

Levi Pennington

People

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Levi Pennington Writing to His Cousin Mary, September 30, 1946

Levi T. Pennington

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1000 Sheridan St.,
Newberg, Oregon,
September 30, 1946.

Dear Cousin Mary:--

Your very interesting letter of the 23rd. arrived some days ago, but I'm just now finding time to answer it. I am a very busy man for one who has retired and has nothing to do.

I don't know how I happened to send my letter of last July with only domestic postage on it, but I have made even more embarrassing mistakes than that in my time, and I suspect I shall make more. But I hope I shall put enough postage on this one.

It is always interesting to know just how things are going with those we love, and the incidents that you describe of your experiences with servants, for instance, give a clearer idea of some of the things in the life of a missionary than any table of statistics or budget of a missionary board could give.

How we all wish that the work of the Kingdom of God could progress everywhere as it ought, adequately manned and financed. "Like a mighty army moves the church of God" would be a bit more appropriate if it were a bit nearer the truth. When we think of the abundance of supplies provided for the army, the immense wealth spent for it, and all that sort of thing, we wish that a small part of it could be devoted to the advancement of the church, enabling it to move more than it does "like a mighty army."

I'm opposed to the Townsend plan as it was originally, providing \$200.00 per month for every person over 60, and requiring that the entire sum be spent each month, and that all who received it should give up any remunerative employment. And I've seen no modification of it since that meets my approval. But I am sure that we shall never be fully civilized until we take proper care of all our aged people. And of all these, the ones most deserving are those who have spent their lives altruistically, and especially those who have invested their lives in the service of the Kingdom of God. How I wish that we had and would always maintain adequate support for our pioneer workers, both during their active lives in the field and after their days of activity are over.

I'm sure that God is very good to you, and will be forever. You have sacrificed a good deal, whether you'd like to call it by that name or not. You would have enjoyed courtship; you'd not have done any cruel flirting, but you could easily have had a number of men hopping lively when they saw a chance to please you; and you would have made some man a fine wife if God had willed it so. He'd never have found life boring, for you'd have had him guessing a good part of the time, though he'd never have had any doubt as to your fidelity to him. And they tell us that there is no marrying nor giving in marriage in heaven, and most folks think that means that the marriage relation does not exist up there. Well, all I have to say is that there must be something exceptionally fine to take its place.

Science teaches us the conservation of energy, that no energy is ever lost, though it may be transformed so that it is not readily recognized as energy. I put on the brakes and stop

my car, but the energy that was driving that car along the road is not lost, but transformed into heat. The water rushes through the gigantic turbines at Grand Coulee, and comes out below with its speed lost and nothing outward to show for the disappearance of those thousands of horse-power of energy, which is not lost, however, but transformed into electric power to be used hundreds of miles away. And your illustration of the forests that become coal and oil and gas is perhaps even better yet. And with such a truth as the conservation of energy in the material world, we can be sure that no slightest part of spiritual energy, transformed into kingdom activity and service, is ever lost. We may be as unable to see it as a savage in the carboniferous age was to see what we should be doing in these days with the stored up energy in what he knew as forests, but God will see to it that there is no loss. "Cast thy bread upon the waters, for thou shalt find it after many days", and even if those days carry us across the river of death before we find it, find it we shall, some day.

Well, that sort of thing ought to be a great comfort to you. I wish I could be as sure that I have served worthily as I am that you have.

What a time you do have with your servants, employes, contractors, etc. I smile whenever I think of the servant who when you told her to "heat it" proceeded to "eat it." (That was Mrs. Swift, wasn't it? But I can see that you've had your experiences of a similar sort.) How easy it is to misunderstand, even when we are all using the same language. Did I tell you of the three men, each somewhat "hard of hearing" who were coming into London on a train that passed through Wembley? They stopped at a station which they were not sure of, and one of them said, "Is this Wembley?" "No", said the second man "this is Thursday." The third man said, "So am I; let's all get off and have a drink."

If you joined the Young Friends group September 6, 1864, you were certainly in the right group, for at that time you must have been very young indeed. It reminds me of the time when I lived on milk exclusively for three months.

Mrs. Hoover and the Micheners will not show me the minutes of your yearly meeting, nor will I show them this letter unless I find their new address and mail it to them. They left Oregon for Iowa some time ago, and did not know just where they were going to locate. There are a lot of folks that we could better have spared, I am sure. Of course it is a lot of net gain for Iowa. We do not expect to see them back, for they sold out here, "lock, stock and barrel."

Wish I could enclose that article that appeared in the "Square" Friend, but I do not know where it is. Maybe I can find the copy of it that I ought to have somewhere and send it to you later.

The one thing that I am most interested in these days in the way of my writing is an "autobiography" of Simon Peter, which I daresay I have mentioned to you. It seems that the only time that I get anything done on it is when we are over at our cottage at the coast; and though we expected to spend most of the summer out there, Rebecca's health has been so poor that we have not got over there yet, and now the summer is gone. And for the present there is so much doing that I could not get

copy
sent
just as
it
came

away if she were ready and all packed up. What am I doing? Well, just as if it were important, here it is.

