

Levi Pennington

People

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Pennington to The Geneva Newlins, July 11, 1948

Levi T. Pennington

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1000 Sheridan St.,
Newberg, Oregon,
July 11, 1948.

Dear Friends:--

In some cases the recognition of a fault is the first big step toward its correction. But I remember what the king said in Hamlet, when he was seeking forgiveness for the murder of the elder Hamlet,

"Try what repentance can --

But what can it when one can not repent."

Well, I know that I am inclined to stretch a letter out to greater length than some folks would approve, but I am so far from real repentance that I am starting this letter on thin paper, with no intention of saying everything I have to say on one page, nor even on two unless I get ready to quit before I have destroyed more than two sheets of paper.

We were very glad for both your "tattleblatts" as you call them. (Wish I could coin nice words like that.) We did not find an uninteresting word in either letter, nor in the "covering letter" which accompanied the one that had been "seasoning" for a year and more.

What a time you are having over there, and what a lot of interesting people you are meeting, and what a lot of good you are doing. But I know a lot of folks who will be glad indeed to see you back in this country. And some of us will be eager to know where you will "light" after this flight to Europe.

Gifts with strings attached, even big gifts to colleges with the "dead hand" supposed to direct them, have some distinct disadvantages. Wish I could have for my own use the fund that is still intact that was given for the relief of folks traveling by prairie schooner across the plains, subject to attacks by Indians, danger from stampeding buffaloes, from starvation and from thirst, as well as from broken down wagons and broken down horses. The giver of that gift thought he was doing a wise and humane thing, but he should have made some provision for the use of the money when prairie schoonering was replaced by other means of travel. Why not a provision that it might later be used for the relief of passengers whose planes were grounded clear away, maybe as much as five miles, from a good hotel?

Or for the relief of Vanport flood sufferers. When a city of 18,000 is swept out of existence in a matter of minutes, almost of seconds, it means a lot of privation and deprivation. But I told you enough about that in my reply to your letters. This letter is just an extra, with no real excuse for it.

I ought to say that we are not the only folks here who have enjoyed these letters of yours. And right now I have dug up the one dated the day of the Vanport disaster, for Rebecca has another set of folks whom she is going to give a chance to read and enjoy these epistles.

Rebecca, I am glad to say, is better than when I wrote you last. She said one day last week that she felt more like herself than she has felt for months. She is up and about, doing

most of the usual work about the house, though with more than the usual amount of help from her husband. One day last week we put up in heavy syrup 29 pint cans of Montmorenci cherries from our little tree at the garden. Most cherries in this section are an entire failure; pears are as bad or worse -- I have not found one pear on our tree that ought to have bushels; very few peaches -- our bigger tree has perhaps half a dozen and the smaller one perhaps a score; but apples, nuts and prunes look good.* And though our garden for the most part was planted late, we expect to can a good deal of corn, beans and tomatoes. We have already eaten a good many peas, and we have canned ten pints, not all from our own vines, however. Some are labeled "Baw Tem Peas", because we baw tem.

You asked in your letter who was to be the presidential nominee of the Republican party, or something of the sort, and I was not able to give assurance nor ever venture prediction. Now I can tell: it is a man named Dewey. And I am clearer in my own mind on the Democratic situation. It is a bitter pill for many to swallow, both north and south, but I think that Truman will be the Democratic nominee, and that Dewey will be the next president. I was glad that Eisenhower finally made clear to his fans that he meant what he said, and was not going to run for the presidency nor for any other public office. I was greatly surprised when he was chosen to head Columbia University, and accepted.

Local politics people here are not much interested in as yet. Frank Colcord says he will not be a candidate for another term. Whether Raul Newton has mayoralty ambitions still I do not know. He is a drinking man, and I helped to defeat him in a previous election. Don't know who will be the candidates this time. There is talk of a revision of the charter, with city manager form of government. It was all planned to do a lot more paving this year, but no bids were offered in response to the advertising for bids, and they have had to start all over. The previous paving was done at top prices -- it could have been done a third cheaper the next year; and there is a good deal of opposition to paving this year, on the ground that prices are likely to be lower a little later. Maybe -- but it did not work that way for the church parsonage. We waited a long time, and now it is being built at as high prices for most things as ever in the history of the contry, and still higher for the rest of the material.

Well, I got off of politics. In the state, it is pretty generally conceded that it is a Republican year, with Douglas McKay almost sure to defeat Lew Wallace, the Democratic candidate. I did my best to defeat for the nomination the present governor-by-accident, John Hall. He was too closely connected with gambling, prostitution, liquor and other interests to suit some of us, and I was glad indeed when McKay won the nomination, emphatically.

