

RMS Empress of Britain
April 20th, 1910

Dear Mother

The pilot did not leave till nearly nine last night. I spent about an hour waiting to see him off but at 8.30 I was so sleepy I went to bed without any supper other than a little chocolate.

While I was saying my prayers Mr. McAdie the Scotch man in the opposite upper berth came in, or rather opened the door but shut it again and waited very politely outside it. Later when he came in I asked him if he had yet found his baggage and he told me that he had just got it among the luggage of the third class. Of course he had first looked all through the baggage of the second and first class baggage rooms.

I think I told you that all the passengers could not fit at table together so we are divided into two lots. I am in the first lot. Last night I saw that we were to get breakfast at 7.30 a.m. and to make way for the second lot at 8.15 so when I woke and saw that it was 7.15 by my watch I was not long getting up. When I went out I found the clocks all 40 minutes behind my watch as they change them at midnight and I had forgotten to allow for the change of time.

I went for a walk on deck. When I saw the coast on our right I knew that we had turned south just as I had been led to suspect last night. I spent 20 minutes trying to recognize the east but could not so went to breakfast. There was a good crowd at breakfast so I expect no one is ill yet.

After breakfast I went on deck again and thought I recognized the Gully Head - to make sure I asked a steward but he said it was the Old Head of Kinish. I did not notice the Gully Head at all but at 10 AM we passed the Stags at about 4 miles out. Then Lough Hyne and the Kedges and the Beacon of Shukin Lighthouse at 10.40 AM. Then I saw lake Clens and Mount Gnbrich and later on we passed the Tastmt at about 2 miles out.

We had lunch at 12. When we sat down the tables were about 2/3 filled. One of my acquaintances looked at the first course and turned his eyes away. The steward brought him a couple of apples and he put them in his pocket and went on deck. The wife of my neighbour on the right did much the same, except that her husband had to assist her to her berth and she did not mind the apples.

Mr. Vis-a-vis stuck to his guns till he came to the prunes and rice when he asked us to excuse him and left in a hurry. So that when the coffee came I and my neighbour on the right were almost in solitary state, as of course the same sort of thing had been going on on all sides. I felt all right. When I went out again I could not see anyone I knew at all and the decks were half deserted.

In about an hour Mr. Dugg came on the scene. I offered him a book which he did not read and half an hour later he said he should go - he got up and took about 10 steps and without waiting to get to the side threw up what lunch he had eaten. Haven't seen him since and don't know where he is.

The other fellow came up later and told me he had eaten the apples and kept them down so far. He is so dizzy he can't walk. It is getting far worse, in fact ever since we left the Tasmant it has been steadily getting worse, fortunately the wind is nearly dead against us so that it is rather pitching than rolling. It is so bad now I can scarcely write as I am thrown against the table every now and then.

They have what they call a log towing behind which spins and twists an affair on the stern which registers miles like a cyclometer. I timed it for half a mile which took just two minutes. This is about 15 miles you know.

If this keeps on I'll have a lonely dinner at 5.20 if I can take any myself. I wonder if I can stand it long.

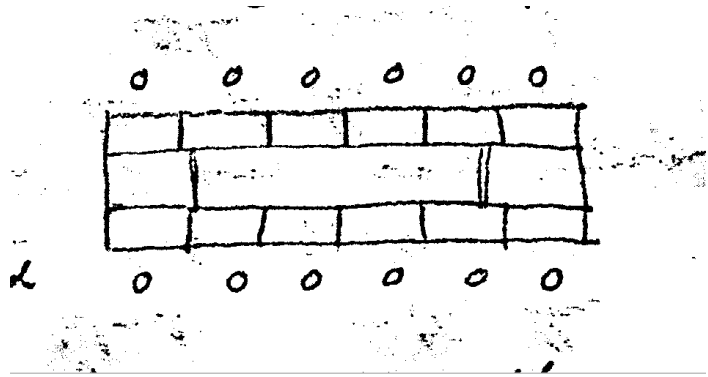
Yours truly,

Billy

Sunday
April 24th, 1910

It has continued to get steadily worse since I stopped writing last night till about 11 AM this morning. We had dinner last night at 5.30. I was not bad, in fact I was very hungry. Our table holds 12 but only two of the eleven others put in an appearance. The result being that we had two waiters to feed three of us, consequently I was too shy to eat much. I went down to the cabin at about 8 and found the other three looking very woebegone so I put on my woolens and went on deck intending to stay there. Unfortunately at 10.30 an officer came along and turned me down. I went to bed at once and asleep too and didn't wake till 4.30 AM when one of the others woke me by the row he made puking. However I went to sleep again and slept till 6.30 when I got up. It was so bad at breakfast that they had guards put on the tables. Each table is like this, the round things being chairs which are screwed to the floor but swing round like music stands.

They have backs half or one third way round them. Each person has a little box in front of him or her which holds plates, cup and saucer, etc. The sides of these guards are about 2 inches high, and the long lathes along the two sides of the table stick down about 2 inches the two rows of boxes are connected together by



two brass strips, so that the whole concern has a good grip of the table. It was a good job we had them as several times I noticed the plates etc. slipping about inside them. There were only about 30 - 40 out of 160 at breakfast. I began on porridge but afterwards confined myself to toast and tea. The waiter offered me butter but I declined.

Divine service was held at 10.30 in the saloon. I did not go as I was afraid of being ill as it was very rough then. We had lunch at 12 noon by which time I felt ravenous, but as only one other came to the table and he left very soon I did not like to eat much. However I did not do badly off roast pork and potatoes.

About 1 o'clock I was sitting with a row of others on deck chairs when the whole row suddenly began to slip sideways. The chair at the lower end of the row upset and the man was buried under it and the rugs, but unfortunately the rest stopped after slipping a few inches.

We overtook and passed a very large steamer today, but at the closest she must have been about 22 or 23 miles to the south of us so that no one seemed to recognize her. Up to this we have always been in wireless communication either with the land directly or through some other vessel. It doesn't seem a bit like Sunday.

We have been supplied with a very neatly got up list of the passengers of the same class. They also print a daily paper on board with the latest Marronogram etc on it. There is not much news in it though compared to what we are used to in a daily paper.

The three others in my cabin have lived in their berths since this time yesterday and are taking nothing but apples, oranges and tea.

There are some babies on board who are almost the only members of their families to be even moderately well. When their people are sick they wiggle about the floor of the social hall and laugh or cry as the notion takes them.

I hope this bad weather is nearly done as it is impossible to enjoy it when wherever you go you see sick people.

We are keeping up a pretty good pace in spite of the head wind. At noon yesterday we were 323 miles out and at noon today 372 miles farther. This gives about 16 1/3 miles per hour. It is difficult to write and as I have not more to say I shall stop for today.

Yours truly,

Billy

Empress of Britain

April 26th

I did not write anything yesterday as I did not feel like it and in any case I had nothing particular to say. As far as sea sickness goes Sunday was the worst day. At every meal yesterday there as a fairly good attendance.

Yesterday I met two brothers, one of whom had been in Canada for 15 months before and was now taking out his brother with him. I learned a good deal about growing in the Calgary district from them. The Canadian told me that he never used a wheel plough in Canada that it was always swing ploughs just like Taty uses at home. Except that when ploughing land which has been cropped before they don't use any coulter on the plough. He says the newest thing is a swing plough with a single mould board drawn by 2 horses, but that sometimes they use double ploughs and 3 or 4 horses. According to him ploughing this kind of land is easy enough, but when breaking up the prairie in the first place with what they call a breaking plough it is rather hard. He says that when reaping they never cut the straw within six inches of the ground and that it is usually left about a foot long. He says that they often use the straw for fuel for the steam thrashers or separators as he calls them.

He told me also that they very rarely shoe their horses. I asked him if they didn't wear out their hoofs and go lame but he says that stones are so few and far between that they don't.

By the way when you are coming out you need not bring two pair of boots to wear on the steamer as one and a pair of leather soled slippers is plenty. I am wearing my slippers all day and every day except one day when the spray was coming on deck very plentifully, so that I had to put on my boots.

The sea air makes me very sleepy and very hungry. You would be astonished to see the amount every one eats now.

Mr. McAdie the Scotch man in the other top berth in our cabin very nearly fainted while dressing yesterday morning. He got so weak that he could not get into his berth but just tumbled half on and half off the bottom one. I expect it was due to his long fast as he lived on oranges and tea from Saturday morning to lunch time on Monday. Most people are still looking a bit washed out, but are improving rapidly with the finer weather. We hope to see land to-morrow (Wednesday) morning. The Customs officials are to come on board at Rimouski about 20 miles this side of Quebec.

We passed the "Empress of Ireland" during last night. The sea has gone down a good deal during the day today, for which no one seems very sorry.

Did Uncle Harry advertise for his desk yet I wonder. I hope he did.

Yours truly,

Billy

April 27th, 1910

There is not much news today. However as the mails are to be collected tomorrow I suppose I had better try and say something. It got very cold pretty suddenly just after noon yesterday. I suppose that we must have entered the Greenland current. It was nearly perishing late last night and during the night we stopped owing to an iceberg however I did not know anything about that till this morning as I slept too soundly. There is a man sitting just opposite me who is very like Mr. Tom Hosford from the side view but not quite so like him when looked at full face.

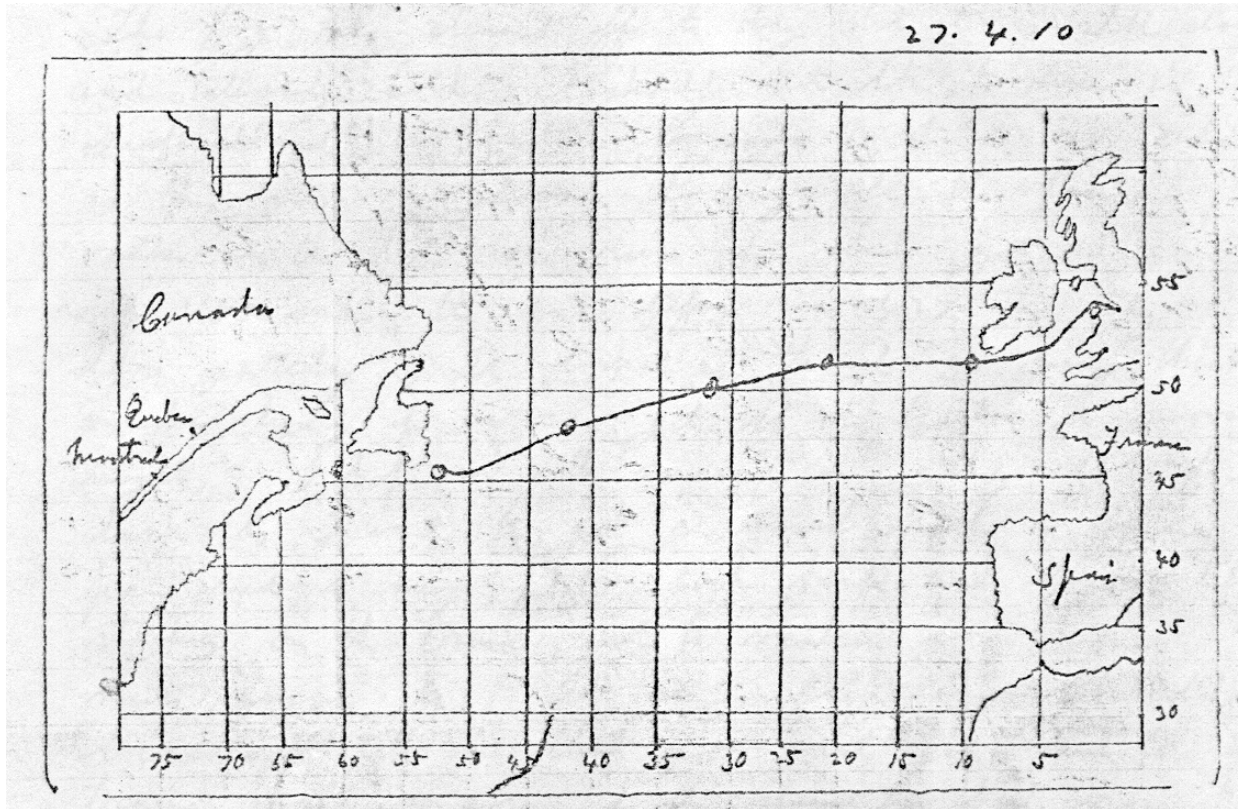
We are directly south of Cape Pare now, but can't see it owing to the fog which has been so thick that I can't see more than about 100 yards since daybreak. Even if it were clear we could scarcely see the land as we are about 30 miles from it according to the chart which has just been published.

There is a pretty good library on board from which we can get books to read by signing for them. The worst of it is that the best books are usually out when you want them.

I have got little souvenirs for Fan and Kit which I shall send by post if I can. I am sending you a woven silk post card as I can't think of anything better. The stewards seem to expect to reach Rimouski tomorrow evening which will be good going if we do it.

Yours truly,

Billy



The above is a rough chart on our course up to midday today Wednesday. The rings are the midday positions Saturday, Sunday, Monday, Tuesday and today. Up to midday on Sunday I thought we were going to go through the strait of Belle Isle but after that we turned south I don't know why but expect it was to avoid the icebergs. Sally may possibly be interested in this sketch of our course so you may as well send it to her. As you will see I never was so near the South Isle before.

WFW

April 28th, 1910

The fog has cleared off today but it is still cloudy and intensely cold. I should not like to live in Newfoundland or eastern Canada if it is as cold as this and as gloomy looking all the time. This was the best days run we made yet as we did 455 miles; the best before was 437 the day before yesterday. It looks as though we may think ourselves lucky if we can get off at Quebec to-morrow night. I hope we will succeed in getting off before dark as I want to get a small kettle or frying pan and a mug, plate, fork, knife and spoon, before starting on the train, not to mention some tinned meat, cocoa, etc. It seems from what the old Canadians tell me that you can't get much on the trains except a corner of the stove to boil your kettle on.

When you come out I should not advise you to bring much money in gold with you as it is an awful nuisance. I had to undo the duster as it would hardly do to have to undo it for the Customs Officer. In Liverpool I got 2 Bank of England notes instead of 10 sovereigns only for that I would be worse off.

I made 5 trips to the purser's office in order to get some dollar bills, but the beast is always out, or else there is a crowd waiting, and as I don't care to wait till Xmas, I haven't got them yet. He said he would be there at 4.30 to day so I shall have another try. Probably shan't write again for some time. Billy.

CTR Line in Northern Ontario 30.4.10

Dear Cindy

We came in sight of land at about 1.15 pm Thursday as I was told but I did not see it till 2.50 myself, this was the New Brunswick coast. We never saw Newfoundland at all as the steamer kept too far south. The coast was very bleak and cold looking, with snow in all the hollows where the sun did not shine. The temperature in the open air was 4 degrees F below freezing at 11.30 AM.

We got to Rimouski at 3.30 AM on Friday and to Quebec at 2.40 pm. As we neared Quebec it got a little warmer and calmer, also the snow as less in evidence.