Last week there were three principal jobs. One was the completion of the picking of the prunes from ~~three~~ trees that we have down at the garden. I got half a ton off of those trees, and now they are all dried and awaiting my disposal at the Springbrook prune plant. A second was the picking of the apples off of the one tree in the back yard. There were seven bushels of King and Northern Spy apples, and now that I have them picked I do not know what to do with them. No sugar to can them with, so many people with apples of their own that there is no chance to sell them nor give them away, so far as I know right now. The third job was clearing up the yard after the reroofing of the house. There had been a cedar shingle roof on the house, and over that some years ago we put a composition shingle roof. Now both of them are off and an entirely new cedar shingle roof is on the house, with the cedar and composition roofs both shoveled off of the house right down on the ferns and shrubs and flowers. We don't want to waste the cedar shingles, as they make excellent kindling wood for both the kitchen range and the furnace. So we have picked the cedar shingles out of about a third of the wreckage and sent it "down the hatch" into the basement. About half of the total mass of shingles I have just wheeled into a corner of the back yard, where it lies, a big heap, not as high as the gallows of Haman, but plenty long, wide and high. The rest of the mess lies right where it was shoveled off the roof. We had hoped to get it cared for today, but it started to rain in the night, and is still at it.

Well, those were the principal projects of last week. And for this week:

Sunday morning I was the man who had the job of raising ^{at the Friends Church} money for the relief of the sufferers across the seas, and I got gifts and pledges totaling well over \$1,000.00, most of it in cash. Two new \$50.00 gifts have come into the hands of the treasurer since Sunday, I am told.

This morning I was the speaker at the chapel at Pacific College, where I addressed the largest group of students that the college has ever had of college grade. (When we had the academy we beat the present enrollment, but this year is about 20 more than we ever had of college grade while I was present. A large share of the new ones are ex-service men, their education being paid for by the government under the GI Bill of Rights. This evening I am to read a "Whodunnit" that I wrote some years ago to a group of students, faculty and others. I promised this more than two years ago, but two years ago this month -- no, next month, for it is still September for seven hours -- I was taken ill and spent five months in bed, much of the time suffering torture; and a year ago this month Rebecca and I started on our five months trip almost around the United States. This mystery yarn is entitled "The Passing of the Ashland Foursome", and I think it has a clever idea in it, though it violates the "editorial traditions" for mystery stories, and would probably never sell.

Tomorrow Rebecca and I go to Portland to see her nerve specialist. We hope that he can arrest the progress of the "shaking palsy" which makes it extremely difficult for her to do any

writing -- can you imagine how it hurts to see those dear hands tremble so? Tomorrow evening is the monthly meeting on ministry and oversight.

Wednesday is the opening meeting of a club to which Rebecca belongs, and in the evening is the first ladies' night meeting of the Rotary Club, to which I belong, and also monthly meeting, and we are supposed to be at both places. Don't exactly see how we can work it.

I don't remember anything special for Thursday, but Friday evening is the reception for the new pastor and his wife and for the students and faculty of the college.

And after that we might -- we just might -- get out to the coast for a bit of salmon fishing. I am responsible for this section of the town, some 20 blocks or so, for the Community Chest solicitation which comes next week; but I accepted the assignment with the understanding that if I were to be away, I could turn the matter over to my second in command, an ex-congressman who probably ought to have been the head of it, in view of my responsibility for the relief campaign among the churches. I've got the whole thing organized, solicitors secured, territory assigned, and I think the whole thing would go off smoothly if I were to drop out of the picture entirely.

Maybe I did not tell you of this campaign for relief, a campaign among the churches which I have promoted. I was head of the campaign last spring that raised nearly \$3,000.00 in addition to all that had been raised before. When the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) announced a nation-wide campaign for relief funds and chose their representative for Newberg, our committee disbanded, to "let somebody run that can run." Recently that UNRRA representative told me that he was not going to do a thing about the campaign, and had so informed the UNRRA; and anyway, the campaign of that organization had been a "flop" in many places. With the community Chest campaign already organizing, for the only general solicitation that is supposed to be made in Newberg this year, there was nothing to do but organize this relief campaign through the churches. So I put the matter before the Ministerial Association, a committee was appointed to promote the solicitation of relief funds through the churches, I was made chairman of this committee, and we opened the campaign with this money-raising in the Friends Church yesterday. Hope the other churches will follow suit -- excuse me, you of course know that I should have said follow a good example.

My granddaughter Bertha May Pearson has entered Earlham for her Junior year. Her father and mother took their vacation at the time of the opening of the college, and they drove out to Richmond by way of Detroit. There they spent the night and had a visit with my brother Parker's daughter and her family, Parker having gone to Ionia to spend the week-end with Lorena and her family, and staying over till Wednesday. He got home just twenty minutes after Mary and her family had left. Esther, Mary's second daughter, graduated from Oakwood School in Poughkeepsie in June, but is staying out a year, as Bertha May did, to get a little money ahead for her entrance into Earlham next fall. (Wish I had money enough to finance their education in college, but I have not.)

I'm sure I told you ~~of~~ of the marriage of my brother Willis at the age of 73. He and his wife seem very happy in their home on the shore of Lake Wah-be-kanees (The Water Lingers). Parker spends part of his time with them as he closes up his business at Interlochen, where he and his wife conducted a summer camp for girls for twenty-five years, at the end of which time she died suddenly. He has sold the camp to the National Music Camp which adjoins it, and has now disposed of the lots he owned on another side of the lake, and has only a road to make to these lots, when he will be all through with his business there. He has been several times disappointed in getting the road machinery that he needs, but it was promised to him surely beginning tomorrow, and I hope he gets the road built very soon. It is such a sad place for him that I want him to get so that he does not need to go there unless he just wants to do it.

But here I have written "allovershundredacres" as they say. It is time to eat a bite (or maybe several bites, for I have too good an appetite), and get ready for these folks who are coming to see if they can unravel the mystery of "The Passing of the Ashland Foursome."

With love from both of us, and the wish that we could have you with us for a time, as I know that Grace White wishes you could be with her, I am

Affectionately your cousin,

Miss Mary White,
Port Antonio,
Jamaica, B.W.I.