Jan 3rd 1898

Barkerville

Cariboo

B. C.

Dear father

I hope this New Year will bring you good health and happiness. Our Christmas and New Year festivities passed off very pleasantly. A grand Christmas tree was provided for the children, and dinners, dances, a concert and play for the older folks; everybody was in the best spirits, shaking hands and wishing all sorts of kind things for each other. Of course I was strongly reminded of home and was thinking about you a good deal. The weather is very mild here, for this time of the year.
I received your letter of Nov 14th and the one from Leah Barker of which I am quite proud. I have already sent her a few lines, also a pretty picture. You ought to get one like it with your paper, the Montreal Star. I have paid for another year for you and would like to know if you get it; but I shall be away before I could get an answer from you. My work has been so easy for the last six months that I am half sorry to give it up. I have only two patients now and they are no trouble, merely boarders, too old to work, so I have lots of spare time and lately I have been learning the to play the bagpipes; my teacher is an old Scotchman named Dandy McArthur from Aberdeen, you will know what he is like, for he is the very picture of yourself. The first time Tommie Fletcher saw him, he pointed him out to me, saying; see, there is father. Tommie Lately I have been thinking a good deal over the many notions and schemes I have had since coming to the country; they have all fallen through so far, consequently I feel rather cheap about it; still there is a little satisfaction in knowing that other people have carried some of the plans, shewing there was reason

in them. My first idea was to start farming in Beaver Lake Valley; that land is all occupied now; then I took quite a fancy for Northern Chilcoten; all the best portions of that country is settled, and new pre-emption notices are being published all the time. At one time I had a notion to go to Bute Inlet or Bella Coola both places are now thriving settlements, and have good pack and cattle trails into Chilcoten, and a steamboat service between the ~~ot~~ coast cities. Within the last two years Bella Coola has been settled by a colony of 300 Norwegians, they have a church, post office, stores, sawmill, and well stocked farms; some of them follow trapping, ~~ot~~ or trade with Indians for furs, others are fishermen, catching and canning salmon. After that, Jim Shepherd and I proposed to preempte some land near Quesnelle, we delayed too long and some one else got in ahead of us. Then we recorded the land at Bear Lake and got the papers for it too, and abandoned it; but that wasn't my fault. I was anxious to keep it; but it was too lonesome for our jim and I mine. I could have made myself content, for there is a chance to do something and make a little money the year round besides building up a fine stockranche at the same time. Since we was out there, there have been several parties trapping and fishing and all made money. I was talking with a man named Moxley last week, who was out there trapping all last winter and he made $1100 on his winters catch, then he made something by fishing in the spring, during the summer he worked in the mines, he went out again in the fall to set his round of traps and took a partner with him; but came into town to spend the Christmas and New Year. Asked how they were making out this time, he says they are keeping the pot aboiling. There is a little swamp lake out there, where large flocks of geese go to breed, he thinks he will go there next summer, find the nests and clip the young ones wings, let them remain till near winter, then fetch them in. The man that tried to persuade us that the land was no good has taken up a portion of it himself, and Willie Bowron has got another

part of it. Neither of them will do any work on the land, they are holding it for a speculation, and on a chance that the railway will come through there, which I think will be built before long. I have sent our Will a map of B.C. and Yukon, shewing the goldfields of Klondike, Cassiar, Omenica, and Cariboo, also the line of proposed railway from Bute Inlet through Chilcoten and Cariboo I think there is a great prosperous future in store for the whole of B.C; Yukon and Alaska. Klondike is the centre of attraction now, and that is the place for me; there will not be prizes for everyone, but I am willing to take chances. We have had some very bad reports from there about the scarcity of food, candles, lamp oil, and the lack of cabins to ~~winter~~ shelter the people; they have been too eager after the gold to prepare for the winter. Candles are selling at $1. 25 each, over 5/- apiece. I will send some more papers, but you must not be alarmed at the news, the conditions will be altered altogether very soon. One or two letters have reached here from Dawson, one of the six men who left Barkerville last August, writes very gloomily of the prospects for the winter, and no wonder; if they have lots of grub themselves, they will have to share it with those who have none. I am lucky I didn't go with that crowd. After this winter there will be no danger of famine; trails, wagon roads, railways, tramways, ocean and river steamboats are being built to convey passengers and provisions to the whole Yukon. Our Jim is staying on the ranche with Tommie and Jack Holt, he says he cannot get work down there this winter, but has enough provisions to see him through till spring. I have been trying to get him a job around here, but most of the mines have closed down for awhile, one man says he may be able to give him work before long If I was in his place, I couldn't be content to remain idle all winter, I think I would find something to do somewhere; but he will pull through.

I have just given in my resignation and will finish my duties here the first week in February. I have got for one partner a young Canadian named Tommie Jones. We shall leave here together for Vancouver and Victoria, where we expect to join others. We shall only stay 1 or 2 days in Dawson. I have concluded not to take a camera, as there are so many professional photographers, newspaper correspondents, and tourists taking them that it will be easy to obtain views, and I shall save the expense and trouble of packing them at around; but I shall certainly take notes of the country and try to get a lot pictures too.

I spoke rather hastily in my last letter to you, about the education of children; I thought of it as soon as I had posted the letter; now I want to take it back, that is, in regard to the drawing lessons; but I think there is room for improvment in the manner of teaching the subject, so that the children could take advantage of it afterwards. Of course I am speaking on what I remember of my own schooldays; but it may be a good deal better now.

Thursday Dec 6th

We have just received new papers, with lot of news from Dawson and the points on the different routes; the famine will not be so bad as expected. All those without provisions were sent down the river to Ft Yukon, and hundreds of others are coming out to the coast over the trails. The Mounted Police are getting great praise for the way they govern the country.

Will write again soon.

Your affectionate son

Tom