The station in Quebec is a long way outside the city and is merely a big long nearly flat roofed shack. Our train left Quebec at 5.30 pm since leaving Quebec we have not seen any snow worth mentioning. The country so far is very bleak and stony and marshy in places, but is becoming lovely as we get west. The carriages are very queer. In the day time you sit two by two and face two men just as in the GS&W at home except that you get no cushion. At night the seats fall out till they meet in the middle, to make a bed for two and a big shelf pulls down from the roof to make a bed for the other two. They are very hard but by putting a rug under you it isn't so bad. I slept from 11 till 2 when we were waked to inspect tickets, afterwards I slept 3 ½ hours more. The worst of it is that you can't undress at all, and in the morning you are quite sore in spots. About half the people have kettles and boil them, some on the stove which is in each coach and some on spirit lamps. There is a tank from which you can get clean water. Then you have to wash them in the lavatory. I was not able to get any kettle so have to wait till they attach the café car and go to the counter there to eat. You are allowed to walk the whole length of the train through first class and all. The café car has a counter running the whole length with a narrow passage at one side through which the public go and a broader one behind for the waiters. You can get nearly anything there. Ham, fried eggs, bacon, roast beef, boiled eggs, bread and butter, toast, tea or coffee etc. It is not so very dear either. I can do pretty well for a dollar a day.

By the way they only allow me 2 dollars for 10 shillings but for a half sovereign they allow me 2 dollars and 40 cents. This soon shows the value of gold. Enclosed are some post cards. It is too shaky to write I hope you can read it.

Yours,

Billy.

Vermilion Alta

8.5.10

Dear Tom

There are lots of wild duck round here, so I guess you would like it. I have seen more mallard than anything else, but they tell me that what they call the canvas backed duck is the commonest. I believe I saw two flocks of teal too, but I am not sure. There is a lake within about 100 yards of the house and it is packed with ducks, you could shoot them when they are swimming as easily as anything, that is unless they get wilder in the autumn than they are now.

I haven't half a bad time here although I have no time to myself, this (Sunday) being the first idle moment I have had since I came. We get up at about half past five, have breakfast at six, dinner at 12 or 12.30 and tea at about 7 and go to bed at about 9.30 to 10.30. They have 800 acres between them, that is Mr. Sullivan and his 4 sons, one of the sons in gold mining in Alaska at present. They had 20 horses but have just sold 4 of them. Still cleaning out the stables and feeding and watering the 10 they keep. It takes a good bit of time.

We started sticking potatoes yesterday Aug 7th and also cut carrots, turnips, cucumbers, pumpkins and radishes. I have not done any plowing or harrowing yet, as between the gardening and putting a new roof on the house, not to mention the horses, etc my time has been pretty well taken up. They use what they call a gang plow for plowing stubble, it takes four horses abreast, and plows two furrows and has three wheels and a seat. There are two or three levers by which you can alter the depth or take it right out of the ground. It turns over two sods of 14 inches each or 28 inches altogether. They then disc the ground, four horses draw an arrangement like 16 steel saucers eight on each axle the axles are set so that the discs on one tend to run towards the discs on the other, you can alter the angle with a lever. They then harrow and drill in the seed. They are going to start sowing oats to morrow. The oats is White oats (Gastons Abundance). Late last night we treated it with a solution of 8 oz. of 40% formaldehyde to 20 gallons of water. They use this on wheat too to prevent smut instead of the bluestone solution we use at home.

The spring wheat is just showing nicely now, although when coming through Saskatchewan on Tuesday it was up there. There is very little fall or winter wheat grown here. The days are very hot, but fortunately there is nearly always a little breeze, then the air is so dry you don't sweat much. The nights are generally rather cold, far colder than at home. I sleep with two

of the boys in a fair sized tent so that I get plenty fresh air.

The water here tastes quite salty, but it is not ordinary salt that is in it at all, but some sort of alkali stuff. Whenever it dries up it leaves a white deposit. The first day or two the more I drank the thirstier I got, and I had a fine pain in my pantry too. But they told me I would soon get used to it. I then avoided drinking any thing but tea for a day even though I was very thirsty and got over the pain, since then I have drunk the water again and it does alright, also it doesn't make me so thirsty as it did at first.

They have only two milking cows here at present at any rate yet they have a small separator and a churn and make all their own butter.

Mr. Sullivan keeps a good many fowls and a few geese but no ducks, and the whole family eat eggs at at least two meals a day. They get outside about 6 eggs each per day. I wonder they don't get sick.

I have found out how they build their houses here now, both log and board ones. In the log houses or shacks as they call them, there are no up right logs at all except the door parts and the sides of the windows. They joint the horizontal logs into one another at the corners.

There is a good deal of barbed wire in use in Canada and most of the horses show signs of it too, some of them pretty badly too. There is one little yearling horse, whose right fore leg is torn right in to the bone. We are bathing it in carbolic and water once a day, I suggested doing it twice a day, but they don't seem to think it worth while. Although a fair team of two horses is worth about 600 dollars, it does not seem to worry them much when one of their horses meets with an accident.

It seems to me that their crops, wheat, oats, and barley are the only things they do bother much about.

Be sure to tell Mummy to direct my letter poste restante Vermilion, Alberta; by the way there is only one 'l' in Vermilion and I find it very hard not to put in two. I have not heard from any of you yet but I hope to get a letter or two from Edmonton in about a week.

There are no rats here at all but there are a good many field mice and gophers. A gopher is a little beast about as big as two rats. If you fire anywhere near him with a rook rifle he sits up quite straight and waits for another shot; still he is not easy to hit as he won't let you get very near him before dodging down his hole.

There are a good many trees round here of from 25 to 50 feet in height but they are only from 4 to 6 inches thick at the bottom so that there is practically no building lumber left. They very rarely use less than two horses here; even when taking a buggy in to town they always take two. The funny thing is that they don't shoe them, except to frost them in the winter. They seem to grow a tougher and harder hoof and to grow it rather faster than the horses at home do. The horses are all very quiet indeed and are no trouble to handle, they never seem to kick or bite; of course their not having shoes on gives one more courage when passing behind them.

I have had a middling hard time here, especially at first while I was getting used to the water and couldn't sleep properly, but so far it wasn't half as bad as I expected from what Mr. James Wolfe and Mr. Sam Connell told me.

I am awfully glad Aunt Annie and Auntie Eva gave me the leather watch chain and coloured scarf, more especially the scarf as I can't yet stand the sun on my neck and so could hardly live without it.

I hope you are still getting on well with Eugene. By the way, how is Uncle Harry getting on? I guess if he hasn't yet got any help, he will be about sick of it by the time you get this.

Farming round here is not half so different from Irish farming as people make out. It seems to me that the principle difference is that here they are much more careless and wasteful and of course do things on a bigger scale.

Also, the land is not quite all that it is made out to be as only about half of it is easy to work, the other half being either too stony or covered with brush, so that when homesteading it would pay well to pick and choose a bit. The Sullivans have only been here four years and it surprises me the number of buildings they have put up in that time. The soil is very rich indeed, but in some spots near the railway it seems to be rather deeper than it is here.

I saw some prairie dogs when coming along in the train, but there are not any round here. There are no bears now either, but they have left claw marks on some of the trees.

Yours truly,

Billy

Vermilion, Alta
15.5.10

Dear Mother

I got your letter on Thursday and you may be sure I was very glad to get it. I am very sorry that Tom fell out with John Hurley but it can't be helped now. If I was Tom, I would not refuse any overtures of friendship which John may make later on. You know those kind of people fall in and out very much oftener than we do, and so he will probably be prepared to be friendly again in a couple of months. He had cool cheek to go cutting the rushes though.

I got a postcard from the postmaster at Edmonton last night saying that there is a parcel there for me and that I must go and open it there, or send a written authority to someone else to do so, together with a statement of the contents and their value and the necessary duty if any. I presume this is the camera and I shall write telling him so. If ever you send me anything by post again, you must be sure to write a separate letter and say exactly what is in it, as that will save bother with the Canadian Customs.

By the way, I wish you would write to the "Daily Mail" office and ask them to send me the "Overseas Daily Mail" for the next six months. Vermilion, Alberta, Canada is a sufficient address after my name. I would do it myself except that I do not get the chance to go to town except on Sunday and can't get the postal orders. It should cost about 4/6 I believe, postage and all. The papers here give no English news worth talking about.

I went to preaching this morning. The Methodist Chapel is rather small; there are only 25 there altogether counting Mr. Hodgins the minister and the organist. I got a drive in from the Sullivans as they are Roman Catholics and were going to mass.

I don't think I told you much about the work here yet, so I will begin now. I came out here (6 miles from Vermilion) on Ascension Thursday and as that was a holiday, I did not do much, just fixed up horses, etc. On Friday I took off the roof of the dwelling house, all except the inside boards (those would be laths at home, but they board it up solid here as it is warmer.) We then spread tarred paper on one side and put on the outside boards again. Next morning Harold and I spread the tarred paper on the other side and just as we had it nicely settled, the wind got up and took it all away. We rescued most of it and put it away till evening when it calmed again and we got it on a kind of way.

On Monday I carried the seed oats and put it into the drill as fast as Reginald, the oldest boy sowed it. The seeder they use drills in 15 rows at once and is drawn by 3 horses.

I spent the greater part of Tuesday cutting willows with an axe and grubbing up the roots; this came pretty hard on me. Wednesday I got two horses and a sort of sledge and drew stones off of a 15 acre plowed field. Thursday I did the same. I could not make much hand of the horses at first as they use different words when speaking to them here. When I found that out I did better. On Friday I harrowed with 3 horses till dinner time. Then grubbed a few more bushes, cleaned the stubble and went about a mile for a load of hay, with a very big crate on form which was drawn by 2 horses again. I had to load it myself, too. They never use one horse alone here. When I was going for the hay, the team ran away when I was fixing the gate on the way out. You ought to have seen me racing after them; luckily I caught them alright as they didn't go fast. I was very much afraid they would capsize. I spent Saturday till 7:30 washing 9 handkerchiefs and 2 pair socks. (I can't get the handkerchiefs very white; however they aren't very bad.) Then I went breaking as they call it. That is plowing the virgin prairie, willow roots and all. They use 3 horses and an ordinary plough except that it has a fin coulter, rather short handles and a little wheel in front to set the depth. They walk their horses pretty fast, but with three it doesn't do them any harm. The air is so dry that they don't get wet at all. I got on pretty well with the 3 horses, better than I expected. They seem rather surprised here that I am not even a bigger fool than I am. I think they half expected me to be like one man here who forgot to put any collars on the horses one day. Of course, the harness damaged them a bit.

The harrowing was the worst job I ever did. The day was a bit windy and walking through the soft earth and the fine black dust blowing everywhere, you would think I was a nigger; it goes through your clothes and everything. That is the worst thing I see here, that you get so very dirty. Of course they haven't a bathroom and the lake is still too cold to bathe in.

Prairie fires are the bane of the country. On Wednesday evening one started about 6 miles from here to the south. We did not see it till about 8:30 on Thursday morning when it was about half a mile wide and travelling fast before a south-east wind. Two of the Sullivans went to help the neighbours and they succeeded in keeping it to the west of the place and finally getting it out. It burned a track 2-1/2 to 3 miles long and about half a mile wide.

It was a good job I bought the Hazeline cream as my nose was a case for a bit. It is getting well now though. So Johnny got his cottage. How did Micky Daly

come off?

Yours,
Billy.

Vermilion, Alta
29.5.10

Dear Kitty

I got your letter of the 14th inst yesterday (Saturday) morning which was exactly a fortnight on the way. Not so bad is it, as it had to come back from Edmonton to Vermilion.

I hope you will not repent of your resolution to write to me once a week as it is rather nice to get letters. I got yours and a second one from Mummy and one from R.F. Thomas all together yesterday morning, so that I was in luck that time. I have been away 31 days now and yet I only got 3 letters counting yours; however, I will be able to get them oftener now as I shan't be running away from them for a bit anyway. I got 4 though, as I got one from Sally too. She told me of Harold's death and I got hers on Wednesday last, so that was 3 days before yours.

The King died on a Friday night I believe, and Mr. Sullivan was in town on the Saturday so that we heard of his death that evening. He said that all the flags were at half mast, so he enquired the reason and soon was told. The newspapers were in mourning too, and all the railway companies arranged a short stop all over their systems at the hour of the funeral.

Best wishes for the Intermediate which will just about be beginning when you get this.

Your blackbirds must be very interesting. I expect you will have seen the young ones by now as they must be able to fly by this. There are a good many birds here, most of them a good bit different to those we see at home. The commonest of all are wild ducks, Mallard, Canvas backed, Teal, and some other kind whose name I can't think of. I have not yet seen a birds nest with eggs or young ones in it.

This is a very pretty place as the woods and the lake and all the small hills look awfully nice. If I can I will try and send you a few proofs of two photos I took, so that you can judge for yourself. I did one of Harold in the boat just at sunset last night when the wind had died down, and I think it is rather good. The worst of it is that I have to stay up till about midnight to develop the plates as there is of course no dark room here (we sleep in a tent), and as we get up before 6 in the mornings and work pretty hard all day, I can't very well stay up except on Saturday nights.

I am head fire lighter and tea maker in the mornings here now. The weather here has been very changeable for the past fortnight; one day hot and the next cool, and showery. Still through and through for the past 3 weeks it has been better than we usually get at home in May. I don't mean dryer so much as nicer to live in. The light during the daytime is very brilliant. At first it used to hurt my eyes, but I like it now. You can take snap shots far easier than at home owing to the clearer atmosphere.

There is one solitary gander here which reminds me a good deal of Belinda. He jeers at us all a good bit, but whenever he hears Mr. Sullivan start to talk, he bawls like mad. It is really very funny, more especially as it makes Mr. Sullivan mad. The old gander is a bit lonely as there are no other geese here, and he likes company and follows people about. He came nearly half a mile to help in the fencing on Friday morning.

We sowed about 9 acres of flax on Saturday week and last Friday it was up nicely (6 days) pretty good going as the weather is broken and cool most of the time.

I went for a swim in the lake on Tuesday evening. The Sullivans wouldn't go in as they said it was too cold. I thought it was just nice. The water was warm as the sea at Tragunnin is in August. They seem to want it boiling to suit them.

On the hottest day here there is almost always a nice breeze and as the air is very dry you never get wet with perspiration. Then the nights are cold so that you can sleep well which is a very good thing.

Yours truly,

Billy.

Be sure to tell me what date you are going home as there is no good my writing to Rockville after you have left.

Vermilion, Alta
29.5.10

Dear Mother

I got your second letter yesterday morning. I was in luck yesterday as I got one from Kitty too and one from R. F. Thomas.

I had thought of writing to Harold about a fortnight ago, but I was afraid he might not live to get it, and I thought it might upset his people in that case so I did not do it.

When the postmaster at Edmonton wrote asking me the value of the camera, I said that as it had been in use about 5 years it was not easy to say, but that it was worth from 10 to 12 dollars. I did not know then that you had to declare the value at your end. It was lucky as (we) hit it so nearly alike wasn't it. I had to send the postmaster a written authority to open and examine it, but I don't believe he opened it after all. At any rate it did not look like it. I had to pay 25 cents postage on it from Edmonton to Vermilion so that altogether, my forgetting it cost about 3/-. Still I am very glad to have it although I shall not get much chance to use it, I expect.

