

Levi Pennington

People

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Levi Pennington Writing to Mary, April 4, 1947

Levi T. Pennington

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April 4, 1947.

Dear Mary:--

It was certainly good to get your letter of Saturday, which was awaiting us on our return last evening from a day in Portland. Bertha May wanted us to spend some time with her, and we had some things we wanted to do down there, so we went in soon after 9:00, shopped and otherwise busied ourselves, with a luncheon at Hillaire's, which Bertha May insisted on paying for, and then the two ladies went to the Carolina Home where Bertha May works, while I finished the job we had primarily come for, and then drove out to the home for a visit there in Bertha May's room, and then the drive on home.

One of the things we spent some time on was a picture to hang over the piano in the living room. I think we have found the right one for that place. The picture of Mount Hood which you colored hangs in the fire-place room, right over the couch on the west side. For a long time it was over the mantel.

We had not heard before of Cecil's impacted wisdom tooth. They can give one a very bad time I am told, though mine came in -- and went out -- with little difficulty. Sorry that Cecil had to have the grippe in addition to the long-continued pain of the tooth and its extraction. The last tooth I had removed was handled by Dr. Homer Hester, and I think I never had one removed which caused me as little pain during the operation and afterward.

You certainly have been living a busy life of late, and it seems that you are to have some good times during the Easter vacation. Glad that you are to be with Bertha May for a time. And you'll enjoy the stay with the Micheners, I am sure, and the visit with Gerald's folks, and the stay over night at Oakwood.

I am glad indeed that you are getting something out of the property at 1412 Union Street. Bertha May did not mention having got her payment, but maybe she forgot it, or maybe it has not come yet.

I have met John Nicholson, and I think I have met Rebecca Nicholson, though I cannot shut my eyes and see her. Is she John's mother, the widow of Vincent ("Tim") Nicholson, my class mate at Earlham? How we seem to want our children to avoid the dangers that we faced ourselves, perhaps not even realizing that they were dangers. This "charmed circle" that we'd like to draw about those we love -- well, it just does not work, that's all.

That "falling up the back steps" might not be so bad as falling down those same steps, but it's bad enough, and I could not advise it. Do hope that right wrist of yours is not permanently damaged -- hope it is as good as new by this time. I have a finger of my left hand wrapped up, but it is pretty well healed in only two days. Mrs. Charles, Clifford

Terrell's sister who lives next door with Mrs. Van Blaricom, wanted a footstool to cover, and I made her one, out of scraps I had in the shop. Did not have a miter box and so could not cut the corners accurately, and in one of my attempts to saw between the beveled ends of the side pieces to make them fit better, I sawed the ring finger of that left hand. But aside from the fact that I have some adhesive tape about it which soon gets to looking dirty, it has not even annoyed me.

That's a nice looking dress you have in prospect -- it may be it is done by this time!

Glad that Tarlham has accepted Esther for next year. They'll never be sorry. And I hope she gets a scholarship. Some colleges are learning to take into consideration some of the things besides mere grades on the books and athletic ability. I could name a lot of folks who have had scholarships that were not half so worthy of them as Esther is.

I suspect I have told you of our experience when during the over-supply of teachers in the midst of the depression the colleges were urged to insist on higher standards for those who were candidates for teaching credentials, and not to allow those of inferior qualifications to take the work that would entitle them to teaching credentials. We discussed the matter in faculty meeting, and some were for establishing an iron-clad requirement in the matter of scholarship. I asked them where they would put the limit, and they were a bit hazy about it, so I asked if they would think it best to let anybody in the lower half of the student body have teaching credentials, and they were sure that that would not do; one should be above the average in order to become a candidate for educational work. That's as far as the discussion went then, for I wanted to make a bit of an investigation, which I did.

When we met again, I told them of R.H., who was graduating that spring, and in whom all the faculty had great confidence that he would make a success for school man; and his grades were about three points below the average of all students in all classes for the preceding ~~ten~~ years. I mentioned B.H., who according to Dean Jewell of the Oregon State System of Higher Education's Education Department was doing one of the most significant pieces of work in the state of Oregon; his average was nearly six points below the average of all students in all classes for ten years. I called their attention to M.W., one of the ^{best} outstanding superintendents of schools in the state, with almost ^{half} as many teachers under him as there were both teachers and students in Pacific College; and his average was nearly eight points below that ten year average.

