

Levi Pennington

People

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Pennington to Perry Macy, January 11, 1948

Levi T. Pennington

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January 11, 1948.

Prof. Perry D. Macy,
Pacific College,
Newberg, Oregon.

Dear Friend:--

I am sorry that I was not at home when you called the other day to ask me something more about Stephen Thorne. I could have told you a good many things, but perhaps nothing that would have satisfied the other members of the committee. Even if I had heard this English brother pronounce the "h" in "shibboleth", they might not be satisfied that I had heard clearly -- they might even say that I did not know myself how the word should be pronounced.

Stephen Thorne is called the recording clerk of London Yearly Meeting, the mother yearly meeting of all Quakerdom. His work, however, is not at all what we think of when we speak of a recording clerk. He does not write the minutes of the yearly meeting; that is done by the presiding clerk, according to the very ancient custom of Friends. Thorne is rather what we should call the executive secretary of the yearly meeting, with much of the responsibility that among American Friends falls upon the yearly meeting superintendent. He frequently speaks in meetings in various parts of the yearly meeting, and has been extensively used among Friends in America.

He preached the second sermon in Indiana Yearly Meeting -- this year instead of having one speaker for the entire series of inspirational addresses at the close of the morning sessions they had a number of different speakers, one for each day. He and his wife are on a tour clear across the United States, after a stay of weeks at Quaker Hill, from which as a center they have ministered to various meetings in the middle west. This trip is taking them to Friends in Illinois, Iowa, Nebraska, Colorado, Washington, Oregon and California -- I may have left out a state or two -- before they turn back eastward. Ernest Lamb, general superintendent of California Yearly Meeting has made plans for them to have much service there, and Stephen Thorne is on the program for their yearly meeting conference which begins on the third of next month, and I am sure they are to have a place in some one of the bigger meetings there on the first, though I do not yet know whether it is to be at Whittier or some other meeting.

I'm sure Stephen Thorne would not want to speak to the college unless he were welcomed, if not by the members of this chapel committee, at least by those who are in higher places in the college than they are. If Gervas Carey wanted him to speak there, I'd favor his coming. If not, I shall be glad to make other arrangements.

Rebecca tells me that some of the students there have stated that Carl D. Byrd took it upon himself to conduct the evangelistic meetings last year, and that therefore they could not pray for the meetings as they otherwise could have done,

and so the meetings did not amount to much. The statement that he took that responsibility on himself is not only uncharitable but it is absolutely false. Carl Byrd accepted the task of leading in the evangelistic meetings last year at the earnest and unanimous request of the meeting on ministry and oversight. He had it in mind to call some outside evangelist, but the meeting on ministry and oversight were so earnest in their desire to have him as the evangelist that after further consideration he accepted the task, and I am sure did his best, and a very good work. If there was any failure in the success of the meetings because of the failure of the prayers of those students, that failure based on a report that was false, then the responsibility is upon the students, not on Carl Byrd.

How fine it will be when along with zeal and earnestness God is able to teach some folks at the college, both students and faculty members, a bit of humility and charity.*

With the hope that the right thing may be done -- if Stephen Thorne comes there to meet only a critical and uncharitable audience I suspect it would be just as well for him to sit in silence for half an hour and see if God could get a word in somewhere -- I am

Sincerely your friend,

Levi T. Pennington.

* And doesn't that sound uncharitable? But the same sort of thing from the same sort of people for more than a third of a century wears a man's patience thin.