Last Monday I spent putting up barbed wire fencing and a big gate in it. Tuesday did the same, but no gate. Wednesday morning ditto. In the afternoon went into Vermilion with Mr. Sullivan, gave my draft to the Canadian Bank of Commerce to collect. (The only bank in the district.) I got some photographic material etc. too. I disced all Thursday morning and double harrowed 3 acres after dinner. Put up more barbed wire on Friday morning, harrowed till 4 pm from dinner time and got soaked through by a very heavy shower which spent the horses' tempers too. Even though it was very refreshing, as Tim at Killarney said. Came back and changed clothes then went out and ploughed till 6. Spent all Saturday breaking up new land. Enclosed are two proofs of photos showing the breaking, most of which is my work. On Saturday, I asked George to take the horses one round while I photographed him. You will notice a few clumps of willows here and there, not many as I picked the best bit of the land to photograph. I expect Paty and Uncle Harry won't think much of the plowing, still we succeed in turning over the sod anyway. In the standing pasture you can see the fin coulter pretty well. I never saw this kind of coulter till I came out to Canada.

The Sullivans don't care for this photo as it shows up the scraggy neck of Polly the white face horse too much. She is rather old and stiff; the other

two horses are not so bad. Billy is the middle one and is a bit cross. Jack is the far one and is a sire horse. At first I was a bit nervous of him, especially when I had to harness or unbuckle the three alone, but now he and I are pretty good friends and he is really rather a nice horse and very clever at stepping into the traces when you get the m..... off with his legs. They have another horse here, Bob, who is a very funny beast. He will often do the wrong thing deliberately and then sort of wink at you. He often goes into Billy's stand in the stall if you let him in first. This makes Billy mad, which seems to please Bob. Then he has a very funny expression too. He is also hard to plow with or to drive in a narrow space as he insists in going in jerks for the first few minutes after he starts. Still in spite of his faults, I like the beast. He also rolls with the harness on if he gets a chance. He did the other day (Monday) and smashed up his breaching. Luckily it was George let him go. I caught him and sorted him out, but it was a bit too late.

Harry Prendergast's team (one of the neighbours) ran away with a wagon on Thursday and he could get no account of them, so had to walk home. On Friday morning he borrowed a horse here and spent the day hunting for them and enquiring all round, but without success. At half past seven on Friday evening Harold went out on another horse with him and trailed them down in an hour. They had the wagon jammed in the bush and were pretty well hidden. That is the worst of this bushy country. It shows you how scanty the population is when no one had seen the team or wagon in a day and a half. If he had not got some one to track them, I expect they would have starved before Prendergast found them.

They have a big steer here who got mixed up in a prairie fire and has had the outside toe on his right hind foot and the inside toe on the left hind foot nearly burnt off. Otherwise, he escaped pretty well. Of course he can't walk. I have the job of nursing him up. He isn't easy to feed as he won't eat much of anything. I give him a hot mash of barley meal and crushed oats in the morning and keep his sore toes oiled with castor oil. I can't think of anything better to do for him.

Enclosed are two views also. Harold is the one in the boat. The scenery here is rather nice, isn't it. The view of the lake is nice I think, I mean the one without the boat. The thing on the right hand corner is the cattle kraal or rather a piece of it.

I have no chance of finishing these folio prints here as I can't get the solutions.

Yours truly,

Billy.

Vermilion, Alta

2.6.10

Dear Sally

Today is the first day since I came here that the weather has prevented us from working outside. It is snowing now, 8:35 a.m., and has been since 5:45 this morning. It seems odd to have such cold weather in June, doesn't it. The temperature in the tent as I write is only 36 degrees hence the bad writing. It was 72 degrees at midday the day before yesterday. They say that they never remember such a cold spell coming so late in the year here.

I got yours of the 11th May on the 25th which wasn't so bad, seeing it had to go to Edmonton and come back here again. You are the first to tell me of Harold's death and burial. I guess it is a good thing for them all, especially the young ones. They did not take any notice of Whit Sunday or Monday here. I didn't even know when it came.

The thermos flask is a very nice idea on hot days. Once or twice I filled it with cold water and took it out when going plowing, and in spite of its being three or four hours in the hot sunshine, the water was so cold you could scarcely drink it. I bought a bottle of lime juice; the only time I have been in town on a week day since May 5th, and a little of this in the water helps to improve the alkali taste. Did I tell you that the water here is so alkaline that it tastes quite salty. At first the more I drank the thirstier I got, but I am used to it now and it does not have that effect, nor do I notice the salty taste. It seems to be wholesome enough.

Mr. Sullivan sold two of his horses the other day and bought two more. The two new ones are a bit erratic yet, but will probably turn out a good deal better than the ones he sold. It won't be any great trial of them to do so either.

Down in Ontario they train their oxen to go to the left when you say "Haw" and to the right when you say "Gee". Some people here have them trained that way too, but most use a bridle just the same as on horses, except that I never saw a winker on a horse. The horses here answer to these words pretty well, too. At least some of them do. It seems to me to be a good notion to train into them as you often have your hands full and can't easily manage the reins.

I had to interrupt this letter at 8:50 as it cleared up a bit and I went disk harrowing. During the morning there were several light falls of damp snow, just enough to make things uncomfortable. It is now dinner time and warming

up a little (42 degrees). It seems impossible to believe that at 8 pm the day before yesterday I went for a swim in the lake, yet it is true enough. The water was not very cold either, but the air was when dressing.

I am rather sorry I did not pack up and bring out my bicycle, as if I had it I could go to preaching every Sunday, whereas now I can only go about once a fortnight as the R.C. Chapel only gets the priest every second Sunday when I get a drive in from the Sullivans. The Methodists have a service twice every Sunday, although there are so few of them.

I got an invitation to Shrigleys at 6:30 Monday last to eat ice cream, but didn't go as in the first place I was very tired after plowing all day. Secondly, I don't care for ice cream and thirdly, the other two boys didn't go.

The Shrigleys seem rather nice. They are the next door neighbours on one side. The family consists of the father and two boys and the mother and I think one daughter. I have only met Mr. Shrigley and Lee, one of the boys. They were over here last Sunday week.

Did Mummy tell you that I am head doctor and nurse combined to a great big ox who got mixed up in a prairie fire and burnt two of his toes, one on each hind foot, rather badly. He is very thin but is beginning to stand and walk a little now. I am giving him crushed oats and hay to eat (I gave him barley meal for a bit but he won't eat it lately) and for a good bit, I rubbed castor oil into the horny part of the toes. Last night Mr. Sullivan gave me some sort of pine tar made up into a tin like vaseline, and told me to smear it on and bandage his feet. He (Mr. Sullivan) was after making two attempts to put it on, but without success.

At the first try I got one foot pretty well made up, but the ox would not submit to be rolled over, so I must try and do the other foot when he lies on the opposite side. He is rather a wild ox having never been trained, but he is getting used to me now. He has two lovely horns almost like the highland cattle.

I sent Sindy two views on Sunday. Did she show them to you?

Yours truly,

Billy.

Vermilion, Alta.

12.6.10

Dear Mother

I got your letter of May 27th last Wednesday. I don't think you need be afraid of my getting a thick neck from the water here as everyone all round has to drink similar water, only worse in most parts; men here anyway. I have got so used to it now that I don't even notice the salty taste.

We had it pretty hot here all the last week. Yesterday it was 85 degrees in the shade. There was a strong breeze, almost a gale, so we didn't feel the heat very much. Today is cooler being only 60 degrees. They use a spirit thermometer here as in winter the mercury freezes.

I am glad Tom has got the railing up. I expect it looks nicer than the fencing we put up here. They use mostly willow posts as the poplar rots too fast and besides, when a prairie fire comes along the poplar posts burn much more easily than the willows. Almost one half of the posts can usually be driven down; the other half has to be planted in holes dug for the purpose. They usually put up 3 barbed wires. The cost of the wires is about \$75 for a 2 mile run; that is enough to go round a quarter section.

Tom must have had very early swarms from the bees this year. I don't expect he will have honey as soon as he thinks, or if he does, it will probably not be sealed. It doesn't usually be sealed over till about June 20th and it is doubtful policy to remove any before July.

We don't wear gloves here all the time; for instance I didn't wear them when ploughing. But when pulling up barbed wire they are very useful, also when bedding rough willows for someone else to hammer in. I tried this with bare hands and got well scratched as the post goes down about 4 inches the first crack and rips your hands. Also when working with an axe all day it is a great ease to your hands to put gloves on half the time. At first I thought I could not do a bit with them on, but I soon learned they are made of strong sheepskin. I got two nasty cuts and one rope burn through not wearing gloves, so I don't often go out for the day's work without shoving them in my basket now.

Last Sunday after writing to you and Fan I was sending Willis Kingston the photos I sent you the week before, when Mr. Sullivan asked me would I come for a drive as they were going over to Mr. Brown's, so I went along. The view

from Mr. Brown's house is one of the prettiest I ever saw. The home is on a hillside and you can see right along a valley for six miles to Vermilion, and then the hills beyond a few miles more. The valley itself is lovely, being nice and green now, and all broken up by little groves of poplars and willows. It would remind you of Killarney.

I hope you are alright. Last Monday I had a sort of feeling that something was wrong with you. It was so strong that I nearly wrote especially to ask, but I guessed you would only laugh at me for being superstitious.

I saw several butterflies, moths and dragon flies last week, also the first of the mosquitoes. Some of the butterflies are just like those at home. There is one very bright, light blue dragon fly here that I don't remember ever seeing anywhere else.

I saw a black leech in the lake on Friday. That is the only living thing I ever saw in the lake (there are no fish in it) except wigglers (things like sand hoppers, but they don't hop). There are lots of shells (two kinds only) on the beach, but I never saw a live one. The shells are so delicate I don't think I could send them to you.

It is very good of Johnny to be so anxious to come out to me, but I don't expect Uncle Harry is so anxious to part with him. Besides, I wonder if he would like such long hours. They expect to get 15 hours work out of you 6 days a week, and so little chance to go into town or to see one's friends. Of course if Johnny were out here, he would have no difficulty in getting as much money as I am getting. Three young men from Ontario came out here and got jobs with farmers in the district lately. I am glad I didn't stay for the summer in Ontario when I see people from there learning farming here before homesteading in their own account.

I get fits of homesickness now and again, but still I have to put up with that. There are a good many other things to put up with too, just as Micky said there would be in my case. Still, I think I will probably be all the better later on from having to do as I am told for a bit again. I guess I was getting a little bit peculiar and fidgety like Willis brothers and that should wear off out here.

I have only been on horseback once since coming here; that was last Monday week. Mr. Sullivan sent me out to a crossroads about a mile and a half away to wait with a message for a Mr. De Forde. Luckily, I asked him how long I was to wait and he said till a quarter to twelve. It was then 10 to 10 so I

rode out and waited the whole time, but Mr. De Forde did not turn up. I could not make a hand of the saddles they use here, as the stirrups are far too far back for my taste. I expect Kit will be home when you get this as she says she hopes to come on the 22nd, so you can tell her more of the news from this.

Yours truly,

Billy

Vermilion, Alta.

3.7.10

Dear Kitty

Enclosed is a photo of an Angora goat and her kid; the kid is only one day old or rather was only one day old when I took the photo. I carefully selected the background so as to show how log buildings are cornered. You may as well show it to Tom as I guess he will be interested.

These goats have a curious task of putting their kids aside when they are going out to feed. They put them behind a door, in a manger, in the corner of a wood pile or some similar place. The kids very rarely stir or even bleat till the goat comes back. The old goats come back for their kids alright but sometimes the younger ones forget where they have put theirs and then they make a great row and we have to turn out and help find them. Once one two-days-old kid was lost all one night in spite of all the hunting we could do. In the morning George and I found it behind an old wagon box just at the yard gate. If it had bleated it would have been found the night before. The poor thing was in a bad way when we got it, but it recovered. I expect you won't believe this but it is none the less absolutely true.

I got Fan and Mummy's letters on Thursday night and as my birthday is Friday, I think they made very good shots for it. As you are at home now I expect you will write to me pretty often unless Uncle Harry copies Uncle Tom's example and makes a clerk of you.

Yours truly,

Billy

These are the sort of little books of stamps here. You get 12 two-cent stamps for 25 cents.

Dear Mother:

Many thanks for remembering my birthday and for your letter which arrived late the night before. Also for the fruggarce which hasn't come yet, but which will I guess be useful in the hay fields.

I got Fan's magazines this morning.

Instead of getting this letter you had a very narrow escape from getting my life insurance money. As I haven't much news I may as well tell you what happened. Curiously enough it was on my birthday too. George and Harold are in Calgary on holiday since Tuesday last, so on Friday I had to go for a load of hay to the far side of the section after tea. This took just an hour so it was 8 o'clock when I got back and 8:20 when I had the hay unloaded. I then put the bridle on old Bob and went out to look for the cows. Luckily as it happened I went bareback as my back was sore from the high back of these western saddles. In about half an hour I found the cows in a patch of wheat at Vigor's about a mile and a half round the lake. They had broken into the wheat through the fence; there were 13 other cattle with them and as Vigor and his family are away and the house locked up, I thought I would drive out all the cattle for him. The cattle separated out and dodged back into a thick patch of bush and I spent until just 10 o'clock hunting them out of it. Several times I was knocked nearly off the horse by the branches and I had to get down for my hat four times. Then when I had some of them out, one of the cows made a bolt back round the house. I trotted quickly round the opposite way to stop her and as it was just dark I never saw the clothes line, which the silly fools left up when they went away. It is a strong wire and caught me just on the second button from the top of my waistcoat. It slipped up and on to my neck, of course throwing me. I don't remember the actual bump very well, when I came to rightly, which can't have been more than a few seconds, he had his hind foot on my hat but I had a grip on the reins in my left hand. I was pretty well shaken up, so I get up on the horse again and only brought out three of the cattle. On Saturday morning I went back early and took the dog with me and got the rest of them.

My two arms are pretty well black and blue where the wire caught against them and my chest and neck are a bit sore and I feel a bit stiff all over, otherwise I am alright. It was a very narrow squeak. I guess if I had a saddle I would not have gone back so easy and would probably have broken my neck. By the way, what does a good English saddle cost - it is all Mexican saddles they use here and they cost 40 to 50 dollars. This seems to me to be very dear.

I was thinking that if we tried homesteading we could get on for the first year or so with a team of oxen and do without any horses, but I see now that if we had any cattle and wanted to let them range loose, we should have at least one horse to find them with. It is quite impossible to drive range cattle alone on foot as they merely run round you, but with a horse it isn't so hard as they know they can't race him on the open and so they don't try much.

It is a pity about Tom's turnips still I expect the other bit will probably be alright. I was afraid the photos would fade too much in the fixing.

I was glad to hear of Katy's increase in the family I hope they are both well. I suppose Miss Furey will soon introduce Ian and Kit to the young Murray. Talking about Tom and Canada, if I were him I would not be in too big a hurry, as if he came out now he would have to go through the same sort of thing as I have to, and I don't think he would like it much. This is I think a nicer country to live in than Ireland, but I haven't seen the winter yet. In any case I think it

would be as well to keep on The Grove till you and Kitty saw how you would like Canada, so that if you didn't like it you would have a place to go back to.

I am wondering what you will think of the plan I outlined in last Sunday's letter. When you get this you will have had a week to talk and think it over so be sure to tell me what you think. I have had rather a hard time this week too as George and Harold being away leaves a good many extra things for me to do.

The fall wheat is just heading nicely now, but the oats or spring wheat is not headed yet. The potatoes that we eat early in May are looking grand.