Not that I'm unappreciative of scholarship, for I love it. But that's not the only thing that should be taken into consideration, any more than is I.Q. the only consideration. There are many nonentities in the world who would have had a much higher I.Q. than Herbert Hoover. And there have been students who outranked the three men I mentioned to the faculty by many points who have never amounted to anything, and never will. The first of these three men worked his way through college, spending so much time on outside work that he did not have time to put on his work in college to do it as adequately

as it would have been done if he had not had to work so many hours per week for his living; besides which he was not too fast in his thinking, but was a plodder, and everlasting, stick-to-it-till-it-is-done sort of chap. The second man did not take things too seriously in college most of his college days, but sobered down at the last, married a girl who was a bit older than he and a real influence in his life for good, and he has gone far. The third fellow was on his own all the time he was in college, did all sorts of outside things, and was a real planner and leader, though not able to hand back on a quizz paper as much of the contents of a book as some could do. But I was convinced that he was going to go a long ways in whatever field he entered, though I did not get really acquainted with him till his senior year.

Here's the sort of thing that indicated his make-up. In those days we had the lyceum course, and at that time the faculty and student body shared 50-50 in the responsibility for it and the profits (or losses) that it showed at the end of the course. We organized a campaign for the sale of season tickets, and this M.W. was chosen to head one of the two teams, Old Gold and Navy Blue -- I don't remember which color he had. The two captains were given the names of all students and faculty members, and they chose their teams. Well, M.W. made far the best selections, and when the choosing was over, the other man may have had as good looking an aggregation, but M.W. had the most folks who would actually work. The town was divided into sections, and each team was to stay out of the other team's territory for so many days. When it came to selecting territory, which captain made the best selections? Yes, you are right again; it was M.W. Who got his workers organized best? M.W. Who got them to work harder? M.W.? Who when all territory was open got into this open field first and most effectively? M.W. And who worker hardest, personally, and sold more tickets than any other two? M.W. Do you wonder that I felt that he was qualified to be a school administrator? He has succeeded very well. I don't like iron-clad rules, anyhow. They may be necessary in some cases, but they are bound to create a lot of injustice.

And now the mail man has arrived with half a dozen pieces of mail; a letter from a distant cousin, Henry C. Fellow, nearly blind and crippled, so that his letter is in part illegible -- he wants me to straighten him out on some Pennington genealogy; one from my sister Lorena; one from Lura Miles, widow of our former field secretary; one from a Mrs. Ross who wants to give \$160.00 for a heifer for relief if it can go to the family she wants to help overseas; and so on. Guess I'd better end this and see if I can do some satisfactory thinking for my service at the church this afternoon. Maybe I'll find that impossible, and will be back pounding out some more letters. I do not know how many calls to the phone I have had since I started this letter. One tells me that the meeting of the Herbert Hoover Foundation which was to have been held tomorrow is postponed for a week; one was from Handsaker, wanting me to spend some days in the White Salmon country, some days in southern Oregon, some in Tillamook, to speak at Hillsboro on the 11th (The state Heifers-for-Relief committee meets that day, as does the executive committee of the Northwest Institute of International Relations), and a few things like that.

And the salmon fishing is improving at Oregon City, and I have not caught a decent fish in three or four years; the garden needs attention; the lawn (one half moss, one half dandelions and plantain and one half grass) needs mowing; I've bought five gallons of paint for the dormers and gables -- Mother wants them white instead of green; the roof ought to be stained as soon as the weather will permit it; and my right leg is lame from walking so much yesterday. And besides I've got to pay the last installment, with interest, for the paving and side walk put in some twenty-five years ago -- and the interest will be more than the principal. (If they had paved a year later, the cost would have been only two thirds as much.)

Well, whatever I do, I ought to quit writing, and I'm going to do it right now.

With love from both of us to all of you,

Affectionately always,

Mrs. C. E. Pearson,
13 Marion Avenue,
South Glens Falls, N.Y.