March 15th/99

Dawson City
Yukon
Canada

Dear Albert.

I was very glad to get your letter even if it was a little behind time; the one you wrote Oct 22nd, I received a week ago. Up to the beginning of this year, we had a wretchedly poor mail service, no one knew when there would be any mail arriveng and very little did reach here till about a month ago. The Canadian and American governments had let the contracts for carrying the Yukon mail to a man named Richardson, who must have been a regular dummy at the business, for he was making no headway at all; however, it has been taken from him, and the North West Mounted Police have taken charge of the mail-bags and are rushing it in pretty lively now; there is such a large quantity in Post Office now, that they cannot sort it quick enough to have it all distributed for several weeks, although they have a large number of clerks and close

they close the R.O. every day, for sorting. Just fancy, there was 20 tons of mail-matter scattered along the Yukon at various places, between Dawson and Skagway – at one time. I have had one letter from our Jim, dated Oct 17th and one from Bob Ward, and another from father, got them all last week. I have had no late news, in fact it is very little news we get from the outside, now and again we hear scraps about the wars and rumors of war. Bob Ward says he is going to tell me all about his trip, in his next. I have already written to him. I have been greatly disappointed about the failure of the mail carrying business, and have already sent word home how it occurred. I saw a Daily Graphic a while ago, which had a portion of an article about the Stikeen-Teslin trail to the Yukon; that famous London paper had a special correspondent over that route, who wrote up some interesting and amusing notes and made some good sketches by the way. I wish that you or our Will could get the whole series and keep them till I could see them, for I should recognize everything that is mentioned almost. Some of pictures are very comic. I would not be at all surprised if he had me down for something, for I came across him often

on the trail; he was always writing and sketching and taking snap-shots.
I felt myself thrilled with interest when you mentioned Van Bien and the Broken Melody, for I have heard and read a great deal about that great 'celloist, and can well imagine the treat. I often wish I could have a practise with you once in awhile. If you were shut up in a place like this for a year, without your music, you would know how to appreciate the chances you now have of listening to the masters. This is almost as bad as starvation; but I have sent out for my 'cello, to get here by the first through boat after the breakup of the Yukon ice; it will be a great comfort to me, if I dont use it for earning money. I could have had good pay with it, if I had brought it last summer. Oh what a big mistake that was.
The weather is already getting quite mild and the days lengthening out; about the first of May we'll have a grand sight, when the ice breaks and piles up in huge masses with a noise like thunder, then drifts away down to the Bering Sea. A good many steamboats were caught in the middle of the river, by the ice and frozen fast, last fall; they will all

be wrecked and carried away as the ice goes down the river, besides hundreds of barges and small boats. I am getting a little work to do now again, but have only just about made a living since I came here. However there will be surely lots of work at good pay during the spring clean up in the mines and I hope to do well yet before leaving this country. A good many people are still going out over the ice, and I expect there will be a general exodus after the cleanup, that will relieve the overcrowded state of the camp, and perhaps there will yet be a chance to get hold of a good claim.

I am glad to hear that Dorothy is coming on so well, when you have the chance give them my best respects. I think this is all at present; but I wish you all good luck and good health, especially father. I hope to see him next year. I shall write to him and Martha Ann very soon; with love to all. From Your affectionate brother

Tom