Why don't you tell me what the lenders did at the June quarterly meeting, and who they got for Bentlydebob instead of Mr. Montgomery and who are invited for Schull in 1911 and Skilbarren in 1912.

I saw the first flock of young ducks swimming in the lake on last Monday week, that was June 20th. There are any number of flocks of them swimming after their mothers now. I saw the first clutch of prairie chickens about 10 days ago; there are a good many clutches of them out now too. The young ones are very like little guinea fowl, they can fly pretty well for short bits as small as they are.

There were two Chipawa Indians here for one hour or so at dinner time on Tuesday last, they could apparently understand me, but I could not make out much of what they said.

Thanks for the shutter test card and the Munton address in is about half way between here and Edmonton and is marked on my map.

Yours truly,

Billy

Vermilion, Alta.
10.7.10

Thanks to Ian for the Richardson's almanac

Dear Mother:

My principle interest this week has been thinking out what to do about homesteading. I heard that the Canadian Pacific Railway Co. has had to surrender the odd numbered section on township 56 range 6 and that they are now open for homesteading. The north Saskatchewan river flows right through the middle of the township from West to East so that the furthest quarter section from the river would be about 3 miles. I asked Mr. Sullivan if he knew this country and he says he does not know that particular township, but that he knows the river banks pretty well and that the land is pretty good. At present the Government is surveying the river with a view of navigating it from Edmonton to Battleford. The other week a steamer went down with 750 passengers and some goods, so that I believe in the future the river will be the highway for wheat during the summer season. Another advantage in that country is that the water is good and fresh, not alkaline as it is here., Then the Canadian Northern Railway is about to start a survey of the north side of the river, so that in the future there is nearly sure to be a railway built somewhere within 10 miles or so of the north bank. Of course that railway would not be working for 3 or 4 years but it would be something to look forward to. There are already several ferries on the river. Altogether I am so taken with this idea that I am writing to the nearest land officer for a plot of the township showing the vacant quarters.

Since Friday Mr. Sullivan has had Jack Lloyd working here with a gang plow. He is a young chap about my age out from Southport for 4-1/2 or 5 years. He started a homestead on 56.7 that is only about 6 miles west of the place I am thinking of. Unfortunately although he has been three years there, he has never been so far east as 56.6 so that he can't tell me much about it.

It seems to me now that it would not be a bad idea for me to go homesteading in the autumn about 4 weeks or so before the freeze up. I think I could get a small log shack up and live in that and a shelter for an ox team too. Then as that is a great hay country I would probably buy hay enough for the winter and spring.

There are several advantages in going on in the fall - 1st, it is hard to get work; 2nd, it is easier to draw logs on a sleigh than on a wagon; 3rd, I could cut logs when there would be no sap in them so that they would keep better. This is also true of fence posts. 4th, I would be on the spot early in the spring. Of course there are also drawbacks but you can see them for yourself.

I spent most of yesterday harrowing some land that has just been plowed for summer fallowing. At dinner time I rode the tall new mare horse and led the other two horses and at night I thought I would do the same, but to my great surprise I found that my legs were so far gone that I was quite unable to jump high enough to get up on her. I did not like the others to laugh at me and so made four desperate attempts but in the end I had to walk home. The land is so soft that the harrows sank the full depth of the teeth, consequently both I and the horses were a bit tired out.

The two boys came back from Calgary on Wednesday night. A good job for me too as I won't have to hunt up the cows and milk them now.

Fan seems to have had a narrow escape from a nasty accident to her foot, as it was she must have been hurt a good bit. As it is already three weeks since it happened I guess she will almost have forgotten it before you get this.

The young prairie chicken or grouse are growing like mad. I have seen quite a bit of them lately. I saw a garter snake swimming in the lake on Thursday. I was out up to my knees trying to get some wire off posts that had fallen down, and he was swimming about between me and the shore. A very good swimmer he was too. Swam just like an eel.

Yours truly,

Billy

Vermilion, Alta.
15.7.10

Dear Tom:

Enclosed please find \$40. I want you either to buy me a really good gun, or if you would rather send me yours and get a new one yourself.

If that isn't enough money, get the gun anyway and I will send the balance. If you decide to send me the new gun, get the left full choke, the right cylindrical, get a hammer less gun with a safety bolt not automatic. And above all get as much of a drop in the stock as in your new one as the old gun always kicked me under the eye. Also get pistol grip. Lastly, get it sent out quickly. If you have any fancy for a new gun, get it and send me yours as that would do me just as well.

If you get Mr. James Wolfe to send me the gun, ask him to put in a receipt separately, as otherwise I can't easily get the gun through the customs.

We had great adventures plowing on Tuesday morning. As nothing would do, Mr. Sullivan had to use his big wild mare. So George drove the three and I held the plow. Presently she began to rear across the next horse, so I had to free them out. Then she got away - luckily it was George was holding her. She ran right through a 3 wire new barbed wire fence, luckily smashing the top two wires. She is a bit cut, but not deeply.

Yours truly,

Billy

Vermilion, Alta.

15.7.10

Dear Kitty:

I got your letter of June 28th today. It was good of you to write such a long one. Today was the first day (week day) that I have been in town since May 25th. You see the taxes are about 10 dollars per homestead and if you take a team of horses and work on the road (making or mending it), between your township and town they allow you 5 dollars for each day's work. So I was sent road making today. We were making the approach to the bridge over the Vermilion River which is within a half mile of the town, so I was given a quarter dollar and told get dinner in town. The foreman and the two other men who were on the job tied up their horses to their wagons and fed them and went to the Vermilion hotel, so I went too. We had a nice dinner (soup, kippered herring, roast pork and potatoes, tapioca pudding) nicely served - the nicest service I have yet seen in Canada. I expected to be charged at least a half dollar for it, but they only charged us a quarter each.

I didn't tell you the job I had on the road. I was given a mule and a horse and a wagon in the morning, then when I got there I unhitched the wagon and hitched onto a scraper (a thing like a big coal scuttle) and loaded up clay on the hill side and dragged it to the embankment where the foreman upset it. At first I thought I would never be able to keep my place without being half killed, but I found it pretty easy; all you do is steer the horses and when you want to load up, lift the handles at the back a bit the more, then dig in and the pulling of the team soon fills it. Then you lower the back and the load keeps it down. The horses then drag it to where you want it without your touching it (provided you pick a smooth track) and by lifting the handles, the whole works upsets forward and empties. Sometimes when filling the scraper the nose strikes a stone or a root and upsets in spite of you.

I rather enjoyed the work, as I had rather a good team. The sort that pull evenly and slowly when the pull is hard. Some of the brutes they have will stop if the pull is a bit hard, then back a step or two and charge ahead one at a time.

They seem to have been very nice to you at the finish in Rockville. It was good of them to offer to put you up anyway.

I am very glad that you have taken to the pony too. It will be nice for you to be able to have him to drive all the summer.

I often feel a bit homesick here. If it weren't for the idea of starting on my own account next spring at latest, I would hardly put up with it. There are too many bosses here; as Paul Lloyd says, he is getting sick of it already, although he has only been here since Tuesday week. He says that at the four or five places he was at before, there was only one boss at each spot. That would certainly be an improvement. However it will knock some of the nonsense out of me I guess.

Yours truly,

Billy

Vermilion, Alta.
17.7.10

Dear Mother:

As I said last week, I wrote for a plot of township 56.6 - I got it on Wednesday. There are still 59 quarters open for homesteading in it. Unfortunately it is about 30 miles from here. I have offered Harold 5 dollars a day for himself and 3 horses (one for him, one for me and a pack horse) to take me there and show me round. He will do it if Mr. Sullivan will allow us to go. I think that by going on horse back I would be able to see more than by hiring a buggy and getting a government guide. Besides I would have the good of Harold's advice (two heads are better than one), whereas the guide would only be in a hurry to get the job done. Besides the guide and buggy would cost \$7 a day, and could not go where a saddle horse could.

Harold has taken up the idea quite keenly, so I told him to try and persuade the old man to let us go. I hope he will. If he won't, I suppose I had better stay here till after harvest and then try.

I had rather a varied experience last week. On Monday I spent all day till 5 o'clock chopping out small poplars and willows in front of Paul's ploughing. At five Harold led out a horse for me and we rode out to the full wheat and spent an hour picking mustard out of it. On Tuesday morning we had the adventure with the tall mare that I told Kitty about. After that George put in the other new mare and drove for a bit, then about 9 o'clock Mr. Sullivan came out and drove the horses the rest of the day while I held the plow. This is almost as tiring as doing the whole business alone, as he at first let the horses walk in and out a good bit, and then wanted to know if the plough wasn't going too wide now and again. However, after a few hours he realised that it was impossible to turn an even sod with sometimes one and sometimes two and sometimes no horses in the furrow. On Wednesday he said he thought I ought to be able to drive that team alone. I thought so too and tried it and had an awful time. As when you told them to start, Frank and Bob would go on and his old mare would as often as not start to back over the traces, then she would suddenly make a charge sideways and nearly upset the other two. Several times I had to lay the plough on its side and walk them about till they got used to going together. I was that mad that I could have sat down and cried several times. And the worst of it was that I couldn't even have the satisfaction of one smack at the brute, as if I did she would go mad. Besides it isn't really badness with the beast, it is only that she hasn't been trained properly. I don't think that anyone should give a person a beast like that to plough with and at the same time expect one to do a good day's work. I only got about an acre down and I was so tired out I could not sleep half the night. However, on Thursday I had an easy time fixing up two doors and a few other things in the house. On Friday I did some road work. All day Saturday I worked a disc harrow.

The weather here is pretty but lately too dry - it was 89 degrees in the shade of our tent.

I suppose Sally will forgive me for not writing separately to her. She and Kitty are getting to be great correspondents.

I expect that you will think I am very extravagant sending Tom so much money to get me a gun, but I think that if I go north this autumn, I will be able to shoot enough game to keep me in meat most of the winter, so that it should about pay for itself in a year or two. Besides, I wouldn't

like to be in such an out of the way spot without it. And I don't see the good of buying a cheap one here. That is the reason I am in a hurry to get it too.

I think Mr. Thomas has given up the idea of coming to Alberta as he seems to think he can do better in Washington or Oregon.

If Harold takes me up near the river and I see a really nice quarter, I guess I will file my application at once. On the other hand, if I don't much care for the look of the land, I will wait till after harvest and then take a look further south near Stettler I think, or possibly I may try Saskatchewan.

Tell Tom that last year several moose, one elk and a bear are reported to have been shot on 56.6. I guess he would like that.

Has the well gone dry this year yet? I expect you won't have quite so much trouble getting water as we had last year.

Kitty and Fan seem to have nearly hanged poor Dirk. I bet they had war - Fan championing Dirk and Sindy the pony.

How is Uncle Harry getting on now? I guess his hay is ripe. It will be ripe here in about 10 days. The wheat and oats are heading out nicely too. And the flax is just in blossom here and there.

Some months ago if anyone had told me that I could stand getting up at 5 am and to bed about 10 pm, I would never have believed it, but though I feel tired now and again, I don't seem to be any the worse. On Sundays I stay in bed till seven.

Paul Lloyd doesn't much care for his job here as he says the Sullivans are all a little queer, and so they are, especially George who is altogether too big for his boots.

I would rather be working on a place of my own too, as there would be more satisfaction in it.

Yours truly, Billy. The mosquitoes are not at all bad here this year. There are a few nasty flies (called bull dogs) and plenty of house flies.

Yours truly,

Billy

Vermilion, Alta.

7.8.10

Dear Mother:

I haven't much news for you this week as we have only been haymaking all the time. Luckily the weather has been fine ever since this night week.

We have got three small hayricks made. They only total about 20 tons of hay all put together. Enclosed are a few photos for Tom to tone and fix. They are printed pretty dark. One is of the hay stacker with a bundle of hay just ready to drop on the rick. It shows the sweep rake with its two grey horses on the left, and the team that hoisted the hay are just turning to come back. They are in the distance on the right. The other view shows the hay just dropping onto the rick. Another view shows the Methodist church in Vermilion with the manse on the right. Another view is of the Sullivan's house. The fifth shows Jay Omestead and me in the garden doing road work. I am in the light coloured shirt.

I got your letter with Mr. G. Kelly's enclosed. It was nice of him to write to you like that.

I guess if I see a nice half section I will homestead on one quarter and get the proxy papers for you to sign for the other quarter as soon as I can. On the other hand if I only see a nice quarter, I guess I had better take it, and let you wait till you come out and see for yourself. Or do you think it would pay better to wait and try and get us both fixed up at the same time. In any case I still think the best thing I can do is to go and see the country as soon as my time here is up. That is August 20th.

I have written to Edmonton to get the date of the next trip of homesteaders to the Grand Prairie country and if possible I shall try and see it too.

There is one other place that I think would be nicer than any of these, the Canoe River district in British Columbia. This is a valley which lies between Tete Jaune Cache on the Grand Trunk Line and the bend of the Columbia River. It is in between the mountains and ought to be sheltered from every wind except North West. At present it is very inaccessible as Dorend on the CPR is the nearest station, about 180 miles away. However, a line is being planned to run through the Canoe River valley from the Yellow Head pass to Kamloops, so that it should have easy access in the future. I have written to the Secretary of Information for particulars about it, but I am afraid it is out of the question. The only real reasons I fancy it are because it is near the mountains and consequently good running water and plenty of fish and game, and because you can grow apples out there, the winters being shorter than here.

Grandma seems to have got a great send off. It is very late and I ought to be in bed; when we get back from preaching this morning it was half past one and shortly after dinner. Rege asked me to go up to Mr. Merricks with him, and we didn't get back till 8 pm. However, I cadged a young pup from Mr. Merrick so it did that much good. He is only 3 days old yet so that I can't get him for a good bit.

Yours truly,
Billy

Vermilion, Alta.
11.8.10

Dear Mother:

I was talking to George and nearly called you sir by mistake. Since writing to Sally last night I have talked to the Sullivans some more about the plan of Mr. Sullivan taking me locating. He says that as I was here all the summer and saw the crops put in, I might as well wait and see them reaped and that if I do, he will take a buggy and team and spend a few days seeing the land near the North Saskatchewan with me and that he won't charge me a cent for it.

Of course the truth is that they want help pretty badly for the next few weeks. On the other hand, from my one point of view I shall be about a fortnight later in getting located. 2nd, the weather will probably be better, at least every one says Sept. and Oct. are the driest months of the year. 3rd, as the grass won't be so green and large stones etc. will show better. 4th, it will be cheaper. 5th, as he knows a lot of Indians and half breeds, he will be able to find the best land quickly and easily which I could not do.

So although I don't see that I will be likely to learn much by waiting till after harvest, still I think I will wait as I don't see that I will lose much.

You asked me about the crops round here. Just close here they did not suffer very much from the drought. It was a drier year than usual, and any one who did not plough deep enough and harrow pretty well suffered for it. We can see a few examples in the neighbours, and in one or two patches here too. But wherever the land was properly prepared, the crops are looking lovely. But on the other hand, at the other side of town a lot of the crops are reported not to be worth reaping. And I see by the papers that nearly all over Canada the crops are a potential failure from lack of water.

