

Levi Pennington

People

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Levi Pennington to Rebecca in Paradise, 1964

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TO REBECCA IN PARADISE

My Darling:--

I'm sitting alone in the house that for so many years you made a happy home, and lonely as I never was for a moment during more than fifty five years when you were by my side, even if there was the width of a continent between us.

You knew all those years that I loved you as completely as a man can love a woman. You know the words I used, "The love of all of me for all of you." And I knew, though I never could understand it, that you loved me with your whole being, and that love was the sweetest human thing that the world can give.

We were never rich in what the world calls wealth, and I could never provide for you half the things that my love prompted. Indeed for nearly all the years that we lived one life together there was financial need, sometime hardship; but we were always rich in love, and that love grew richer and dearer as we approached and passed our Golden Wedding, and it became increasingly clear that I could not have the delight of your companionship much longer.

And when the end came to your earth life, I started on the lonely road that I have now traveled for more than three years and a half. You were my joy, my comfort, my inspiration, the best part of my life. If I have ever done work worth while in the world, you shared it -- it could not have been done without your help. And if I have written anything worth while, you were in it as its subject or its inspiration.

It was really a heart cry when I wrote

LONELY

Since you have gone away
I am lone, dear, and sad without you.
Since you have gone away
Earth seems empty and dead to me.
Though you have gone away
Memory longingly lingers about you.
I am so lonely, so lonely, dear,
Since you have gone away.

And that other that I called

ROSES IN DECEMBER

And you are gone, my darling.
I cannot hold your hand;
I cannot kiss your dear, sweet lips;
I do not understand
Why God should take you from me;
I need you, need you so!
And did He need you, too, my dear,
And so you had to go?

I finished my second book of verse, as I knew you would

want me to do. And I am trying to face life as bravely as I can. I wish I had more of the kind of courage that was yours. But more than half of my heart lies buried there in that sacred place looking toward the sunrise.

What a wealth of memories I have of our life and love together. It is a blessed thing to be able to remember how dearly we loved each other, and how we delighted in so many things together. But with every sweet memory comes the realization that you are gone and we can never enjoy those things together again. I cannot look at the beauty of the flowering peach tree in the south yard without the pang of being alone and not able to share it with you. And so it is with every beautiful scene, every beautiful piece of music, all the beauty of every kind that we shared so long.

I try to be courageous as I know you would have been if my earthly life had ended first. In spite of the baffling sense of futility, I look ahead and try to make plans for the on-coming tomorrows. Two years ago I planted a Gravenstein apple tree, though I do not expect to eat the fruit of it, though I may. I have planted new roses, I have two new ones this year, but there is always the devastating thought that no matter how beautiful may be the roses that bloom from these and other plants of the varieties that you loved, Peace and Sutter's Gold and Crimson Glory and all the other two score varieties, I can never take the first lovely rose in and give it to you. I have planted a dozen gladiolus bulbs. I cannot show them to you, but I can take them to the hospital where the nurses loved you as they *did* so dearly -- you were the loveliest patient -- nobody could ever *be* more patient and more appreciative than you were.

It would be unbelievable to anybody who had not had the kind of love that blessed our lives to know how everything reminds me of you and of the happy past with you. Big things and little things.

I come back after months of absence to the house that was the sweetest place on earth because you were there in other years, and there is nobody to meet me. I sit down to the table, and the face that grew dearer with every passing year is not smiling at me -- your smile, darling, was the sweetest thing on earth. I dream of you, and wake to the sad knowlege that it was only a dream.

Sometimes my memories bring a wave of regret. How could I ever have been impatient at your fears in riding in an auto when I knew that you would face black death, as you faced influenza that was killing people by the thousand, without a tremor and only with care for me and for Mary and Bertha May? When I use the hand rail in coming up the steps from the garage, I wonder why I did not know what a help it would be to you -- I could have provided that so that you could have had more use of it than you had. When I came home from a trip in which you were deeply interested, how could I have wanted to rest a while before I told you the things you were eager to know?

But how completely all my faults and failings were forgiven. And how sweet, even sweeter than the long years before, were our last years together. I should be very grateful, and I am.