Barkerville, B. C., August 1895

Dear father

We are still having a run of bad luck; everything seems to be turning against us. Here we have been in Barkerville ever since spring came in, waiting for the work to start up, all for nothing. Our Jim and Johnnie Holt have had no work all summer. Tommie Fletcher had two weeks work in the spring, that was all he had till about a month ago, when he went to the Forks of Lacouelle where he has been working ever since. I have done very well myself, having had work nearly all along, sometimes at very good wages: 3 and 3½ dollars a day and board. I am now working at a sawmill, an Jack o' Clubs Lake, which is about 7 miles and a half from Barkerville, on the Cariboo Rd. I am well on for my second month here now. I am the cook, etc., and help in the mill in spare time, at 35 dollars a month & board. When we came up here in the spring we expected having a good, all summer, and thought to earn lots of money. Whittier, the manager of the Cariboo Gold-fields Co, had made it well known, that he would find work for all the men who came up, and pay good wages, and that he would hire no Chinamen. Of course that brought quite a crowd of men into Barkerville, and things began to look lively, every body thought it would be a good season and plenty of money flowing, no one doubted but that there would be work for all. So I sent for our Jim and Tommie Fletcher to come

an strength of it; and in a while after John Holt took a trip up here to see how things were going, and he thought it worth while to stay. Well! we kept waiting and waiting with the rest of the men for the work to commence, and the Co. kept putting it off for various reasons till summer was nearly gone. Then Whittier asked for tenders for the contract of the job in sections. Several white men tendered for it, also some Chinamen, and he gave the whole lot of the work to the Chinamen. If a thunderbolt had struck dropped into Barkerville it would not have caused more commotion. Everyone was astonished at the news, most of the men who had come up expecting to get work, went on a drunk for several days, and it seemed as if there was going to be trouble, threats were uttered against Whittier, and one man was put in gaol for assaulting a man who was defending Whittier, and for assaulting the Chinese. Yes are the boss of the Chinamen.

Our Jim and John Holt got disgusted and downhearted at having wasted the whole summer, and they started off down the road again a week ago to seek for work elsewhere. This job has knocked all our schemes on the head, and we are as far from success as ever we were. If only we could all have worked a few months this summer, we could have made a good start on our ranche at Bear Lake. We fully intended to do some good work there this fall, we were going to buy tools and provisions for winter and go out about a month or two before the winter setting in, to build a cabin, do some clearing, and cutting fence rails, then when winter came to set traps all over the country and catch fish through the ice on the lake. All that would have been easy enough to do, if only we could have had two or

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three months work a piece and so, had a little money to go on with; but as things have turned out we cannot raise money enough to buy provisions etc for winter, so I expect we shall have to abandon the ranch till next spring, perhaps for ever. I am afraid we shall lose it altogether for I know 2 or 3 persons who have their eyes on it, and I am afraid they will jump it when our six months is up — the time allowed us in which to take hold. When a person takes up a pre-emption he has got to live on it, so that if some of us dont go to live at Bear Lake this winter, someone may step in and take it from us. There is a chance that no one would try to take it during winter, for it would be such a long and unpleasant trip, the trail is never travelled in winter and there is no means of getting his provisions in only by packing them on his back, and he would have to travel on snowshoes. So we shall have to try and be first in there next spring and re-record it. This land at Bear Lake was not much thought about until we took it into our heads to go out there. Of course there were several people knew about it. Now that we took it up it has become a good piece of property, so I have been told several times, and I think it should be a good spec myself, if only we can hold it. I know several who would like to have it.