The only reason that I thought it would be as well for Tom not to have to work out, was that I thought he would find it very hard, both the work and the bossing about. Still I guess the experience he would get would be valuable to us all. If he does feel inclined to try that, I think his best plan would be to work out next summer for a few months in one of the older settled districts in Manitoba. Every one says that it is there the best farming is done, and if he had the Manitoba experience and I had the Alberta, we ought to be safe to get on.

Besides if he didn't like to be away too long he could work for about a month ploughing and seeding from the middle of April to the middle of May, then during the slack time he could come to us and help put up buildings, and then work out for another month in harvest.

On the whole this seems to me to be a good plan as I guess Tom would rather take hints from strangers than from me, and besides what he would know would be useful to us all.

If Tom would be satisfied to work out for a season, I think it would be a very good thing. You see, I thought that he probably would not.

You asked me how much money you ought to bring. It seems to me that it is not absolutely necessary for you to bring any, but of course we could build a great deal better homes if you

bring some. Besides, you see we will not be able to get any return worth mentioning from our land until the third year, and meantime we will want something to eat. Then again if we had a little money to buy a few cows and some sheep and pigs it would pay us I think. Of course we would not want these at first as we would not have anywhere to keep them, but after a month or two we would be able to manage them. You see by keeping animals we would be able to make a little money almost at once. Then we would be able to buy a couple of horses and a light car so that we could get about quicker.

The money I have got will probably be spent like this.

2 oxen	180	dollars
harness for above	17	“
1 good wagon	100	“
1 sleigh	25	“
1 plough	28	“
1 disc harrow	30	“
3 section harrow	15	“
1 mowing machine	50	“
1 rake	40	“
1 subsoil packer	75	“
1 seeder	85	“
1 reaper and binder	155	“
1 brush plow	25	“
cases hay (picks?), etc.	50	“
food for 2 years		
	<u>240</u>	“
	1,115	dollars

From the above you see that I won't have anything left to build a home with, but of course I need not (pay) each down for most of the machinery and besides I shan't want the binder for the first year and a half.

You will probably consider the subsoil packer an unnecessarily expensive item, but if I don't get that I shall want a roller and late on I shall probably have to get the packer too, so that I think it would be better to buy it next spring. Then there is the cost of barbed wire, so you see the money won't go very far.

Although we can get on without any more money, I think it would be a good thing if you brought about 200 pounds with you. However, there is time enough to think of that till next March or February any way. There will be no need to think of mortgaging the Grove, as it would be cheaper and better to sell some of the stocks and shares held by you and Uncle Harry at the mill.

I wouldn't dream of mortgaging for several reasons. First, it looks bad, second it would upset the securities held by the bank, and thirdly there is no need for it. I got the latest map and bulletins from the government of British Columbia the other day, but I have not read them all yet. I notice that the Canadian Northern Railway runs a little differently from what I expected; it leaves the valley of the Canoe River a little south of Tete Jaune Cache and follows the North Thompson river. The Government warns you not to go into British Columbia unless you have a taste for pioneer life, so I suppose we had better give up the idea.

You are getting to be very early birds, I shouldn't bother if I were you. Mr. Sullivan doesn't get up till after seven here, so I don't see why you should. Besides they tell me that in the winter any of them don't get up till nine.

A good many vegetables grow very well here. Rhubarb, peas, butter beans, beets, potatoes and carrots. The carrots are the nicest I ever tasted. White turnips too are splendid.

The oats here will be ripe in about a week.

Yours truly,

Billy

Vermilion, Alta.

14.8.10

Dear Kitty:

Enclosed you will find a photo of Mrs. Sullivan (on the right) and Miss (Clevet) a visitor, riding astride as they all do here. It looks a little odd doesn't it, but not so queer as I expected.

I am sending you two photos of myself with a sweep rake, one with the rake empty, the other coming back with a load of hay on it.

We have been haymaking all the past week and expect to be doing the same all this week. Two of the boys reaped the winter wheat one day last week. They had only about 11 acres of it; it was tried as a sort of experiment as they never grew it before. I think it should give a fair return too.

It rained from 6 to 7 yesterday morning so that we did nothing to the hay till one o'clock. Luckily we got the biggest hayrick finished at 10 to 8 the night before. However in the afternoon we had 3 mowing machines going, so that we got quite a lot cut. Just at the finish I bent the cutting bar of the machine I was working.

I am glad you are making such a good herd of Brownie. It would be nice if we could have him out here, but we couldn't as the change of climate would be apt to kill him.

Fan will soon get tired of Dirk I guess, now that she has to keep him chained.

The wild ducks here have a rather curious plan. When the young ones are about half grown they leave them all in charge of one duck while the old ducks fly away to feed. So that lately we often see from 40 to 100 young ducks all swimming about after one old duck. At first I wondered how on earth they managed to hatch out so many.

I saw a flock of 8 wild geese go flying down the lake at about 7:30 the other day. They made quite a noise with their curious call. These are the first wild geese I have seen.

Did you make out a list of what I will want, to be sure not to forget to put in my wagon yet. I have added two or three items to mine this week, so that it is getting quite formidable. I am trusting to you to think of the provisions principally.

Yours truly

Billy

P.S. I am sending Tom a booklet issued by the Vermilion Board of Trade. They crack up the district pretty well, still it is one of the richest districts in the North West. At least so the Government say, and so two or three people who have toured a good bit tell me.

Vermilion, Alta.
17.8.10

Dear Mother:

Enclosed is a form of requisition for filing by proxy. I only got it today. If you want me to make entry for you, you must fill it up and date it. I don't really know whether you had better do that or not. You see, you might rather have the land near wherever Tom settles; of course it goes without saying that I would rather have you near me, but I don't altogether like to do the choosing for you as it seems rather the reverse of what I ought to do.

Still, if you didn't like it afterwards, I don't think you would find much difficulty in getting it changed by paying \$10 extra.

I have not done any land hunting yet, but hope to soon, as the crops will probably all be reaped next week.

We had a frost here last night, but I don't think it will have injured the crops as it wasn't very hard though it felt very cold getting up this morning..

You must not be offended at what I said above about the homesteading, as I assure you my intentions are good even if they are badly expressed.

Tom will probably be able to get a quarter within a mile or two of me in a year's time if he likes it, as there is still a bit of open land up there.

We were haymaking again this week. On Monday I was unlucky again as when I was mowing, one of the big gear wheels of the machine smashed right up. George started to take it home and gave me the Massey Harris. I asked him what would happen if I broke that too; he said I couldn't even if I tried. So I started in and luckily I didn't break it. That is the best of the Massey Harris machines, that they are very strong.

I got your letter on Monday. It came in 12 days, the quickest I ever got. I think you had better not get a saddle for the present at any rate. You see, I shan't have a horse for some time and besides the Western saddle has several advantages which partly make up for its drawbacks, so that I don't know which kind would be most useful yet. I am getting used to the cowboy saddle now as I did a lot of riding lately. I am no great jockey yet though, still I generally stick on.

We saw some prairie chickens this evening and one flew right against the wire of the east line fence, so George went and picked him up. The shooting season opens in about a fortnight. I didn't get the invoice for the gun yet. I am afraid I will have to pay very heavy duty on it. I am glad you went after it so soon.

Yours truly,

Billy

Vermilion, Alta.

Friday, 26.8.10

Dear Fan:

The other day we were working at the far side of the lake, so we crossed at the narrow part. Coming back George took the team I had been using on a sweep rake and drove the wagon. I went ahead with the others in the buggy. He forgot to shorten the traces, so of course where the pull was hardest in the middle of the lake, the pole slipped back out of the neck yoke. The pull of the horses virtually ran it deep in the mud before he stopped them, so he was nicely stuck. You might bet I laughed. In the end he opened the traces and climbed onto one of the horses and rode home. The rest of us didn't wait to see that though. We got the wagon out by tackling a team to the back of it and dragging it ashore.

I did not get the invoice of the gun yet, so I suppose there must have been some hitch in sending it.

The shooting season for ducks opened on Tuesday. When coming back to dinner on that day, Harold had their gun with him when we saw some grouse run into the bush. As he had the other things to carry, he told me try if I could shoot a big one. So I went round a bit and came out where the birds went in. One of them flew nicely so I fired at him and luckily hit him. George and Harold were very much surprised at my hitting him. A little further on Harold shot two partridge (the first I saw here) in one shot but they were pitched. At dinner I was dead from being congratulated on my shooting. However it did good as Mr. Sullivan stood me 25 cartridges. I have used 23 of them and have only shot 9 ducks; the rest were all misses including one I fired at a muskrat.

I had another accident that might easily have been serious on Wednesday last. We were reaping the wheat and Mr. Sullivan had ridden Polo up there, when Polo got away from him. He walked after him, but Polo would not let him catch him, so he asked me to take one of the spare horses and get him (the binder takes 6 horses but we always take 8 out so as to run it all day without any stops except to change horses). I started off bareback on Jack and carried a little oats in a basket on my arm. I caught him after a bit and then as he had a saddle on and Jack hadn't, I got on him and led Jack. Polo shied badly and then started full gallop. I could not start Jack up fast enough, and I did not like to let him go. The result was that I was dragged out of the saddle. This was right enough but unfortunately my right foot caught in the stirrup and of course Polo ran away and started to lash badly. I held on to the right line and so kept him turned a little sideways so that his hind legs missed me every time. He turned in on the standing wheat at once so that I had a sort of toboggan ride on my back. After a bit I got my foot free, then I stopped so fast that the jerk took the line out of my hand so that I lost both horses. The only thing I held on to the whole time was the basket.

Harold came up at once as he had seen the whole accident and had run through the wheat to try and stop Polo. He (Harold) was as pale as a ghost as he was sure I would have been brained. I caught Jack at once and Harold caught Polo. I expected a lecture for flattening the wheat, but all they were scared about was me.

We measured the trail through the wheat later on and it was only 40 feet. I don't know quite how far outside the wheat I was when I fell. Harold says 10 to 15 feet, so that I had a good slide

hadn't I. The best of it was that I wasn't hurt the least bit.

I never even heard of (Al) Ward and Mary Murphy's engagement before. I wonder what does Ellie Driscoll think of it.

Yours truly

Billy

Vermilion, Alta.
Sunday, 8:00 p.m., 28.8.10

Dear Cindy:

Mr. Sullivan and I are to start early in the morning land hunting if the weather is fine. It looks a bit doubtful, worse luck. We must first go into town to get the latest list of vacant land, so that I expect to post this then. We are taking bread and butter along and a gun as we hope to be able to shoot what meat we want. It would be quite a picnic and I feel sure lovely, if only it wasn't such a serious job.

The Sullivans have been very nice to me for the past week or two, they have different manners to what we are used to. For instance they say rather more than what they think, instead of a great deal less as we usually do. Still when you get used to that, they are really very nice people at the bottom and very kind to their animals; at least all except Mr. Sullivan, as he is just a shade hard on his own horses.

I came across a rather good description of the USA customs the other day in "Lady Betty across the water" and as it might easily be the Canadian customs, I am copying it for you. "Most of the others were more fortunate about getting these things; nevertheless they seemed far from easy in their minds, and though they protested almost tearfully that they'd nothing whatever to declare, stern persons in uniform stirred up their boxes as I used to do with the nursery pudding, when all the plums had sunk to the bottom."

You will remember the Lady Betty stories in the (Windsor); this book is about her visit to the States.

I told Fan the other day about my shooting the ducks; well we ate them on Saturday and they were simply lovely. I ate the whole of one of the partridge Harold shot last Tuesday or Wednesday and it was lovely too. I never tasted a partridge before. All the game here is one of the great advantages of this country and it ought to be still better further north.

Harold had a great chase after a prairie wolf the other day on Polo. He says he was slowly overtaking it when the coyote went under a fence and of course he had to stop. There were two or three howling round here a few nights ago. They made a great row. I should have thought there was quite a pack of them, if the boys hadn't told me that it only takes a few to make all that row. I did not even get the invoice for that new gun yet. I wonder why. I hope it won't be long now as it would not pay me to have to make a special trip into town from my prospective homestead for it.

I will remember to get near a river or lake if possible, that is if the land there is good in other ways.

I think it will be better to build the first home on my 1/4 and then when you come out we can build one to suit us all on Mommy's. Besides if I put it on hers and anything happened to prevent her getting out in time, we would lose house and everything.

Vermilion

4. 9.10

Dear Mother:

As you will have guessed, I have quite a bit to tell you this week. I went into town on Monday to get plots showing the open land north of the river. The subagent could not give them to me as his district only extends to the river. I asked him to telephone to Edmonton and get them down by the night train for me. He consented to do it although of course it was not his business. We found then that there was a storm on between Vegreville and Edmonton, so he could not get through. So I went to the telegraph. Next morning I rode in as soon as the office was open and got the plots. In the end it was about 1 o'clock on Tuesday before we got away. We had two bags of oats and a box of provisions and my rugs and two double blankets, two horse blankets, a buffalo robe, a waterproof shirt, tea pail, pot, basket and a little axe.

At about 5 o'clock we had tea at the house of a half breed; we had our own provisions but got hot water from them to save lighting a fire. We started out again at about 6 and at 7:15 we came to an Indian encampment and tried to get directions from them, but we did not make much hand of it as they only knew Cree and French. Just as it got dark we got lost altogether and for a long time we could not find a trail of any kind. It got cloudy so we could not see the sky, and as we kept coming to lakes and having to go round them, we nearly lost our sense of direction. I had Mr. Waldron's compass and that corrected us a bit. I proposed camping out, but as it was showery Mr. Sullivan wanted to find a house. About half past eight we came to one where a young American lived alone. He let us put the horses in his stable and gave them some hay and let us sleep on the floor, near his cooking stove. I got up at five and found everywhere covered with hoar frost. I gave the horses some oats and lit the fire. Then as the American or Mr. Sullivan were not up, I took the gun and went after ducks. I shot two but they fell in a lake so I took off my boots and stockings and rolled up my trousers and drawers and waded for them. The mud on the edge was frozen and the sun was not up so it was mighty cold. The water felt quite warm when I got to it. I got the ducks but stepped into a hole and got wet nearly up to my waist. When I got out I wrung the water out of the legs of my breeches and put on my boots and socks again. My legs did not dry till about 5 in the evening so that I had an uncomfortable day. We started on again at a little after seven. At the first lake we tried to water the horses, but the wretched things suddenly broke through the bottom and began to sink, so we had to get out. Luckily the crust on the mud was strong enough to hold us up. So we got the horses untacked and they were able to founder out. By this time all four wheels had sunk just up

to the axles. However, I hitched the strongest horse to the back axle with a middling long rope and by pulling a bit and (spoking) the wheels we got it out. Later on we came to a well where we got water for the horses. Mr. Sullivan wanted to go see George (Kamras) the Galatian who did some of the breaking here, so when we got to the Galatian settlement we tried to find his house. Most of the Galatians don't know any English, so we were soon in difficulties again. Luckily we came to a Mr. (Ros..?) place who told us that George was called Carmelite so we kept saying Carmelite, and tried Carmelite and gesticulating till we found him. About two miles before we found him, as we were crossing a boggy spot, the horses suddenly sank again and they fell. Then the tall mare was pulling across the other one's head and holding it under water. I jumped out like a shot and managed to get the top one a little sideways so as to get one nostril of the bottom one clear. They did not struggle so I was able to keep them that way while Mr. Sullivan opened the straps. The top mare then floundered away and got out of the bog herself and he went after her. While he was hunting her I got the other one out. We then had to hitch on to the back side again and haul the rig out. There must have been a special providence watching over us as we did not even break the pole. The only damage done was that the buckler on one martingale tore out. It was an awfully tight squeak for the smaller mare. I was full sure she would be drowned. I got out the axe then and chopped some willows and laid them on the softest spots, and we walked across and drove the rig. We were both a bit wet, but we were thankful to get out so well.

