

Levi Pennington

People

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Levi Pennington to Dr Alexander Purdy, August 11, 1965

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August 11, 1965.

Dear Friend:--

You may be sure that I deeply appreciate your very kind letter of the 4th, with its congratulations and best wishes for my approaching birthday. How I wish that I could deserve all the kind things that are being written to me these days. I am surprised every day to learn of other folks who know about this birthday and who send their greetings. My hearty thanks to you and Jeannette.

Yes, I knew Ellison R. Purdy and Stephen M. Hadley, and held them both in very high regard. But neither of you two have ever given me reason to think less of you than of them. I do not think I have ever missed an opportunity to hear you speak, and you have always given your audience food for thought ^{and} a stimulus to action. I've never known you to need the adage that I found so common among English Friends during my one visit with Rebecca to that land of my ancestors. I do not know where the saying had its origin, but I wish I had always observed it, "If you have nothing to say, you should avoid giving verbal evidence of the fact."

There seems to be a prospect of a considerable gathering of my relatives on the 29th, though aside from my younger daughter and her husband and two granddaughters of the second order (I have three varieties of granddaughters) I have to look more than 2000 miles to see a nearer relative nearer of kin than second cousin. But for this birthday I'm expecting this Portland daughter and her husband and the two girls (aged 24 and 21, and both lovely), my older daughter and her husband from Greene, New York, a favorite niece from Detroit, a nephew and his wife and perhaps their oldest son and his wife from Ann Arbor and a cousin and his wife from Rolling Hills, California. That's all I know of thus far.

And though I have not been "officially" informed, I have learned by the "grapevine" that there is a plan on foot involving the Newberg Friends Church and the college for "open house" at Pennington Hall on the afternoon of the 29th. You'd both be more than welcome at that event.

I have keen recollections of that unofficial gathering of official Friends at the home of President David Edwards, out of which grew the Forward Movement of Friends in America. And I recall the effect that the news of Theodore Roosevelt's death had on all of us. How bitter were some of the things that were said by some very prominent people, in those days when ^{men} were made "war mad, hate crazed, blood drunk" by the destruction of human life and many kinds of value on a scale that had never before been equaled. The pastor of the largest Presbyterian Church in the world declared that all pacifists should be taken out and shot at sunrise; a prominent minister of Portland, who had helped to establish college YMCA organization in many of the colleges in Oregon said in a street meet-
in one of our college towns, "I'd be willing to go to hell myself if I could send a Hun to hell ahead of me"; Billy Sunday said in a sermon in Indianapolis, "I'd rather be a maggot in the heart of a

dead polecat than to be a pacifist." I wish I had never heard the author of some of the finest Christian literature of the first part of the 20th century in an address he gave in Newberg, in which he fairly frothed at the mouth in his damning of all Germans. War is madness at any time, but it seems to me that there is not so much actual emotional insanity these days nor in the Second World War as there was in the First, when a man would kick a dachshund just because it was a German dog, when hymn books had to remove the tune called Germany or give it another name, when West Germantown between Richmond and Knightstown had to be changed in name to Pershing, when hamburg steak and frankfurters had to become Liberty steak and hot dogs, and all that sort of thing.

How did I get started on this sort of threnody or worse? But I don't see how any man who tries to think can be complaisant in this atomic age when for the first time man has the power to wipe the race off the face of the earth. If God had exhausted His resources, that might readily happen. But He is neither dead nor sleeping.

With real gratitude for your very kind letter, and with best wishes always to you both,

Sincerely your friend,

Dr. Alexander C. Purdy,
Box 395,
Buck Hill Falls,
Pennsylvania. 18323.