No 148.

Bank of British North America.

~~All letters to be addressed to the manager.~~

Dawson N.W.T. March 11th 1900

Dear father

You see, I didn't start for Nome over the ice after all, and I guess I won't go now till the river opens, if I do go there at all. The party of men that I had made arrangements to go down with, gave up the notion, and so, I had to, for I could not afford to buy 3 or 4 dogs; (they cost at least $100 each) and the necessary outfit. I can hardly say about what time I shall be coming home; for I intend going down the river on one of the first boats in spring, to call in at Nome, and if I should strike anything good, might decide to stay for the summer; if not, I will keep on the journey, homewards. If I had had a few hundred dollars a couple of months ago, you might have seen me by this time, for I was

almost crazy to go and fight the Boers. If the war is likely to last for some time after the Yukon opens, (early in May) you may expect me home very quick, but my stay would be a short one in that case, for I am anxious to get to South Africa in time to take part in the war. I'll have money enough to take me there by that time. I intend to go to South Africa, in any case now, for it will be a good country after the war. Then, if I like this country better, I can come back again.

This war has caused great excitement here and stirred all the Britishers, to the fighting pitch; enough volunteers could be got together here in the Klondike to form a regiment, and the best kind of men too, Britishers from all parts of the world who have travelled and had to rough it, many who have seen service in Britains wars, others who have fought with the Americans. All the N. W. M. Police and the Yukon Field Force volunteered; but they cannot be spared from Dawson; some of them have been accepted and

have already been in action.
A whole lot of the time-expired police got their discharge as soon as they heard about the Strathcona Horse being formed and started up the Yukon over the ice on foot, on the chance of being accepted. Major Perry who is in command here telegraphed to Col Steele, who is in command of the Strathcona Horse — that these men were on the way out. Col Steele was in command here until last fall and was the most popular man in the country and he was the idol of his men. If he gets down there in time, you will hear something good about them, for they are a fine lot of men, grand riders, and good shots; mostly ex-police who have already served under him, and would follow him anywhere, or dare anything.
One of the men who went out over the ice, Corporal Skehing; made a record for himself a few years ago, in the North West Territories when there was some trouble with the Indians. He had to carry dispatches to a station 200 miles away, and did it without leaving the saddle except to change horses; when one horse tired

he just caught another on the prairie, put on the saddle and off again; he made it in a very short time. Last fall he and two other police were sent back over the Edmonton trail to search for a lost party of prospectors; after a very hard trip, they found the men dead, buried them and returned here. Last winter the police were employed as mail carriers on the river, and they often travelled 60 & 70 miles in a day. These are the kind of men that will form the Strathcona ~~Horse~~ Squadron. Some of them are on bank guard here every night; I often sit and chat with them, so I am pretty well acquainted with them. I dont suppose there is one, but is anxious to go to the front.

Some of the officers who went to Africa, often came to dine with our people. I am watching the papers to see if they distinguish themselves. In one of the Graphics I saw the picture of a young man Lieut. Digby-Jones who was killed at Ladysmith. He was staying at Bailiffs Ranche in Chilcoten when I was there; we often went out riding together and ~~bathing~~ swimming in the Chilco river. He was a fine lad, rather wild. It seems a pity to be cut off so young.

№148.

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~~All Letters to be Addressed to THE MANAGER.~~

Dawson N.W.T. 1

I wish now that I had cut out all the paragraphs about the war-feeling in Canada, especially in the west. If the Russians, French, and Germans only knew what they would have to face, they would think twice before starting to meddle in our affairs. We may rest assured that our supply of fighting men is unlimited. Thousands of good hardy men, good riders and marksmen, have been refused in western Canada. Every little town in B. C. had a company of anxious volunteers. We had a rousing patriotic concert, a short time ago, and the fund for the relief of Lommie Atkins' widows and kids received $1500 as a result. We sang and cheered ourselves hoarse. The Queen, Lommie Atkins, Rule Brittania, Soldiers of the Queen, Hearts of Oak, and others were cheered

and encored so heartily that one would think the people were going crazy.

Oh! yes, I'd like to be in South Africa just now; but I'd like to make a little ~~more~~ money before leaving this country. I have not made much with my cello, only had 3 single engagements $15 at a time. This ought to be a good country for there is plenty of gold; but the government seems to be trying to discourage the miners. Some creeks, and all forfeited claims and fractions revert to the Crown and are not open for relocation; all these, are to be sold by auction about August, which sales will be of no advantage to the working man; the only ones to benefit by it will be the moneyed men and the government. There will be a whole lot more dissatisfied people leaving Dawson as soon as the river opens. Nome is the great attraction for most people here. About 600 have left Dawson for Nome over the ice. Two or three men even making the attempt on bicycles. There is a splendid trail

this winter, up the river from Dawson to Bennett, and quite a number have made the trip in and out on bicycles.
It has been a very cold winter, the thermometer registering very low all the time, some of the glasses showed as low as 70 below several times. Yesterday morning it was 45 below, but it is much milder today, and I guess the spell is broken; it will warm up quickly now, and we will soon see the snow disappear then the ice.
We had another big fire in January, but the burnt space is all built up again.
I think this is about all the news; but will try and write again before I leave Dawson whether going up or down. I dont think you could send any more letters in time to find me here, so it is no use writing to me now. I hope you are all well and in good spirits. I am counting the days now, till the time that I shall

be hurrying out to meet you all, then we can converse to better advantage. I am a poor one to talk with a pen. Goodbye for a little while longer.

Your dear son

Tom