That evening we crossed the North Saskatchewan at Hopkins ferry and went on to Caskeyville. We put up near there at the house of a Mr. Joe Mabily. That was the best farm house I have seen in this country. We started out early next morning and explored a bit on our own hook till about eleven, then I hired a Mr. Charles J. Markstead to ride one of his horses and show us land. \$2.50 from then till 9 p.m. Of course we had maps, but I thought it was better to get someone who knew the trails to show us round as it would save getting caught in bogs again. It was well worth the money too, as he saved us a lot of time and also showed us what he thought were the best quarters. Of all we saw there were only 4 quarters which would be at all likely to suit us. The first decent one we saw was S.E. 3-57-6. The soil of this is good, the surface is a bit rolling like the big stone field. There is a fair lot of wild hay on it. There is no water; that is, there are two small lakes which would freeze right to the bottom in the winter, so that to water cattle we should dig a well. I could plow about 40 acres of it with a brush breaker right as it stands. The rest should be cleared with an axe.

The next was N.E. 34-56-6. This contains almost the whole of a lake of about 60 acres extent. This did not freeze to the bottom last winter. There is

lots of hay on this quarter so that it would be fine for stock. There is only a little land suitable for grain growing.

Then there was S.W. 35-56-6. There is about 100 acres of this quite clear of bush and almost flat. The soil is about 4 inches of black loam, then a subsoil of a mixture of fine gravel and sand. There is almost no hay on this and no water at all. One corner of this touches one corner of the last vertical quarter. So that if we get the two, we would have a good combination but either alone would hardly do.

The last nice one I saw was S.E. 34-56-6. On this there is one piece nearly square of from 25 to 30 acres quite clear of bush. The soil of this patch is fair but a bit light at the South East corner. The subsoil is clay in the north and gravel in the South. There is a small slew or lake near the NW corner round which some hay grows. The west side is covered with poplars, under which there is good soil. If I was only looking out for a quarter for myself alone, I would prefer this of all I have seen. All these quarters are situated relatively to one another as shown in this sketch. The narrow parallel lines show the space reserved for roads.

[There is a sketch here of the 4 quarters]

The North Saskatchewan River runs about a mile south of the south line shown in my diagram. The main advantages of these quarters, besides what I have mentioned, are that they are on the old Edmonton to Battleford trail which is of course a good one, the best in that country. The Government telegraph line runs near and the nearest telegraph office is at Moose 6 or 8 miles away. Wells dug near give good water, a bit hard but free from alkali. If the railway runs that way as I think it will, there will be probably stations at St. Paul about 12 miles to the North West and at Mooswa about 8 miles South East.

The drawbacks are that the soil is only moderately deep and is a little apt to be parched up in a dry year owing to the character of the subsoil. And that at present they are about 50 miles by a good trail from Vermilion, the nearest railway station.

I am enclosing a township map so that you can see pretty well where they lie. I put ink crosses on the two townships I mentioned. You can guess pretty well what part of the township the sections lie in from the numbers.

I don't know quite what I ought to do, but in any case I shall have to wait till I get the proxy form back before I can file for either of us. Meantime,

I guess I will go up to Edmonton and see if I can see some more land. Of course this will cost a bit, but still it may be worth it. And it will be better to look before you leap. I wish you or Uncle Harry or Tom were here to talk to about this as I don't like acting all alone.

Besides, I may not see any I like better, and yet when I come back these may be taken by some one else. Of course I saw lots more land, but as most of it was unsuited to us, I don't see the good of telling you about it.

There are two other advantages of the land up there that I forgot to mention. One is that it is near the finest building logs I ever saw, Tamarack and Spruce, and that there is a post office where there is a weekly mail within about 5 miles. Of course you had better write to Vermilion till I give you a new address.

On Thursday night we slept on the kitchen floor at Mr. Markstead's and on Friday morning I got Mr. Sullivan to go back to these quarters again, and I hunted up the survey posts or some of them, and dug holes every here and there to see what sort the soil was. We started from there at about 10 o'clock on Friday. We got to Hopkins ferry at noon where we got dinner and some hay for the horses. On Friday night we stopped at the house of a half breed named Isere Lobaquin. They only talk a mixture of French and Cree so that we could not talk much. He had one son 14 years old who talked English well and his old father could talk good French.

After supper Mr. Sullivan wanted to know what way the house faced, and as the young chap had gone to shoot some ducks, we had only the old chap to ask. Mr. Sullivan tried him with north and south but he only said ne comprend. I could not think of the word for rise and didn't like to chance arrive, so I said le soleil se couche, and pointed to what I thought was west, and he said bein le soleil se couche so then to make sure, I said nord and pointed north and he nodded again. It really would be nice to talk to these French half breeds if I only knew more French. If I knew more French words and didn't have to think of them, I could get on with them without knowing Cree.

There is some good land in the half breed settlement, but as I guess you are like me and would prefer white neighbours, I didn't do any special looking round there. The same is true of the Galatian settlement. Still, both the breeds and Galatians are nice people. We got back here at about half past twelve yesterday, all right after all our adventures but feeling a bit tired and glad to get back.

Most of the crops round here had to be out before they were quite ripe owing

to the early frosts. The crops up north are as a whole nearly a week later than those here, but on the other hand they did not get the early frost that we got. Their first frost was on the night of August 31st, about a fortnight later than the frost here. Tom seems to be doing well with his calves. I am very glad Cindy is going to Killarney as she will have that to look back on all her life.

This letter will probably not be much good as I am naturally a bit upset about this homesteading business. I don't know quite what virtues I expected to see in the land, but somehow it looks a pretty big job to tackle land that has never been touched before. Mr. Markstead says that you get to like it a bit better when you have worked on it a bit and I expect that is so.

By the way, Mrs. Markstead, who is the only Methodist in the immediate vicinity, told me to tell you she hoped to have you for a neighbour. Most of the others are Presbyterians.

Although I got your letter (saying Mr. James S(?) had sent on my gun) last Tuesday and today is Sunday, yet I have not got an invoice from him yet. I bet he forgot to send it. I guess if he did I will have a job to get it from the Customs officials.

I shot 9 grouse on the way back, so we had a great Sunday dinner today. They taste just like rabbits, and not much like birds.

I don't think I shall get a spirit stove. I intend to get a stove pretty much like the little range at home, except that it must have a wood crate, not a coal one.

I can't have a cow this winter as I won't be able to have enough hay. Hay is very dear, about 1 pound a ton and it will cost quite a bit to feed two oxen; besides if I go near the river I could easily buy milk as the next door neighbour Mr. Tom Aarbo, a Norwegian, keeps about 30 cattle.

Yours truly,

Billy

P.S. Don't be put out if I don't write for a fortnight as I may go on a long trip from Edmonton. I don't expect to, but one never knows.

P.P.S. Mr. Sullivan's opinion of the land was curiously enough about the same as mine. The boys think me hard to please.

*Letter written on letterhead from The Hotel Cecil, Corner Fourth and Jasper,
Edmonton, Alberta*

Sept. 7th, 1910

9 p.m.

Dear Mother

As I hinted in one of yesterday's letters, probably Sally's, I went down to Tofield today to see the (Muntins). After quite a hunt round the town I found that they had gone to Innisfail last June or July, so my trip was all in vain. I got to Tofield at about 11:15 and as it was a damp cold day, I turned into the Queen Hotel for dinner at 12. It cleared up then, so I started out for a good walk round after dinner. There is only one train a day each way, so that I could not leave till half past six. I walked a good bit east and south and came quite close to a big lake. I think it was Beaver Lake. This is a big one 12 miles by 6, so you can easily find it on the map if you wish to.

I got back to the town at about 5 and went to the hotel again and asked if I could get supper before train time. The owner said yes that supper would be ready at a quarter to six, so I waited. While waiting I overheard two men talking about the probable route of a railway in the country north of the Saskatchewan River. So I joined in and told them that I was up there last week and what the people up there said about the chances of the railway. This served instead of an introduction, so not to lose any chance of getting news, I asked if they knew the country west of Edmonton. It turned out that one of them had done quite a lot of railroad work out there, but he seemed a silent sort of man and didn't talk. However, the other man had spent from March to July in the Peace River country and he told me quite a lot about it. He had been to both Grand Prairie and Spirit River Prairie.

I hope you won't think I am getting too forward with strangers, but you see I won't get information if I don't ask for it.

Some time ago Mr. Sullivan suggested to me to buy a quarter section of unimproved land from the Canadian Pacific Railway by paying about 1/5 of the price down, the balance in installments. The idea being that we could reserve our homesteading rights for the time being, and that when the North West country is surveyed we might prefer it. You see, if you own homestead you can't do it again, whereas we could probably sell the quarter bought from the railway company at any time and not lose on it. The advantage of this is that we could get the land near a small town and station, and in a fairly settled district, not to mention near a church, etc., so that it would not be so hard

on you all as pioneering in the outskirts. The principal disadvantage on you all is that your homesteading rights will run out as soon as Tom comes of age.

I did not think much of this plan (as for one thing I didn't like the alkali near Vermilion) until when I was coming back here tonight, it suddenly came into my head when I was in the train that I had not seen any signs of alkali near Tofield, and also that I had walked over some good looking railway lands. The country there is fairly flat, but there are a good many fair sized clumps of poplars about 20 ft. high, scattered about to break the monotony. It would be necessary to bring either boards or brick to build a house up, as there are no building logs to be had. Altogether I rather like the notion, as it would be well to get some experience of the sort of things we would want before going too far away, then if Fan was feeling too much out in the cold, she could run up to Edmonton and have a go on the skating rink once or twice in the year. I went there last night for about an hour and a half; it wasn't half bad, but as I didn't know a soul I felt lonelier than ever.

I think that before finally homesteading I will drop in to the office of railway lands here and enquire what lands are for sale, the price, terms of payment, etc.

Mr. Sullivan said the other day that if you came out and found that I had taken a homestead near the river, that when you found it was about 50 miles from the present railway, you would go straight home again. I don't suppose you would, but there is something to be said on that side of the question. I am very sorry now that this idea did not occur to me when I was at Tofield, as in that case I would have looked over the land a bit more carefully. However, if necessary I can go down again as the fare is only \$2.10 or about 8/9 return.

I will know better what to do when I get back from this trip west.

I have written this so that you may see some of the different possibilities that are turning up, and so that you won't be too much astonished if I don't enter for a homestead at present. It's really very hard indeed to know what to do.

Yours truly,

Billy

(The Hotel Cecil letterhead)

Saturday

Sept. 10th/10

Dear Mother:

I got a letter from cousin Eva today partly in reply to one I wrote on Wednesday last, and partly inviting me down to Innisfail to see them.

If I homestead anywhere this year, I shan't be able to go as there is little enough time left now. So I wrote and thanked her, and told her that.

On Thursday I noticed a youngish man and his wife, a baby and a youngster of about 3 or 4, and the wife's father come in to the hotel. Last night the land guide was round here talking to me and he introduced me to them, telling me that the young man is to be one of the party. His name is Arnott and I think the father-in-law's name is Wilde, but I'm not sure as I didn't catch it clearly.

I have not spoken to the Mrs., but I talked quite a bit to both the men this morning and they seem decent sorts. They have brought all their belongings up to Edmonton and intend either to homestead or buy land, and go to live on it at once. I asked if they did not think it a bit late in the year, but they don't seem to think so. They were good enough to say that it would be nice if I settled near them, so you see I must have a very taking way. They seem nice mannered people so that other things being equal, I would not object to being next them, but I guess that it isn't likely to happen all the same.

You may write to Vermilion as hard as you like still as the Sullivans are collecting and sending on my letters, which is really very nice of them. Did I tell you that Mr. Sullivan invited me to go north to Cold Lake with the 15 wagons of flour which were to start on Tuesday last. It is about 100 miles north of Vermilion and would take at least 4 days up with the loads, and 2 back empty, probably longer when there were so many teams on the way as something would be sure to delay some of them. It would have been an interesting trip, but I thought it wiser to go west instead.

I got a letter from Sally a couple of days ago in which she says you are all quite keen on coming out here. I was awfully glad to hear that as I was a little afraid you might be doing it principally to please me. I think we will have a great time next summer laying out the farm and planning a house and outbuildings and putting them up. I have been planning various parts of the house and altering and improving the ideas for the past few weeks. I guess

you and Tom are doing pretty much the same in your spare moments.

You ought to see the lovely little pavilion, the boys call it, though it is really a closet I built for the Sullivans. It really is rather neat and it was about all done on wet days and in odd moments.

If you and Tom are planning a house, you will want to be careful not to make the slope of the roof less than about 40 degrees to the horizontal, as if you do, you will have to scrape off the snow after each snowstorm or else the weight will be too much for your roof. The Sullivans' hen house roof was smashed down last winter. I had a great time getting it up again with a jack and props this summer.

When you are going out you might as well bring the following, among other things. A couple of shovels (we can get or make handles here, but the Canadian shovel is a bad shape), 2 spades and the step (business?) for them; we can make handles for them too, but what they call a spade here isn't a spade at all, the shears we use for cutting tin, and the cartridge loading machine. Cartridges cost -/1-1/2 each here even when bought by the hundred, so that lots of people load their own.

If I was you I would start a list of the things you intend to bring with you, and add to it as you think of them. If you don't do something like that, you are sure to forget lots of things.

I went to the Hudson Bay Co. the other day and bought a waterproof sheet to spread on the ground under me on this trip. It is a pretty good one but rather dear, \$2.50. I also priced their blankets. The large best quality double ones are \$9.00, and their tents. They want \$20.00 for a 10 ft. By 12 ft. tent made of 12 oz. stuff. They have a nice folding camp bed for \$4.50 which when I was looking at, I got my finger caught in the joint and it burst the tip of it in grand style. Luckily it only caught the very tip of my finger so it isn't very bad.

On the whole I think I like the country round here better than that near Vermilion. For one thing they don't seem to have got the early frosts, and the woods are prettier as spruces are mixed with the poplars. Unfortunately it seems to be damper too. However, I'll know this better after next week's trip is over. On the other hand, if I settled down north of Vermilion, the Sullivans will give me a hand to get started.

I hunted up a Methodist Church today to go to tomorrow.

Yours truly,

Billy

Sept. 11th/10

I sent you an Evening Journal as I thought you might be interested in the account of J. Cornwalls and the press correspondents trip in the Peace River. There is really not much of special interest in it except the account of what bad rifle shots they were. You will also notice from the paper that Edmonton was "tickled to death" as our American cousins would say, by the visit of the Bristol business men.

I notice also from Friday's papers that the Government at Ottawa has refused to consent to the route of the western branch of the Canadian Northern Railway towards the Yellowhead Pass. I wonder what the C.N.R. will do now. The papers think they will go south, but our land guide thinks they will go north via the (pr....?) river pass.

I went to preaching this morning. There was a fine crowd there, very different to the Vermilion service. They are building a new church as the old one is too small. They have got the site of the first Protestant church ever built in Edmonton. Curiously enough, that was only built in 1871, that shows you how young this country is.

