

Levi Pennington

People

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## Pennington to His Sister Hannah, July 27, 1948

Levi T. Pennington

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July 27, 1948.

Dear Sister Hannah:--

Enclosed is the family epistle, and here's a little more "jist fer you."

We wish heartily that your trip to the Grand Traverse region could have been happier, with plenty of health and strenght to see all the folks you wanted to visit. And if you had had a sister-in-law like Cora's two sisters-in-law, that would have been much pleasanter. I like my sisters' attitude in regard to cigarettes, as well as a number of other things. I don't see how I could be permanently happy in the atmosphere there, and I'm not thinking merely of tobacco smoke.

What a lot more satisfaction Park could have if his son Owen -- well, there goes my big mouth, or there it would go if I had not caught it just in time. I do not permit myself to say all the things that I can think of about that fine, courteous, unselfish, filially devoted son of my youngest living brother. It's as I told the Gladstone Park Chautauqua audience when I was the evening speaker after Billie Sunday had spoken in the afternoon. I told them they were not going to enjoy me as they had Billie, because nobody could speak like Billie Sunday, and I would not if I could, for I had quit using such language when I became a Christian.

We shall be glad to read the letters you are getting from LeRoy, and I'll return them promptly.

I see you are right again because you felt that I would not object because you said that Lorena and Harold could not fully enjoy their new porch because of the noise because of the detour because of the brigge being built -- because the old one was washed out because of the high water because of the recent heavy rains was it? Well, I don't care how many because you use because I use because whenever I like because ~~of~~ think I have a perfect right to because I am an American citizen because both my parents were.

That cat that was Ben till the birth of kittens demonstrated the inappropriateness of that name when she became Ben-Hur reminds me of the story -- I'm sure you've heard it "again and agāin and agāin"-- of the little boy whose father took him in to see the twins that had just been added to the family, and asked the boy for suggestions as to their names. After some thought the boy suggested Peter and Repeater. The father said that would be all right if it were a pair of boys, but it wasn't. The boy thought again and suggested Kate and Duplicate. The father said that would be all right if it were a pair of girls, but it was a boy and a girl. This time the boy thought hard, and then suggested Max and Climax.

One of the questions I used to ask my ethics class at the beginning of the course was "is there ever a time when the absolutely right thing cannot be done?" Most of them naively



thought, as I did when I was much, much younger, that always there is the absolutely right thing, if we could only find it. Then I laid before them a situation, which can be duplicated a thousand times over. A and B were married, and had some children, who were entitled to the care of both parents. C and D were also married, and had children, who were entitled to the care of both their parents. But A. and B had a falling out over something that ought never to have separated them, but they did separate, and were divorced. The same thing happened to C and D. Then A married D and C married B, and there were children born to both pairs again. Then B comes to realize that she never should have separated from A, and robbed her children of their own mother's care. But her new husband loves her, and her new children are entitled to the care of both their parents -- now how can absolute right be attained by that woman, to say nothing of all the rest of the complicated mess? Can she do right by her first husband, whose love for her has revived, and by her present husband, who really loves her, and by her children by the first husband, and by the children of her second husband, and by herself, and by society, and the church, and God, and all the rest? By the time the class had meditated on that problem for a while, they were about ready to admit that the consequences of wrong may make absolute right impossible, and that all one can do is to seek the best thing possible under the circumstances.

Playing with the spon on a long time before taking the medicine? Maybe. But as I see it there is no possible way of achieving the absolutely right thing in the case of Johanna. You can't give her mother what she deserves -- there are laws against it. Her father has made it impossible to do what he ought for her, however willing he might be to do it. It is not just to you and Tom that you should have to take the responsibility for her care -- it would be a bit different if you were both thirty or forty years younger and both in good health. It is not right that Johanna should lack the love and guidance that she needs, and that she must get from you and Tom, so far as one can see, if she is to get it. I'd certainly hate to see her put into a Catholic school. May God give you the guidance that you need. It is not an easy decision.

Well, here is the second letter since I started out to write a score of them after the "family epistle." They'll not be as long as this, the rest of them. Some of them are going to be like "off ag'in, on ag'in, gone ag'in, Finnegan."

With love from both of us to all of you,

Mrs. T. S. Baird,  
135 West Bond St.,  
Hastings, Mich.

Rebecca was very glad to get your personal letter to her, and she will answer it some day. She thinks a lot of her two Michigan sisters, and she thinks

of them a lot oftener than when she puts on that lovely wrist watch, which she admires, as do many others who see it.

*Last Tuesday in Portland two boys were born with the same father and the same mother, but they were not twins. How come?*