soon, with Louise and her boys, for a stay for the rest of the summer for him, and a month or two for Louise and the boys.

Hannah and Lorena and their husbands were supposedly spending two weeks or so at a cottage near Ludington, as I remember it. Perhaps they are back by this time. Hope the trip was good for all of them.

I've had no word from Willis for a long time, nor had the rest of the tribe when I heard last, except through Parker, who wrote that they were moving, or rather had moved, and were about worn out rearranging, repairing, remodeling, and all that.

Mary and Cecil are very busy, with repairs to the church, daily vacation Bible school, etc. Bertha May is at home for the summer, and Esther will be soon, I suppose. She was spending a month at work before returning to South Glens Falls. She does not expect to enter Earlham until a year from next fall, so she

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will be there only during Bertha May's senior year. Hope that they both get to see you repeatedly, even if she does not get there till the fall of '47.

But it is nearly time for me to go to church, and I must end this.

With love from both of us to all of you,

Affectionately your nephew;

Mrs. Dora O. Masten,
411 North Delaware,
Indianapolis, Indiana.