

Levi Pennington

People

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Levi Pennington To Ellis F Lawrence, November 15, 1941

Levi T. Pennington
George Fox University

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El TeePee, Woods,
R.F.D. Cloverdale, Oregon,
November 15, 1941.

Mr. Ellis F. Lawrence, F.A.I.A.,
918 Failing Building,
Portland, Oregon.

Dear Friend:--

If this coast country should ever suffer from drought, let them send for Rebecca and me. I do not know how many times it has happened, but often enough to make the careless inductive reasoner fall into the error of "post hoc, ergo propter hoc." We came out here in perfect weather late Wednesday. Almost before we got the car unloaded it began to rain, and if there has been five minutes since when it has not been raining, you'd have to prove it by somebody else. I do not know of such a time. It has varied the incessant rain with winds ranging from gentle breezes to gales; twice there have been brilliant displays of lightning and thunder more like Indiana than Oregon; and it has rained hard much of the time and harder part of the time. In front of our house where there is a slight depression, not deep but of considerable area, the water has been standing in a pool that looks like a pond every minute since Wednesday night so far as I know, on ground that is so nearly clear sand that no ordinary rain will make even a moments puddle. The little stream that flows just back of the house here is very ambitious, and thinks it is a small river; while the Big Nestucca is trying to see if it can't get to be a Columbia. If I have conveyed the impression that we have had rain and lots of it since we came out here, then I can quit, with the remark that this is not the first time this sort of thing has happened. This is the second time in succession that we have been here in incessant rain for days and days.

I had hoped that I could at least try for some salmon while here, but though I may be a goose I am not a duck, and unless the weather changes very materially, I'll stay right indoors, as I have been doing since Wednesday. I had 150 letters to get off, and that and work about the place here has kept me busy.

Your good letter of the 11th. came just as we were getting ready to step into the car for this trip. I thought it might be making a date for me to sit for your sculptor friend, and was not a little relieved to learn that I could come right on here.

I knew Prof. Bates when he was on the University faculty. Indeed all my work for the Master's degree was done under two men there, Prof. Howe and Prof. Bates. It was under Prof. Bates that I did my work in Original Verse. There was an interesting thing which occurred about the time I was ready for my oral examination. I had done all my work by correspondence except for a six weeks summer term. I was sure (and still am, by the way) that one course I took was for a credit of three semester hours, but they got it on the record for three term hours. And so I was credited with not enough hours lacking one third of a term hour. I was to make that up in some way, and so I wrote to Prof. Bates, explained the situation to him and asked him if I could make up

this work, one third of an hour's credit, in Original Verse. Dr Bates's reply was interesting. He wrote in substance as follows: "If there could be anything more asinine than that a Master's examination should be held up or called in question for the lack of one third of a term hour of credit, I can't think what it could be. But I suppose we must provide the 'pound of flesh.' If you will write four good stanzas of original verse, or six bad ones, I'll see that the extra third of a credit is got on the records." Well, I wrote six stanzas, and got the credit, took the examination, and got the degree. (I wrote a short story about the examination and what followed, but I've never sold the yarn. But I was later asked to consider a place on the University of Oregon faculty, though what would have happened if I had given it consideration I do not know.)

This is too long a tale to make you know that I'd be personally interested in the writings of Dr. Bates, who gave me some very fine literary criticism during the time I worked under him. And I am not surprised that he gives credit to the Quakers for a large share in the fight for liberty, in America as well as in England. A book that I think you would probably enjoy, since you have become interested in the matter through Dr. Bates, is "Rebel Saints", written by a Dutch woman who was not herself a Quaker, dealing with the lives of some of the early Friends. She came to the office of The American Friends Service Committee in Philadelphia, and asked for a job. (I have this from the executive secretary of the organization, to whom she made application.) He told her that they did not have any job for her, as they were letting people go, not taking them on, as they did not have money enough to pay the salaries of the folks already employed. "Did I say anything about salary?" said the lady. "I wanted to work for this organization." She was evidently a woman of culture and education, and the executive secretary said that they did not have any work for her, even if she would work for nothing. She explained that she was willing to do any kind of work, without pay, and so she was set to work sorting and fixing up old clothes that were being collected for Russian famine relief or something of the sort. She worked for nothing a while; then they paid her half wages; then they saw that she was too valuable for the kind of work she was doing and brought her into the office on salary; and they learned that what she was there for primarily was that she might have access to the two best Quaker libraries in America if not in the world, one at Haverford College and the other over in "Jersey." It was out of this study that she secured the material for her book, "Rebel Saints."

