

Levi Pennington

People

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Levi Pennington To Errol Elliott, September 25, 1965

Levi T. Pennington
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September 25, 1965.

Errol T. Elliott,
27½ N. W. Seventh Street,
Richmond, Indiana. 47375.

Dear Friend:--

It will certainly be good to see you, and I hope you will be my guest if you can stand it. It won't be as it was when Rebecca was here, but such a welcome as I can give you will certainly be yours. And I wish I could share your confidence that I can really be of help to you.

I am trying hard, thus far with only half a day thus far to show for it, to get on with my Rambling Recollections of Ninety Happy Years. If and when I get it done so that it can be typed, I shall hope to have it put into more readable form than it is in now, written as it is partly by hand and partly on this old Remington 12, at intervals covering more than 20 years, with duplications that I hope can be largely weeded out, and with vast areas of time and space omitted because of little interest or profit to anybody.

Yesterday I had a visit from the Acquisition Librarian and the Curator of Special Collections, who'd like to have me turn over the remaining 25 bushels of correspondence bodily to them, duns and order for underwear and explanations why bills could not be paid, and doggerel rhymes to cheer somebody who is ill, accounts of an accident that blackened a left big toe nail, and fruitless attempts to catch fish, and thanks for a new Christmas neck tie, and the time when a couple who spent a week end in our cottage at the coast left some cereal out where the mice could get at it, and the glad word was spread around until the house was so well supplied with mice that we caught 13 of them the first evening we were out there -- and things of even more historical importance than any one of these things, if you can imagine anything more important than they are -- these two gentlemen would like to send a dray or something for the whole 25 bushel boxes. (Why, these boxes are worth 20 cents apiece, without lids, and every one of them has a lid that fits mouse-proof tight.)

The two hardest chapters are those on Oregon Yearly Meeting, hard to know what to write and what not to write. Should I tell of ACS's attacks on Kirby Page, "He is a communist; he admitted in Boise, where he was hooted out of town; he is supported by funds from Moscow", and on the American Friends Service Committee, "The American Friends Service Committee does not have one thing that we can use, it is spiritually rotten, and any young Friend who works with the organization will do so at the peril of his immortal soul". Shall I tell of the long fight against the Five Years Meeting, and his argument that when the local yearly meetings combined to form the Five years Meeting they became guilty of the sin of nicolitanism

-- that's the way he always pronounced it -- and violation of the scriptures which give no warrant for any ecclesiastical organization except the local meeting, and his final assurance that "The Five Years Meeting is a thing which God hates", this from the pen of L.H. This sometime Friend has long since gone to his reward, but his descendants are still alive, and one of his grandsons has no small place in Oregon Yearly Meeting; but ACS is very much alive, has a prominent place in Oregon Yearly Meeting, and sent me a birthday greeting, "To a man with whom I often disagree but still regard as my friend."

If some day I should get finished the first draft of "Rambling Recollections" and should loan you a copy of it, if you carried out the painful task of reading it, perhaps it might suggest the questions you will want to ask me when we meet.

With the hope that you will not be too much disappointed when you seek what help you think I can give you, and with happy anticipations of seeing you some time,,

Sincerely your friend,

I intended to mention what one might call the Light and Shade of Quaker history. Sometimes the terrible wrecks that some Friends, especially some Friends ministers, have made of their lives force themselves on my memory till it seems almost crushing. The man who once served as pastor of the meeting which was my last pastorate and who was once clerk of Indiana Yearly Meeting, who threw away everything that was most worth while and ran away with the young woman who served in their household; the man who was once pastor of the church which you last served as pastor who did the same sort of thing; the man whose address at the Five Years Meeting both Rebecca and I held to be the very best thing of the ~~numerous~~ entire program who fell in the same way -- that last actually made me physically ill for a little while -- how widely ought those things to be known? The David and Bath-Sheba history has been too often repeated among Quaker preachers. I have just had a call from a woman who belongs to a well-known Quaker family of Oregon Yearly Meeting and whose husband is a Friends Minister who is distressed because her sister and her daughter are in a place in California where few people live who know anything about Friends, and who have been embarrassed no end by that move toward a more liberal attitude toward pre-marital sex indulgence -- they do not come far from actually recommending it -- that has its beginnings, I think, in England, but is getting some support in America. And that article in Quaker life which told us that it was our Christian duty to drink alcoholic liquors that we might the more readily reach the ones who do partake of the cup that inebriates. How glad I am that I have known Allen Jay, and Ira C. Johnson, and Joseph O. Binford, and my father, and Isaac Sharpless, and Rufus M. Jones, and Mead A. Kelsey, and Errol T. Elliott, and Andrew Mitchell and a host of others, for whose moral code and conduct never needed an apology.