

Levi Pennington

People

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Levi Pennington To William H Giersbach, January 6, 1942

Levi T. Pennington
George Fox University

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January 6, 1942.

Master William Hastings Giersbach,
c/o President's Office,
Pacific University,
Forest Grove, Oregon.

Dear Master Giersbach: --

The news of your arrival reached me some days ago, and I am sure you would not hold any animosity over my delay in getting this letter started to you if you could see the pile of letters on my desk that have been waiting for answer, some for weeks.

Let me congratulate you on your safe arrival, and wish you every success in the work which I hope you will engage in for the next seven or eight decades.

You have not chosen what some would call a propitious time for your discovery of America. There are terrible things going on in these days. Men are being slaughtered by the million, as their leaders call on high names for their support in the terrible work in which they are engaged. Such fine words as Civilization, Liberty, Patriotism, Religion, Christianity, and others that represent great and noble ideals are used to justify the slaughter of millions of men of other races and other countries. Nations have forsaken every ethical ideal, as it seems to Americans these days. Solemn pledges, international treaties, the basic codes of honor and honesty seem to have been disregarded and utterly discarded by some of the powers both east and west. A great oriental nation has attacked America while her representatives were at the national capital of the United States ostensibly seeking for a peaceful settlement of differences. Not only war but famine and pestilence are abroad in the world, and hate is dominant in the world in these days when you have begun your career among men.

And yet I congratulate you on your arrival, at the time and place where you have made your advent into the world. You have many advantages, and you will have, I devoutly hope, many opportunities. As to your advantages, you have come into the world in the best state and the best country on earth, Oregon, U.S.A. No country in the world's history has been blest with such opportunities and such prosperity as has been ours. And in addition to your advantages from without, there are the advantages that are yours because of your heredity and your immediate environment. Born of such parents as yours are, with culture and morality and religion as your birthrights, you are surely to be congratulated.

As to your opportunities, and the responsibilities commensurate with them that will be yours in the future, none of us is wise enough to see fully and clearly, but any of us can see enough to realize that you will have plenty of good work to do. For with all the progress that has been made by the generations that have preceded you, we have made a mess of things in many ways. The progress of the spirit has not kept

pace with material advancement. We produce abundantly in some parts of the earth, while in other parts of the earth there is dirth, starvation; and even in the countries that are richest there is dire poverty. We can destroy food while other nations starve; we can have millionaires and paupers being made at the same time. And as a result of unjust differences there is hostility even among men and classes under the same government. And there are race hatreds, class hatreds, national hatreds. And we still settle international differences by destroying the lives of millions of men and women and little children like yourself. We still take profit in our governments from the sale of poisons and from gambling and other evils.

These and a host of other wrongs are awaiting for you and your generation to right. May you, as you grow in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and men, develop with others of your generation the wisdom, the courage, the steadfastness and the ultimate power to build a far better world than that into which you came so near Christmas that your birthday and that of the Prince of Peace are only two days apart.

Perhaps you will not understand all that I have said to you in this letter. Perhaps it was folly for me to write it. But whether you ever read these words or not, I trust that you may fulfil my hopes for you, long after I am gone.

With congratulations to you and to your parents and to the world of the future to which I am sure you will give good service, I am

Sincerely your friend,

Levi T. Pennington.