June 19th / 95

Barkerville
Cariboo
British Columbia

Dear father

I am sorry I cannot send you any very good news as yet, for we have not been able to obtain any regular employment so far. The reason that work is so late in starting up, is owing to the lateness of the season. The old timers say they have never known such a backward season. The mountains around Barkerville are still covered with snow, and Whittier's Co's (Cariboo Gold Mining) cannot commence their huge scheme till it goes off. When I came up here first time, — three months ago — people said then, there would be lots of work in two or three weeks, and they have told that tale ever since; but I think it cannot be long before they commence now. The contract for hauling up the hydraulic plant, from Ashcroft, has been let, and they have to begin at once. Since our Jim wrote to you, John Holt has come up to Barkerville and is staying with us in our cabin. He has been amongst the mountains at the head of Horsefly River, all winter. He was out with Jim Shepherds mining partner, Jack Gordon, trapping fur animals. They got over 70 marten, and a few lynx, mink, weasels, and wolverine. From the account he gives us of his trapping expedition he must have seen some very interesting sights, I almost envied him his trip.

I suppose you got our Jim's letter, telling of the accident by which we were burnt out of our house, that was a great misfortune to us, for we lost almost everything. In fact our Jim and Tom Fletcher could not save their coats and hats. We had just got comfortably fixed, and

had just bought a good stock of provisions, which were also destroyed.
The most serious loss by the fire, was a violoncello which had been
lent to me by Mr Bowron, the Gold Commissioner for Cariboo.
I daresay you will remember me saying what a stir there was when
I came up here at first, by my 'cello playing. That was the instrument
that was burnt up. It was not a nice looking instrument, and had
had some rough usage, having been kept in a stable for some years;
but it had a beautiful tone, so mellow and sweet, I think I never
heard one as good. I used to tell our Jim and Tom Fletcher how
I wished it was my own. There was no one in Barkerville could
play it properly, and only one or two people had heard a 'cello played,
they thought it was just an instrument for vamping, or a bass as
they called it. I have since got my own instrument up from Quesnelle,
and we are getting up a small band, and we practise in Mr Bowron's
drawing room. Miss Bowron plays the piano, Willie Bowron violin,
Mr Champion, (Surveyor) mandolin. Mr Phelps (schoolmaster) guitar,
and myself, on the 'cello. I am still giving lessons to Dr Tunstall, violin.
The next greatest loss sustained by the fire, I think, was my diary or
log-book. I had about half-filled a good sized book with what I
considered interesting matter. ~~I had~~ I had tried to describe more
fully the scenery of this wild, grand country, in its various aspects.
I had also made a good collection of anecdotes told by various people
on all kinds of subjects; when I heard anyone tell a good story I
used to put down in my book. It is impossible for me to remember
every thing I had written, but I intend to make another start some time,
and collect as much as I can of my lost diary.
The cabin we now occupy is situated a few hundred yards up Conchlins
Gulch, which runs into William's Creek just opposite Barkerville.
We have got very comfortably fixed again, and able to keep ourselves
going pretty easily. Tom Fletcher was working 15 days at one time in
ground sluicing, ~~running~~ but had to quit on account of the scarcity
of water. He was getting 2 x ½ dollars a day. I have been getting a few
days in all the time, at $3 and $3.50 a day and board.
Our Jim has only worked one day, 16 hours for 5 dollars.

Our Jim is having such a good time, and living so well, he is getting quite stout. The change has improved both him and Tom Fletcher, though they have only been out a little over two months.

About two weeks ago I had a telegram from Jimmie Shepherd saying our Jim and Fletcher's luggage had arrived in Dunnella, so our Jim started out next morning to fetch more blankets, clothing, etc. to replace those which were burnt up. He also sent my 'cello, and a violin, music, and a few Church Monthlies. He also brought up with him the book which Mr. and Mrs. Adamson presented to me. I take this opportunity to thank them for their beautiful present and kind wishes. I have already read a large portion of the book, and am really delighted with it.

You know that I always was a lover of the beautiful in nature, so this book will be a pleasant companion to me, and will bring me into closer contact, and help me to appreciate more fully all the wonderful and beautiful things which were sent to benefit and brighten our lives, — the bountiful Gift of our Creator.

It will give me great pleasure to collect specimens of plant and insect life, for Mrs. Adamson, and I also asked the other boys to pick up any new species they may come across. I have already got a few ferns and flowers, but it is rather too early yet, the flowers are just beginning to bloom. Where we are now, up among the mountains, the summer comes around very late and so short; but I believe it is a great place for flowers, butterflies, etc.

June 21st.

Since I wrote the first part of this letter, we have had another piece of bad luck. On Wednesday evening we went for a walk up to Richfield, and looked in at the Court-house & Record Office, where the pre-emption records are posted up. Amongst the new records was one posted by a Sydney Williams, recording 320 acres at 4 mile Creek, near Dunnella — for agricultural purposes. Now that is the very same ranche that we [illegible] building

our hopes on, and which we intended to take up in the fall, when we expected to have enough money to make a start. I went to Mr Bowron, the Commissioner, to see about it, and he gave me all the particulars. He said that Mr Williams was up in Barkerville 2 weeks ago. (I saw him at the time, but did not know who he was) He came up with three other gentlemen, all capitalists, who have since taken up mining claims. Mr Williams is a surveyor, who evidently knows what he is about. I think he has taken up the land as a speculation. I dont suppose he will farm the land himself. He has drawn up maps, and plans, etc. of the place, in fine style. Mr Bowron shewed them to me. I think there is still about 320 acres left; but it is in two pieces, 160 acres at each end of the flat, and Mr Williams has all the best land. We had thought to get the whole lot; and we feel now as if we had let a small fortune slip through our fingers. This is the second good chance I have missed, for if you will look through my diary, you will read of another place that I had chosen as a good spot for a ranch, namely. - Beaver Lake Valley. That land has also been taken up. Three or four men have divided the valley amongst them. Well! I suppose we'll have to make the best of it, and look out for a fresh place. I'm in half-mind to go westward a little farther, between here and the Pacific, say to Bute Inlet. Somehow, I fancy there must be plenty of good meadow-land to be found yet. I have heard some good reports of the country in the vicinity of Bear Lake, between 20 or 30 miles from here. I may take a trip there in a few days.

Two survey parties have started out to survey the country for the projected British Pacific Railway, which is intended to come through Cariboo, Chilcoten, and some think Bute Inlet. I shall very likely stay in Barkerville all next winter, but then we dont know what may turn up. Anyhow Mr Bowron wishes me to stay, and says he will try to get me a permanent job. He says they cannot allow me to leave Barkerville now, on account of my place in the land.