I am supposed to be the "inspirational" speaker each day at the close of the morning business session of Indiana Yearly Meeting, and to give the Wednesday evening lecture on Quakerism. One of the two doctors who have been treating Rebecca says it might be that she could go with me, and on to New York for the marriage of our granddaughter Bertha May Pearson, who graduated with considerable honors from Earlham College in June of 1948. (That was just last month, in case there should be any confusion.) The other doctor does not think it would be advisable, though he

* Berries bid fair to break all records.

might change his mind if she makes sufficient improvement during the rest of the summer. It would not be much fun to go and leave her at home.

Since I wrote you last, a nephew of mine, his wife, and a friend of his and his wife from Birnamwood, Wisconsin, have been to Oregon and gone back home. They had expected to catch no end of fine trout in Canada, and the waters there were so high they could not even find some of the streams, and did not catch a thing. They occupied our cottage at the coast most of the week they were here, and I spent some days out there with my nephew and his wife before the arrival of this friend and his wife, who had stopped with some friends in Seattle. My nephew went out deep sea fishing the day after we got there, while I took his wife to Tillamook to visit Clarence and Abbie Edwards, *with whom she had lived when she taught out there years ago. Otis, this nephew, caught his first salmon, and as Robert Dann used to say, he "felt like a duke." On Saturday they both went deep sea fishing, with one other fisherman and a man to handle the boat. The other fisherman caught two chinook salmon that dressed 40 pounds, and five silversides. Neither my nephew nor his friend had so much as a strike from a salmon. That Hain't No Justice. But they caught a lot of big bass on this deep sea trip. Otis and I fished off the rocks at Cape Kiawandi, where some famous catches were being made up to the day we went. One morning earlier in the week one man had caught twenty of these big bass. The day we were there, twenty men could not catch one. The one lone fish that was taken was caught by a woman.

My record of one fish for 1948 still stands. Gulley took his son, his son-in-law and me up the Zigzag River near Mount Hood a week ago yesterday, and there had been some fine catches made in that stream. But when we got there, the hotter weather was bringing down a mass of snow water, and they told us that the fish would not bite under those circumstances. It has taken more than one experience to convince me of the truth of that proposition, but this trip added to my conviction that it is accurate. Flies, spinners, worms, salmon eggs all failed to land a fish, little or big.

We had a call recently from Charles and Bertha Haworth, and they told us that Mrs. Miles was better than she had been. Lyra had gone over to be with her for a time, and they said she got better at once. My guess is that she will be living with the Danns at Corvallis before much more time passes. But I suspect that you know a lot more about that than I do.

You have possibly heard of the marriage of Jean Michener, daughter of Ardis and Dwight Michener. She married a Nicholson, a brother or perhaps a cousin of the man who is to be Bertha May Pearson's husband. He is the son of a classmate of mine at Earlham College 38 years ago. (If I don't watch out I'll be past forty, when life is supposed to begin.)

Well, now, this is a lot of frivolity for me to write to folks who are in serious business such as yours. I'll commit just one more frivol, and then I'll quit -- I hope.

The sale of All Kinds of Weather has agreeably surprised the publishers. The only thing that publishers know, and they do

** Clarence is far from well. Has failed much lately.*

not hesitate to tell the aspiring author, is, "Poetry won't sell." Well, this book has already sold more copies in the first two months than they thought would sell in six. Of course it would not make me rich if the whole edition were sold out right now, as I have heard more than one southerner say. But it looks as if the publishers would make a bit of money on the venture, and that the author, though he has given away between \$125.00 and \$150.00 worth of these books (maybe I should have stated that as the price rather than the value of them) would come out of it with at least enough to buy a watermelon on which to celebrate. And they say that is considered quite an achievement in literary circles. Usually, they say, an author loses some hundreds of dollars on his first book of verse. (As small as the royalties are on this one, I'd have been money ahead if I had had the book done on a purely commercial basis; but it would not have been so much fun.)

But I half promised to quit, and I am going to more than half fulfil my promise. I am going to quit -- and then start again.

With love and best wishes from both of us to all of you,

Sincerely your friend,

Levi T. Pennington.

The Geneva Newlins,
Centre Quaker International,
10 rue de la Madeleine,
Geneva, Suisse.

I was just wanting to express the hope that my lecture on Quakerism might not be like Einstein's lecture on relativity. When he first propounded his theory, there were only six men in the United States that understood it. One of these attended a lecture on the subject by Einstein -- and after that only five men understood it.