Sunday Aug 7th/98 Dawson City
Yukon
Canada

Dear father

I have reached Klondike at last after struggling for 5 long months over the Stickeen-Teslin trail which all Canadians said was so badly fooled in my life as when I chose this route to reach Klondike. You will remember how hopeful I spoke of it, for I firmly believed what the Canadian official guide said about it but I found that the guide was false from beginning to end; they did not know anything whatever about the country we passed through it was literally unexplored country. Perhaps you will have read something about the trail and what we had to go through. When we came down into the Yukon we found the people who came over the other trail knew all about our difficulties;

could always tell us "Sluckers pilgrims"
by the emptiness of our boats, smallness
of our outfits and the state of dilapidation
that we were in for we were forced to
have lots of stuff on the trail, had eaten
up or lost nearly all our grub and what
we had left was seaweed stews and
[illegible] and tow. It was generally conceded that
those who came through by Teslin con-
stituted anything very fine hard coins
through out of the thousands who
started and it notice that a good many
[illegible] came out from England
and Scotland, especially Lancashire and
Yorkshire. Hundred of people left their
outfits on the trail and came right back
[illegible] on to Teslin with what I could
hung, having already sent my provisions
[illegible] but that was nearly all lost
[illegible] boat upsetting on the Teslin
[illegible] and I had just one 50 lb sack of

flour, 40 lbs of beans 10 lb of bacon and 2 or 3 lbs of dried onions and fruit left I joined two other young lads who had a boat partially built, but they had no grub and were almost reduced to starvation. I shared my provisions with them and another lad from the North of Ireland. By the time we got the boat finished we had not much food left but we went on short rations and luckily we caught some fish and got some moose meat from Indians. We started for Klondike however not knowing how long it would take us or what we would have to encounter, for no one knew anything about the Mountaineers. We left Teslin on a Friday evening and rowed down the lake all night and made good time the first day then we got head winds and our progress was delayed; it took us over 3 days to reach the end of Teslin Lake 112 miles long. About a week out from Teslin our

grub gave out, but we reached Ft Selkirk with one mess of beans, we bought a little dob of food here but pulled into Dawson without a bite to eat I had 8 dollars left, which is about as much as 8 pence here; everything is high but not so high as at Teslin. At one time flour, sugar, beans, oatmeal, rice and such like cost 1 dollar per lb, and bacon 1 dollar 25 cents, about 5 shillings. We reached Dawson over a week ago running from Teslin City 650 miles in 11 days. The scenery was beautiful and we should have enjoyed the voyage if we could have made it at leisure, but we had to work hard to get down to the food supply. It has been a disastrous trip to all who came over the Stickeen route, it has cost me over 600 dollars and I lost 6 months time worked hard and landed here no rags, hungry and dead broke, some people have lost more and a few have lost their lives.

I arrived here too[5] late to sell my mosquito salve the mosquitoes have disappeared, so I'll have to wait till next spring to sell what I brought with me. The people who came over the Chilcoot and White Passes, that is by Dyea and Skagway and down the Yukon were the lucky ones, they got their outfits transported to the head of navigation on the Yukon for 7 cents per lb; and it only took them 10 or 12 days to come from the salt water. You may imagine what a sick lot of people we were when we found out the difference between our route and theirs, but there is one consolation for us, as I have said before and every body says the same, we who have stood the test of the Stickeen-Teslin trail can stand any kind of hardships of the country and are bound to come out on top in the end. Thousands of men turned back from Glenora and Telegraph Creek on the Stickeen, faint-hearted and lucky for them; thousands more turned back and sold their outfits for next to nothing when they reached Dyea and Skagway

thousands more made an attempt at the Passes and retraced their steps leaving their outfits; while many more thousands who got in to Dawson quit easily by boats, barges and steamboats down the river, also up the river in large steamboats; got (cold feet) or homesickness; stayed a day or two some stayed a many weeks, then in bitterness more and left the Klondike behind and they were glad to pay 150 to 200 dollars to get out. that is the price of a passage out in the steamboats, of those who came in by Stickeen-Teslin, I only know of one man who has gone back home; they all say now they have stood this much they will not leave the country till they get some return for their trouble. When first came here, there was a population in the vicinity of Dawson of close on to 40,000, and a gloomier looking lot of men I never saw; the long main street was fairly packed with men lounging up and down and wearing faces as long as so many fiddles, as the saying goes