I think Edmonton will be a very important city in the future. They call it the gateway of the west. It seems to me that it will rival Port Arthur or Fort William, or even Winnipeg in 5 or 6 years. It is intersected by the three big transcontinental railways; the Canadian Pacific, the Grand Trunk Pacific and the Canadian Northern, and one of the USA railroads is also planning a branch here to it.

Yours truly,

Billy

11.9.10

I did not get either the gun or invoice for it from W.J.S. Wolfe yet. Tell him to wait till I see him next, etc.

I did not get a letter from any of you except Sally since last Tuesday week and as today is Sunday, that is almost a fortnight so I suppose it must have got delayed somewhere on the way out. If there was anything wrong with you I guess Sally would have heard it. By the way, that reminds me that Sally seems to think Fan isn't as well as she ought to be. I suppose it isn't lonesome for me she is.

I wonder will Sindy be satisfied to ride astride as all the ladies do here. If she won't, if I were her I would buy a really good side saddle at once and try and ride Uncle Harry's horses now and again if she can get them, so as to get used to riding and so as to make sure the saddle suits her and to get it soiled a little for the customs.

Don't let her get a bad saddle whatever you do, as out here one's life may hang on the goodness of one's saddle when out in the winter time. Besides, she will use it nearly every day so it will have to stand wear and tear.

I wonder how we will all get on our snowshoes. Of course it isn't necessary to be able to use them, but you can often take short cuts with them, whereas without them you can't leave the trails without sinking.

In the winter they tell me that you can't wear leather boots here as if you do, your feet get frostbitten. They all wear either big compressed felt boots or moccasins pronounced mock ass inns with the accent on mock. When in a stable or other damp spot they pull on galoshes or rubbers, as they call them, over the moccasins.

I guess you are tired of hearing that I won't write again for 9 or 10 days, but the guide told me that we won't be back for that length of time.

Tell Tom to get the .22 repaired and to bring it with him in the spring.

Yours truly,

Billy

Sept. 22nd, 1910

Dear Mother:

I have only just got back here from the western trip. I had a pretty hard time too, but curiously enough I have got fat on it. You see we were never quite sure when we might get the next meal, so put in big feeds when we had the chance. I guess I may as well tell you the story as it happened. It was a chapter of accidents right through and very disappointing in its result, as I did not see any land I liked nearly as well as the land I told you of before, near the North Saskatchewan river.

Four of us and Mr. Sutton (whose card I enclose) the land guide, started out from Edmonton on Monday, Sept. 12th in a three seated democrat drawn by two horses. We went through St. Albert and got to a little place called Ray the first night. We put up at a little hotel there. Mr. Arnott and I had a tiny room and one bed between us. Fred and Norman had a similar room and the guide had a room to himself. There was no wash stand in any room and no light. In the morning we had to take turns with the other guests and wash as best we could in a basin in the hall.

Just after starting out next morning the bush came out of one of the back wheels so we packed it up a bit and drove it in again. By noon we were in the middle of the Alexander Indian Reserve. We stopped and lit a fire and boiled some tea, etc. while the horses grazed. One of the horses rolled and broke his harness. I fixed that up with a bit of rope so that it held till night. That night we got to the house of a Mr. Rickson, a brother in law of the guide. Just before getting there we broke a front spring, and the bush came out of the back wheel again. That night Mr. Arnott and I again slept together, but as the bed clothes looked dirty, we heaped them on the floor and used my rugs. During the night we had a lively time with bugs. One beastly thing bit me over the right eye and it was all swelled and nearly shut all next day. I had a few more bites on the neck and shoulders, but the eye was the most conspicuous. Mr. Arnott did not swell at all, nor did any of the others.

Yours truly,

Billy

22.9.10

In the morning we tied up the broken spring with wire and took off the back wheel and wound a piece of cloth round the bush and drove it in again, then wedged it with 4 wooden wedges. It never came out again as long as we stayed with the guide. The guide mended the harness by bandaging it with zinc. It was 9:20 on Wednesday before we got started and I was a bit ill from the beastly bug bites. (If I ever go knocking around again I will carry some Keating's powder). You may be sure we took the rugs and our clothes out in the open and examined them well, after which we shook them unmercifully.

At about 10 o'clock one horse went very lame. Mr. Sutton tried several farms to get a horse to replace him and finally succeeded. That night we stopped at the home of a Mr. McLeod. Everything was nice and clean, but the swelling in my face shifted across to the other eye and was as bad as ever. In fact it stayed swelled all day Thursday. On Thursday night we camped in a wooded country near a lake. The guide had a small tent and I cut down a spruce tree and cracked off the light branches, and Mr. Arnott made a good bed of them while the other two boiled the kettle. We then put up the tent. We slept pretty well; the pine branches made a grand bed when covered with my waterproof sheet. On Friday my eyes were both alright, which was a great relief. You can scarcely imagine how much better I felt. I hope never to meet a bug again. Just after dinner on Friday one of the front wheels smashed up altogether and the axle came down suddenly on the ground. Luckily Norman, of the fellows, was a wheelwright so he and Mr. Sutton took off the wheel and went back with it to the last house we had passed. Norman took off the band and drove all the spokes one by one again. They then reddened the tyre and put it on again, after which they cut sticks and laced them across the spokes with wire. It carried three, while two walked most of the rest of Friday. Just at dark we got to a place called Peavine. The house we came to belonged to a Mr. George K. Hay, an opposition guide to Mr. Sutton. Mr. Hay was in Edmonton but Mrs. Hay, a very nice English lady, allowed us to sleep on the floor so we did very well. She also spent an hour playing the piano for us. She played all the old Scotch tunes. As Mr. Hay is Scotch, she knew them. She also played Hiawatha, The Merry Widow, Rainbow, Red Wing, etc. So we had a great time.

On Saturday Mr. Sutton wouldn't work, as he says that is the proper Sabbath. He isn't a Jew, but he has some funny religion of his own. He lives up to his belief such as it is, so I suppose it is hardly right to say much about it, but it doesn't seem to me to be purely Christian either. For instance, he thinks a man ought to have two or three wives at once. Anyway, on Saturday morning I was so tired of his breakdowns and his preaching and finally the

thought of wasting Saturday, that I said I would leave altogether and walk south to the Grand Trunk Line about 32 miles away. Mr. Arnott said he would do the same. The other two were town men and a bit scared of getting lost and so elected to stay with the guide.

Arnott and I started out at 8:20 on Saturday and walked west first, as we wanted to see the land we had come out to see. I had my rugs, overcoat, coat, drawers, vest, souwester, soap, towel, razor, etc., tooth brush and spare pair of socks rolled up in my waterproof sheet, so I cut a stick and carried them on my shoulder. Arnott had a similar bundle in a soldier's backpack, and a 30.40 Winchester rifle.

About 10:30 an old chap overtook us with a wagon. We asked him if he was going by Green Court and when he said he was, we asked him to take our bundles. So we got on better then. We had dinner at 11 o'clock at Meyerthorp post office. We got to Green Court at 3:30. We found Mr. Bayly, the post master and Dominion land subagent, and asked him if we could put up there. He allowed us to sleep on some hay on the floor of a small blacksmiths shop he had. On Sunday we walked away west and looked at lots of land, but it is all either already taken, or no good, or good soil but covered with trees or bushes. We finally saw a hill in the distance and made for it hoping to see some open country from the top, but it was no good. So we started back again and walked till an hour after dark in order to make Bayly's place again. We slept on the hay again and next morning we added two small tins of corned beef, a tin of sweetened condensed milk, some coffee, a pound of raisins, a pound of sultanas and a pound of dried pears to our load; also an empty golden syrup tin to boil water in. Then we started south. On Monday night we got to a hill between two big bogs, one of which we had crossed. It was as lonely a country as ever I saw, even in Kerry. We lit a fire and spread my sheet and rolled up in rugs and slept with our feet to the fire, and the loaded Winchester beside us, as there are lots of bears (brown, black and cinnamon so they say) in that country. We got up two or three times to keep up the fire, but we were not disturbed except by the distant howling of about two prairie wolves. We weren't seriously afraid of anything as of course bears or wolves won't go near you if left alone, but I could not help thinking of the nice fix I would be in if a big timber wolf grabbed me by the throat. On Tuesday morning we started off again as soon as we had light enough and walked hard till half past eight when it was very hot, so we stopped and made coffee with bog water, and we ate the meat and all the sultanas. We also ate the nicest looking of the cooking pears and I stewed the rest of the tin and we ate them that way. We started again at half past twelve and walked till half past two when Mr. Arnott shot two partridges with the Winchester. They were expensive birds, costing about 4 or 5 shots each. Just then we came to a little river

of very cold water in which we had a swim. After that while I skinned and cleaned the birds, Arnott lit a fire. Unfortunately it was windy and the fire started to spread. I had to go and help him to put it out. I tried boiling water in the golden syrup tin, but that didn't do. In the end I had to use one of the rugs to get it out. It scorched the rug a bit but did not seriously injure it. Anyway it was better than starting a prairie fire which might have burned us up.

We decided to wait till we got to a better place before cooking the partridges, so we walked on. Later on we came to a big spruce wood right in the middle of which we found a wagon trail going east and west. We did not know which way to follow the trail, but as we soon found a section peg which told us that we had come a mile east as well as 17 miles south from Green Court, we decided to chance it and go west. After walking about half a mile we saw a foot trail leading south, so I said we might as well light a fire and cook our birds and meantime someone might come along. So we did. We cut the birds in slices and toasted them on long forks cut from green wood. We had no salt, but we ate them and the raisins for want of anything better.

Just as we were done and the fire almost out, a man driving a cow came along. We asked him the way and if he could tell us of any house we could stop at. He said he kept stoppers, so we followed him. We got another meal from him and his wife and they made us up a good bed on the floor. It was a good job too, as next morning was wet. However, as Jenkins, the nearest station, was only eight miles away we started out. We got there at 11 o'clock. There is only one house there, a store kept by Swanson and Anderson, two Swedes. We asked if we might put up there till the next train and they said yes. So we slept there and came in on a construction train this morning. At least it started at 11, but did not get to Edmonton till 6:10 p.m. Altogether this trip cost me about \$70 and we are not anything the better off, except for the experience of life in the wilds.

I expect you will all think that I am a mighty poor walker to take 2-1/2 days to do about 30 miles, but I assure you we walked hard. It is no joke to carry a 30 lb. pack across bogs where you sink every step up to your ankles or through woods where you have to stop and climb over fallen trees. By walking pretty hard and no stops, we were able to make just two miles an hour, and two hours at a stretch was as much as we could well stand. Besides, we knew that there was no train between Tuesday morning and Thursday morning, and as we dare not risk the bog at night, we could not catch Tuesday's train, so we did not see the good of killing ourselves.

I was a bit disappointed at not finding your proxy form waiting for me when I

got here. If it turns up in the morning I shall file on S.E. 34-56-6 for myself and N.E. 34-56-6 for you, if I will be allowed (it may be reserved) or S.W. 35-56-6. These are the lands I went to see near the river north of Vermilion. I can't do any better as the western country is far worse. I only hope these are still open and that no one else has taken them.

It is very late so I will wait till to-morrow to answer yours and Kitty's.

Yours truly,

Billy

23.9.10

This morning as your proxy form had not yet arrived, I thought it better to go to the Dominion Land office and file on a homestead for myself. You see there are a whole lot of people looking round for land and I was afraid that all the spots I liked might be taken. Mr. Arnott has filed on S.W. 35-56-6 and his father-in-law has taken S.E. 3-57-6. Neither of them has seen the land, but they asked me about it and if they don't like it, they can abandon it again.

On the enclosed card I have marked my quarter with a small o, Mr. Arnott's with a +, Mr. Drew's with a . and the one I hope to get for you with a z so you can see the relative positions.

I hope I and all of you will like it. At any rate, I did my very best. I had a very nice letter from Harry and Eve Muntin last night. They think like Uncle Harry, that it would pay better to take improved land. We will know better later and if so, Tom can try an improved farm.

I shall go down to Vermilion tomorrow night again. If your form doesn't arrive by then, I shall have to come up here again. I am glad Kitty enjoyed her Killarney trip so well. It was a pity she had not better weather.

It is a great pity Tom had such bad weather for his harvest. Still he is not alone in that, as here in Edmonton it was a bit wet too. I guess there will be a lot of bother in thrashing it, not to mention the waste. It is too bad to have to work hard all the time at home and have so little for it. I wonder if we will be able to do much better here. At any rate, there should be very little fun of us going to the wall here as Tom or I could easily get work outside for 5 or 6 months of the year so that we could keep above water anyway. I am glad Dr. G. Munro liked the idea for Fan.

I guess you will be pleased by my having the Arnotts for neighbours. They are, of course, not perfect but they are not half bad.

One objection to the west country south of Green Court is that there is a large nigger settlement there. Also, there is a certain amount of Typhoid from there. I think on the whole that the place I picked is the best for us at present.

Yours truly,

Billy

24.9.10

Dear Mother:

I got your proxy form this morning. As I was passing the office coming out of the breakfast room, the clerk called me and handed me your letter. I had run right out of money so wasn't able to file for you till I could get some up from Vermilion. I got the bank of send down my signature last night by the train, and got them to reply by telegraph this morning, so that I had plenty of money by half past eleven. The moment I got it I went down to the Land office as fast as ever I could walk and luckily the quarter I wanted for you was still open so I filed on it for you.

I suppose you know the conditions. You will have to go to see the Land Agent here in Edmonton by about the 20th or 21st of March next and to be in actual occupation of your land on March 24th, 1911. If you fail to do this, your entry will be cancelled.

If Kitty will be 18 on Feb. 26 next, you cannot enter for a different homestead after that date so they told me.

I asked them if it wouldn't be possible to get a slight extension of time for you as the weather will be a bit cold for travelling then, but I couldn't get any more time for you.

Do you think you will be able to come out by then, the boat and train will be comfortable enough as they are steam heated even in the Colonist Class in this country. The unpleasant part will be the drive from Vermilion. I have worked pretty hard today hunting up stuff that I can't get at Vermilion. I bought a 10x12 tent, a pair of Hudson Bay 4 point blankets, flannelette sheets, etc.

I forgot to put in the card in the last letter, so here it is. I am awfully glad you and I are side by side without even a road allowance between, and Kitty will have her first lake too.

I forgot to tell you that I went to the land office today to get a permit to cut logs for building purposes. They asked me when I intended to cut them, and as I could not tell them, I had to do without a permit till I can find out where I can get good logs. I am afraid this will mean a hunt for a J.P. or some official as I must seek an affidavit before I can get the permit. I was a fool not to hunt up some good timber before, but I did not know all the rules. You see, it's easy to get J.P.s here, but it will probably be difficult to find them in the country.

My address will be: W.F. Wolfe
 Elk Point
 via Vermilion, Alta.

I had to interview the head postmaster and several clerks here in Edmonton to make sure of that today. You had better to be sure to (list) it on all letters from this out.

Don't put any Post Restante or anything on the letter, just Elk Point via Vermilion, Alberta.