When our Jim and John Holt failed to get work on the Whitlies scheme I wanted them to go out to the ranche and cut some hay — there is plenty of wild hay — then we might have had some cattle to winter out there. One man offered to lend them a couple of scythes and rakes and said we might have his cattle to feed if we had plenty of hay for them. That would have been worth something. This man is in the milk trade and has quite a few milk cows which he has to drive down to Chilcotin every winter, because there is no feed around

Barkerville for them. He has to pay 25 dollars a head for wintering them besides the expense of taking them down and bringing them back about 290 miles quite a big item. I think he could afford to pay us 35 dollars, being only 20 miles away. There are others beside him who have cattle and horses which want feeding during the winter, there are two butchers with a lot of beef cattle. It pay would pay them to let us winter them and it would pay us handsomely to do it. Then we could buy their calves very cheap, and raise stock from them of our own. The place is well suited for stockraising, the grass grows very tall and there is any amount of it. Johnnie did not want to go, he said, because we should have to buy provisions and tools on the "jawbone" or credit system, which he did not like doing. We could have got credit easy enough, and very likely been able to straighten off before winter was over, and have a good start on our ranche in the bargain. Now we shall be thrown a year behind, and perhaps lose the place altogether. John Holt has made up his mind to go back up Horsefly River before winter, and do a little trapping again, and will come back here in the spring and commence work on the ranche at once. I hardly know what our Jim and Tommie Fletcher will do during the coming winter. Very likely Tommie will go with John Holt trapping into Horsefly. If I dont get another place for winter, I think I can stay here, though they would very likely want lowering wages; but I am trying to get another job, keeping the stage house and looking after the horses. The house is 20 miles from Quesnelle and is kept purposely for the stage to change horses. I think I have a good chance of getting it; but the pay is small, 30 dollars a month. Though the keeper has a chance of making money in other ways, he can do a little trading, and he can buy hay and grain and sell

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before now, he was willing enough; but we were all waiting for Whithers contract and were disappointed. Dont say anything to him of what I have said about him here, when you write back; I think he will be all right in another twelve months, especially if he has to wrestle around a little. He left here to try and get some work for himself, and there is no telling when I shall hear from him. I tried to encourage him as much as I could, and he seemed as if he would try hard to get along himself. If he cannot get work, I can keep both of us easy enough. I and Tommie Fletcher, (he worked two weeks at 2 1/2 dollars a day) was keeping all four of us going for a while, and made a little headway into the bargain. When our Jim and John Holt were down to see me, we had more money than when we came up here in the spring; besides I have not drawn any wages yet at this place. So if I had been alone I should have saved quite a bit of money.

We get all the papers that you send pretty regularly I think, and are very thankful for them, lately they were rather full of election news; but we knew the results before they came, the news of the election being wired to the Canadian and B. C. papers. I was surprised to see the Unionists go in with such a majority but I was not very much surprised to know the result in Rochdale and Middleton divisions. I thought Col Royds would have a good show when Mr Potter resigned. We have not had any of the Parish Monthlies lately, we had one number burnt up in the fire. I think I will send you a paper or two now and again, as a sample of how we are supplied with news. I think we are better informed than in the old country, generally. Newspapers are so very cheap for this country.

If you have not already sent the watches, send them to me, at Barkerville I shall be here some time yet, and I'll get them allright even if I move. Let me know

I am very sorry to say I shall not be able to send very many specimens of natural history for Mrs Adamson. Since I came down here I have had not much chance of collecting them, and most of those I had

already got are spoiled. I had pinned the butterflies and insects on to some blotting paper, and the flowers and leaves pressed in two books we found in the cabin. I went up to the cabin last Sunday to see about some things that our Jim had left, and found that some of the butterflies were gone, and what remained were all spoiled, their wings were torn to pieces. The flowers are still there; but they are spoiled, too, being dried ~~and~~ up and crumpled. I think I did not go the right way about it to preserve them. I will try to replenish them before I send what I have got. I shall have to be quick about it, for winter will on us in less than two months. Long winters are the rule here, being away up in the mountains, between 4,000 & 5,000 feet high. I had a letter from our Willie yesterday, ~~and~~ and three numbers of the Parish Monthlies. I also had one from our Jim, to say that he was going down the road to seek work. I can assure you he will have a hard time of it while he is on his travels, especially if he is a long time in getting work. I've experienced it, and know what he may expect; but I will try him up and shew if he has any grit in him. Dont let the news trouble you, he'll be all right, he can easily get back here ~~when~~ if he fails to get work.