Some of the things I remember in her preface (I cannot quote them exactly) were these: "Most people think that the lives of the Quakers have been as drab as their clothing. Compared with these early Friends, the I.W.W. in the Kansas wheat fields live a quiet and sheltered life." "They (the early Quakers) held that the fact that an evil had always existed was proof that it had existed quite long enough." "They gave government a liberal education in minding its own business." (The immediate reference was to government interference in matters of religion and conscience.)

Well, that will give you a taste of the quality of the book. I do not have a copy of it here, and I do not know that I have a copy at home, but I know there is one in the college library. I shall be glad to get a copy into your hands in some way if you think you would care to read it.

But I'd better end this letter, or you'll spend all your extra time for a month getting it read. The rain is definitely slacking up, and it looks as if there might be a possibility for some fishing Monday. We shall be going back Tuesday, to get ready for the Rooseveltian Thanksgiving day, when we shall have two German refugees as guests, a man and his wife now on the Pacific College faculty, who had fine positions in Germany till the Nazi purge. She has Jewish blood, and of course she had to go; and he was given his choice between giving up his wife and holding his job or giving up his job and keeping his wife. They lived in Germany from hand to mouth till 1939, when they got to England, coming to America last year.

Well, I believe I have scattered so many words about that I have not said in so many words that I shall be glad and grateful if I can read Dr. Bates's book. I am sure that he can make a case for the proposition that proportionally Massachusetts got too much credit and Pennsylvania too little for our American heritage.

It has always seemed a strange thing to me, ever since the action of the state higher education authorities to avoid duplication of courses at the university and the state college, that a man could get more Chemistry, for instance, at Pacific College than at the university. The whole problem is a bit too complicated for an outsider to understand; and perhaps there is too much prejudice on the two campuses for folks there to understand fully. At the inauguration of President Boyer I said to some one, and I think it was President Boyer, "I wish that some one who has really been on the inside of all the controversy between the two big state educational institutions would write the whole thing up so that those of us on the outside could really understand it." He was silent for a moment, and then he said, "It would make an interesting story; and it could be written up as high tragedy or farce comedy, or anything between." There is an old scriptural verse which says, "Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." It is stating the matter conservatively to say that this is not the case always in Oregon state higher education. When the head of a school in one of the two big institutions can stand up and demand the resignation of the state board, and get it; can demand the resignation of the chancellor and still hold his job; not the mention things that have happened since the days of one Dr. (?) W. J. Kerr, -- well, all has not been "sweetness and light."

If educational matters could be settled, early enough, on a basis of real statesmanship, before they become involved in local, ecclesiastical and political issues, we'd save millions of money and no end of headaches, heartaches and pains in the neck. I

President of the

might mess it up worse than ever, but if I could go back from 50 to 75 years, I'd have the State University in one place, and it would be a real university, with classics, the social sciences, the natural sciences, the arts and all the rest in one place and under one management. This would not prevent the location of special schools, especially graduate schools like medicine, law, etc., from being located where they could do their work best. But it would prevent, as it seems to me, the constant rivalry, sometimes bitter, between two campuses.

But denominational college education has nothing to boast about in such matters. When I came to Oregon there were denominational Protestant colleges at Dallas, Philomath, Albany, Salem, Forest Grove, McMinnville and Newberg -- if ^{you} omitted any, please fill in the names. Well, the thing they should have done, if there had been enough wisdom, statesmanship, horse sense or whatever was required, was (in my poor judgment now) to organize a great Christian university in Portland, for instance, with a great central college of arts and sciences to which all would contribute on some sort of equitable basis (Chemistry is no more Methodist than Baptist, and Greek is not denominational, while the truths of mathematics have no direct relationship to transubstantiation, consubstantiation, the general view of Protestant churches nor the unorthodox view of the Quakers) while each denomination maintained its own identity in the schools that taught what that denomination wished especially to emphasize. Something on the order of the Selly Oak colleges at Birmingham, England -- (say, Levi, you promised more than a full page back to subside, desist, shut up, and it is high time you did it.)

Well, I'm doing it.

Sincerely your friend,

P.S. I ought to answer your last inquiry. I am glad to tell you that both Rebecca and myself are much better, practically back to what is normal for us.