They mostly all came into the country intending to start prospecting and take up claims, but they are a sorry lot of prospectors some of them have made the round of the mines in a few days and because they did not stumble over some gold or nobody told them where there was a likely place to dig they came back with bad reports of the country and the thousands of idle men in town have not the heart to go and see for themselves after that. They are supposed to be looking for work while they are in town, but of course there isn't work for 1 in 100 of them unless they go out and work for themselves. I have had a few days work already and hope to soon be in good circumstances again. I am going to start in the morning — this is the 9th of Aug — and make the round of the mines in the best paying creeks Bonanza, Eldorado, Hunker and others to find out what I can of them and to try and start a little business. I'll write again soon and tell what it is and what success I meet with, and I'll be able to tell you something

about the mines. Perhaps a little description of Dawson, and the state of things existing here will interest you.
The Yukon river is 1/2 a mile wide here and flows pretty swift in a northerly direction and the Klondike river runs into it from the East. Dawson City is situated at the mouth of the Klondike on the north bank and covers a triangle shaped stretch of level ground about a mile in length and 1/3 mile at the widest; but it also extends up the mountain behind and even over on top of it, the hillside is just spotted white with tents; the river front is deeply lined with craft of all kinds with people living in tents erected on a good many, the bars and shore of river is crowded with more tents; but the flat land is made into a townsite and divided into lots and here all the business houses, theatres, saloons dancing halls, gambling halls, public buildings and private residences, warehouses, sawmills and such like are located. There are 5 sawmills, any quantity of joiners and builders

blacksmiths and other artisans, 2 newspaper and printing offices, two hospitals, Mining Exchange and all kinds of brokers auctioneers legal men etc, about 70 doctors and the country is governed or rather was governed in many respects by the North West Mounted Police and the officers at their head

Klondike City occupies a narrow strip of level land on the South side the Klondike river mouth 3 islands and both banks of the Klondike for a mile up are thickly populated. At one time the Yukon must have flowed where the city now stands; the ground is nearly all a 2 ft thickness of moss and muck or bog right underneath is solid ice & frozen ground the hillside is the same, and now during the hot summer this thows out a great deal making the land into a swamp, so you may know that it isn't conducive to good health. Some streets have boarded sidewalks but the middle is all mud and pools of water, these are receptacles for all kinds of rubbish The government has done no work towards draining the land, nor taken any kind of sanitary precautions, and the place is

in a fearful state of filth. There is much sickness due to this and the malaria of decayed vegetation floating around in the stagnant pools. There are a number of springs in the hills of icy cold water; some people drink a good deal of this water which also contains a quantity of decomposed vegetation and I think that is what causes so much diarrhea and the like. There has been a few deaths from typhoid fever and there are many other cases of typhoid all over the town; but it is a miracle that there isn't a great epidemic here considering the state of things. I have had good health all along up to the present. The weather has been beautiful on the whole and I have rather enjoyed the trip at times. This are the summer is a strange experience and I guess the winter months will be equally so; for over 3 months we have had continuous daylight; the sun makes a circle in the heavens and disappears each day for a very short time only. However we are

beginning to get a longer twilight now and the evenings are getting quite cold so everyone who intends to winter here are making preparations to have winter quarters the city of tents will soon disappear, hundreds of log buildings of all sizes are going up, big rafts of logs for building and dry logs for fuel are being floated into town every day, and the sawmills are working night and day. The electric light Co has commenced operations, so it is likely that the principle parts of the town will be well lighted during the winter

I am well satisfied with the prospects of the country and hope to get some good out of it; if only I had a little capital now I could use it to good advantage, it was very unfortunate for me that I came by the steamer if I had got here in time I would have been all right now, but it is no use crying over spilt milk. I'll make up for it if I had my cells here I could make good wages. I have written to my friend in Victoria to send it up to me, but I am not sure if it can be got here before the ice closes navigation

I cannot tell how soon this should reach you or how soon I may get one from you for we are very poorly served in mail matter There was only one mail came to Sealen in 6 months and only 2 or 3 times to Dawson this season although there are steamboats running all the time right up to Lake a short distance only from there. When it gets here, it is not distributed for a week after. This is to give the mounted police and officials time to receive bribes from those who are anxious enough to pay it for their mail

I will now conclude hoping that this will reach you soon. I'll try to send it out by some private or dispatch for the government is not to be trusted I will write again soon. I hope you are all in good health Be sure to collect all news you can and send it to me quick, With kind regards to all friends and love to all at home

I remain your affectionate son

Tom