I shall write again very soon for I have not said all I would like to say about the ranche at Bear Lake. Something I am not sure about. There seems to be quite a bit of interest taken in the Bear Lake district lately. I keep hearing about it almost every day, and our ranche is always brought in with it. Several prospectors have been out there and return with fair prospects. When coming back from town last Sunday I met Mr Bowron the Gold Commissioner driving out, and he was asking me what I intended to do about the ranche, and asked me to come up to town, to talk matters over about it. Somehow I keep thinking there is someone wanting to get hold of our preemption. I think Mr Bowron wants to advise me in the matter, he has been very good to us.

I will now conclude, with love and best wishes to all

Your loving son

Tom

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to the teamsters, he can also keep a stopping place for teamsters, besides he gets half a dollar for every meal provided for the passengers by the stage and the driver as well; so that would mount up in summer when there is plenty of passengers and traffic. If I get the job our Jim could stay there too and get his hand in and perhaps have the job himself next spring; but we shall see how it turns out.

When he went down the road a week ago, I felt very sorry for him, he seemed so downhearted. I wished I could have exchanged places with him, for I am pretty sure I could soons get work again; but I know it was impossible, he could not do the cooking, etc. He will have to improve a great deal before he makes anything in this country; he hasn't a bit of push in him; you know how he is, careless and easy going; he depends too much on me and Johnnie Holt to get him work, instead of wresting around for himself a little. Tommie Fletcher is quite different; when he got tired of waiting for work in Barkerville, he struck out for the Forks of Quesnelle 60 miles away, and got work there. I think Tommie will be all right when he gets a little more accustomed to the country. Our Jim has been spoiled by setting and twisting away like a machine all his life, instead of having a job where he would have to exercise his mind and hands a little more; besides he has always had you to pull him through. It would have done him more good to shift for himself and knock about a little. He is like a fish out of water here, where men have to be active in mind and body, and pick new ideas up quick and then be able to turn them to account. He has to be able to turn his hand to anything and everything You can imagine from what I have had to try my hand at, and I am a "greenhorn" yet. First of all tried my hand at cooking; splitting firewood, etc

for old Shaw, in Horsefly; working a rocker on Horsefly river; then helped Fred Choate in Beaver Lake Valley to finish his house, cut fence rails, etc; then worked with pick and shovel on the of the Horsefly Gold Mines Co. Next at Quesnelle I worked on Carson's ranche, where I was clearing brush; cleaning vegetables and grain, weeding, hoeing, ploughing, and other jobs. Then in Chilcoten worked for ~~Bailiff~~ Bayliff, cutting logs, and fancy poles ~~fence poles and~~ hauling them, fixing fences and gates, fixing cowshed and stables, roofing and chinking, keeping stables in order, branding cattle, haymaking all through except mowing, drove the horserake, used the fork pitching up, hauling in both by waggon and by horse and tongue, drove the hay waggon, shaped off and finished stacks and was broken in to haying properly. It is carried out on a great scale on the stock ranges, where they have to feed so many cattle through the winter. Then again at Nightingales I was cook and housekeeper, helped to bind and harvest oats and wheat, dug the potatoes, gathered and cleaned the onions, carrots, turnips, beets, cabbages, etc, helped to butcher, ~~was laboured for a man putting up new buildings~~, fixing fences and other jobs. Then at Pickards was school teacher, stable boy, and man of all work. Then helped Jimmie Shepherd to cut, haul home, saw & split up, about a years supply of firewood. Then at Barkerville sawed wood for Rogers, made laggin for Whittiers tunnel, whitewashing, papering, washing painted ceilings and walls, scrubbing floors and general spring cleaning for several people, then worked at this place for nearly a month packing shingles carrying the lumber from the saw, digging foundation for additionals building to mill, and shingling, now I am cook and housekeeper again and man of all work. A jack of all trades and boss of none, so far; but a man is forced to be a jack of all trades, here, not like the old country.

It would have been better for our Jim if he'd had no one to come to, then he would have been forced to get some kind of work. If he doesn't get some kind of work to do in this country before next spring I think he will have to go on the tramp and hunt around for himself, as I did last summer. It will do him good; though it will come rather hard on him. He has had an easy time of it so far. It is not altogether his fault that he did not get to work