Yours truly,

Billy

Elk Point via Vermilion

9.10.10

Dear Mother:

As I told Kitty last week, the weather was very unpleasant when I got to my homestead first. Still in spite of getting soaked wet, I did not get cold. It has been fine since except for one wet night. Arnott and I pitched the tent as best we could, at first we tied the ropes at one side to the wagon and drove pegs at the other side. As it was very low and uncomfortable, we spent Monday cutting logs and laid 4 rounds of them, then on Tuesday we put the tent up on this and banked it all round with earth after filling the chinks with chips. This is a great improvement as we can walk about in it now. My head doesn't even touch the stove pipe. You see, so as to get as much heat as possible, we put my range near the front of the tent and the chimney is at the back, so the pipe runs nearly the whole length of the tent. My range has room for 4 pots on top and has a fair sized oven. By the way I am a pretty fair cook, strange to say. I can make a fine plain cake but the sweet ones generally burn on top, or else are not cooked in the middle.

So far bread has been a failure as we are too tired to keep up a fire all night, and the tent gets too cold for the yeast to work.

It was a good job we raised the tent, as late on Tuesday night Mr. Drew (Mr. Arnott's father-in-law) walked in on us. I can't say I like the old beggar as he is too fastidious for a homestead. He has been rather rude to me once or twice too and seeing that he is living with me, that is a bit strong I think. The worst time was on Thursday night last. His beastly fox terrier was sniffing to the plates which were just dried, so I caught him by the back of the neck and was on the point of giving him a good toss on his back when I remembered he was a great pet, so I just jerked him back a bit and didn't upset him. Old Drew took him out of the tent and I supposed petted him. About 5 minutes later when I had nearly forgotten the incident, he came in again and said "There is one thing I do 'ate (he always forgets his H's) it is cruelty to animals, and I cannot understand how anyone, especially anyone who professes to be a Christian (this was a hit at me for saying my prayers every night and morning, an example which I noticed he followed last night) can be cruel to a poor dumb animal. If I see cruelty to animals I shall be sorry I came out here, and my wife will be sorry too when she comes." It occurred to me to say I was already sorry he had come, but I didn't say a word at all. Mr. Arnott was awfully wild and I am pretty sure he gave it to the old beggar later on when I wasn't there. Next morning Mr. Arnott apologized as best he could. We spent most of Wednesday fixing up a chimney at the back of the tent. On

Thursday I ploughed about half an acre as I thought it would be well to have it for potatoes, carrots, etc. next year. I had a great deal of bother with the plough as it is a new one I brought out from Vermilion and it wasn't running right. In the end I had to get on one and alter the beam. It works fine now; the last half of the bit I ploughed is nicely done, though I am saying it shouldn't, but the first part is very bad. Oxen are a bit nicer to plough with than horses.

On Friday and Saturday I helped Mr. Arnott to cut logs and draw them out of the wood. We got 26 logs each 27 feet long out in the two days. He is to help me build my house in return day for day.

I have not got any letters from any of you for nearly a fortnight; we can only get letters once a week here at the best. The mail leaves Vermilion on Thursday from now on instead of on Monday, so that Thursday will be the best day for you to post letters to me.

We had an immense lot of stuff on the wagon when coming here. I will give you a list so that you can tell anyone else what to bring when they are going homesteading.

1 range, 12 lengths of stove pipe, 2 elbows, 1 damper, 1 kettle, 1 porridge pot, 2 enamel basins to wash up in, 4 augurs, 2 pickaxes, 2 post hole augers, 2 logging chains, some ropes, forks, knives, spoons, 3 pulley blocks, 60 lbs. nails, 4 pair hinges, a latch, a hack saw, 200 cartridges, Arnott's gun and rifle, 12 lb. hammer, crow bar, 2 pikes, 2 chisels, wrench, 1 gallon can of oil, lamp, lantern, axle grease, rule, steel tape measure, 4 bread tins, (brand) mixer, 2 baskets, some assorted bolts and nuts, 1-1/2 doz. candles, frying pan, spade and shovel, 5 axes, 1 tent, 2 pair Hudson Bay blankets, 1 pair sheets (flannelette), clothes line and pins, Vaseline, blacking, (black) lead and brush, candied fruit, dates, macaroni, chocolate, cloves, ginger biscuits, arrowroot biscuits, 50 lbs. flour, 20 lbs. flake oatmeal, 20 lbs. sugar, 1 tin marmalade, tin jam, 10 lbs. maple syrup, thin corer, 2 boxes yeast cakes, tin baking powder, 4 cans condensed milk, 2 lbs. dried peaches, 2 lbs. dried apples, 2 lbs. dried pears, 1 lb. tea, 1 bottle Yorkshire relish, 1 tin (bloaters), 2 tins sardines, 2 lbs. butter, 1 tin pineapple, 2 lbs. haricot beans, 2 lbs. salt pork, 1 ham, salt, 2 lbs. raisins, coffee, soap, lemon and strawberry conserves, matches, 4 lbs. rice, 5 lbs. l....., blue bag, 1 lb. lye. Bird egg powder, tapioca, onions, cups and saucers, plates, (), tea pot, sugar basin, butter dish, egg cups, pie dish, pepper, cheese, and washing board and tub. 4 window sashes, glazed; enough 2x6 timber to make frames for them. 1 plastering trowel, 2 (tel.....) chains, 4 loaves of bread which we ate on the way, my trunk and bag, Mr.

Arnott's trunk and the plough, a bag of potatoes and a bag of carrots and beets. So you see we had a good load besides two bags of crushed oats for the oxen.

I think I have told you most of what we have, although there are, I know, some things left out.

I wish I had my house up.

Yours truly,

Billy

Elk Point via Vermilion

23.10.10

Dear Mother:

My house didn't grow any bigger since this day last week, but I hope it will grow a good bit this week. On Monday morning I started out with the oxen team for the nearest lumber mill, said to be 9 miles from here. Arnott hired another team and sent Mr. Landis, the man he has building his house, with them. I think the mill is a good 14 miles. Anyway, it was getting dark when we were loaded up, so we stayed the night with the lumber men. The whole gang is French except one, and he is English. Most of them knew a little English so we got on famously. They are really very nice men and not at all as bad as they are painted in stories. We got back here at 4:30 on Tuesday. I brought 798 sq. ft. of timber one inch thick and Lanais brought 803. On some of the hills we had to tackle both teams to one load and then go back for the other load. Of course I do not want the lumber yet, but I was afraid it might freeze up and not snow for some time and then of course oxen could not travel, so I thought it better to get it while I could.

On Wednesday, Thursday and Friday I was cutting logs and on Saturday I drew 17 of them up to the house. It doesn't sound much to only draw 17 logs, but you see I had to snake them out of the wood and load and unload them.

On Friday morning I walked over to Elk Point for the letters (5 miles) and was lucky enough to get 5; two from you, one from Sally, one from Fan and one from Saidie, besides an enclosed one from Sindy and the Daily Mail. So you see I was very lucky.

The nights are pretty cold here now. Some days the ice doesn't melt till about 1 o'clock. On Saturday when I got up I happened to look at the thermometer and it was 6 degrees below freezing in the tent, in spite of 4 of us sleeping there. Still we sleep soundly enough, but I don't take long to get the fire going in the mornings.

I guess you will like to know what we eat, so I will tell you. I make stir-about in the morning and we have that and coffee and plain cake (flour with salt and baking powder) with butter or golden syrup for breakfast and the remains, if any, of the stew of the night before. We got butter from Mr. Aarbo for 20 cents or -/10 a pound. For dinner we have the same with haricot beans sometimes, and at night we have an Irish stew made from 2 grouse, whenever Arnott or Lanais can shoot them; potatoes, beans and macaroni (and carrots and onions when we can get them) and of course we drink tea. So you

see, we live fairly well. We have finished the ham that we brought out from town; while we had that we were still better off. Last Saturday week I bought 2 dozen eggs for 50 cents which was not dear I think. We have to pay 50 cents a bushel for potatoes or about seven pence a stone; very dear I think, still they are good ones.

Saidie seems to have had a great time on her honeymoon. She wrote me a fine long letter and told me all she saw. I am very glad she liked the album. I thought it would be a curiosity at home. I expect it was a bit late, but I could not help that as I sent it the very first day I was in town. I had quite a job to think of anything that would get through the Customs.

The photo of the James S..o(?) is rather nice. You don't often see one in which every one is smiling and no one giggling.

I am afraid you will think my house very modest after the designs you sent, but we will try and build a better one on your land next year. Sally and Kitty did finely on their exams, didn't they.

Everyone has a coffee mill in this country as most of them grind their own coffee, so it will be easy to get one here. I don't know whether they are as good as the one at home though. They don't look as good.

There are not any blackberries at all here, none nearer than British Columbia, I think.

I thought Sally has the Berhuaseland(?) Bonds stowed away in her own treasures, but I am not sure. They came due in May and November anyway.

Arnott and I hired a Mr. Jackson to bring out a load of shingles, etc. for our roofs from Vermilion, so we have most of the material on the ground now.

I don't know the price of wild ducks at Edmonton, but I guess they would be hard to sell. You could buy them for 10 cents, -/5 in Vermilion. They are all gone south now; the lakes here are all deserted.

If I were you I would book second class on the boat and colonist on the train. When you are on the train, you can walk along and see how the first class people do and change if you wish. The trip will be warm enough, except the drive from Vermilion out here. The train will be rather too hot, I expect.

Yours truly,

Billy

Elk Point
Vermilion, Alta.
30.10.10

Dear Mother:

Arnott went to the post office on Friday but I didn't get any letter from home, so I suppose it must have missed the mail; however, I got one from Sally and one from Mr. Sullivan. He began his "Dear Sir", I wonder what happened to him as they all called me Billy all the summer.

On Monday I got on generally with my house and on Tuesday morning I started in great spirits, but at about half past nine I foolishly put the head of an axe into the cap of my right knee. It didn't go very deep and I patched it up with sticking plaster. It didn't bother me much that day or the next, but on Thursday it was so stiff and sore that I had to lie down all the afternoon. On Friday it was so sore that although I lay down all day, I began to be afraid I would have to go to Vermilion to see a doctor. Yesterday it was a lot better and today I can walk pretty well. I would never have believed such a little cut could pain so much. This would hardly be worth telling you, except that it explains why the house hasn't grown faster. The house is just as high as my shoulder all round now.

Working with an axe is a bit dangerous at the best. Arnott put a big cut in his right boot without cutting his foot the other day, and Lanais, the man he has working with him, cut a piece right out of the ball of the thumb of his left glove and never even scratched his hand. That was a tight squeak, wasn't it. You see, we have all had a lesson now so you may be sure we will be careful in the future.

I felt very down in the mouth all the week and once or twice I was almost sorry I came out to Canada, still I never quite repented. We had a little snow on Tuesday last and quite a lot fall from 8 o'clock to 11 o'clock on Wednesday morning. It remained on the ground till Friday when most of it melted. The shallow lakes are frozen over and don't thaw even at midday, and the ground is frozen down about 2 inches. I had to use a pick to get some earth to put round the bottom of the house.

So far we have been able to break the ice on our well by banging the bucket on it, but I expect we will have to use an axe soon.

You will probably imagine from this that we are half dead with the cold, but we aren't. Most days I wear a trousers and overalls over it, and a flannel

shirt and a sweater. No under clothes nor coat nor waistcoat. I don't know why we don't feel cold, but it is none the less true that we don't. By the way, woolen clothes covered by cotton ones makes a splendid combination as the wool keeps you warm and the cotton stops the wind.

Ever since last Sunday we have left the two oxen loose with bells strapped to their necks. We had no bother in catching them till last Thursday when they got in with about 30 of Tom Aarbo's cattle and wouldn't wait. I couldn't help, and after chasing them a couple of miles, Arnott gave up. On Friday he and Lanais went after them and after about 2 hours, brought them back. They are kept tethered again since.

What kind of a rifle did Tom buy? Is it a new .22 or what? I hope he bought a magazine rifle as the single shot ones are very difficult to reload here during January and February. He ought to get the little Winchester repaired and get Sindy to practice with it and bring it out when she comes.

I got the gun on Friday. It is very nice indeed. It is just as I wished in everything, except that the stock is a shade too straight. Still I expect I will soon get used to that. I haven't shot anything with it yet.

We seem to eat a terrible lot here. Four of us are getting through flour at the rate of 2-1/2 to 3 lbs. per day, besides a lot of flake meal. We have also used up 40 lbs. of sugar and 2 lbs. of tea and 1-1/2 lbs. of coffee in 30 days. It beats me where we put it, but I suppose it is a good sign. I guess it would madden Fan though.

Old Mr. Drew is getting tired of his homesteading experiences. He was talking about abandoning it the other night. He seems to have expected to get land like England which has been cultivated for about 2000 years. Of course it is nonsense to expect to get crops like you do at home, or prices either, but then you can get so much more land here than you can at home that that makes up the difference.

I think it would be a good job for Arnott if his father-in-law did clear out. For instance, he has ordered a lot of pure bred fowls from the Government Agricultural farm and he hasn't anything to feed them on or anywhere to keep them. I remarked the other night that the eggs he will get will cost him about 25 cents each if he is lucky, and about 50 cents likely enough. I bought 2 doz for 50 cents last time I was at the store. He has no business of fowl until next year or the year after when he could feed them, but he imagines that he will make money on them. Besides, I would not begin by buying costly June bred. Any old things would do to practice on as he will

probably freeze them this winter.

Butter is dearer now. We have to pay 25 cents a lb. For it. Can Sindy ride yet?

Yours truly,

Billy

Elk Point
Vermilion
"Sweet Saturday Night"
12.11.10

Dear Fan:

Arnott and Mr. Drew are going to Hopkins tomorrow and as the mail goes from there on Monday, you will get this as soon as Kitty gets the letter I wrote last Sunday.

We had cold weather here all the early part of the week. Wednesday night was the coldest. At 10 o'clock it was 5 degrees below zero Fahrenheit and on Thursday morning when I went out for sticks to light the fire, it was only 4 degrees above zero. It warmed up a bit on Thursday, and on Friday it was only a little below freezing and at noon the snow got damp. Today was a lovely day, just a few degrees below freezing and no wind. I had my coat and waistcoat off again and my ears and hands bare. It felt quite hot after the cold spell, and yet it was cold enough to keep the snow dry.

My house is now 11 logs high all round, about 7 ft. 8 inches. I think I am a great genius at building it, as I did every thing all alone. I expect Mommy will be afraid I will get hurt, but she needn't as of course I couldn't possibly lift even one end of each log alone, so I had to arrange a pulley gear to hoist them, and it is by pulling down on the rope that I hoist the logs. The gear is 4 to 1 so that I only have to pull a bit more than 1/4 the weight of the log. The trouble is that it takes a long time to adjust the gear for each log, so that it is a very good day's work to get 4 logs fitted. If I had another round of logs up, I could get the joist of the next floor in, so that I would not be so nervous when walking on the wall.

If the weather will hold on good or middling I will try and get a good upstairs built, but if it comes on too bad I may be forced to put on the roof pretty soon. Still it isn't too bad in a tent even with a zero temperature. The trouble is to get water. You see, it takes so long to make boiling water from ice. Then it is hard to manage food too. Our potatoes and onions are all frozen on us, even in the warmest corner of the tent, and once or twice the bread was nearly frozen. The milk and butter have to be thawed out too.

The photo Kitty sent is of three servant maids at Hollybrook who came over one afternoon about 1901 or 02 to be taken. Pretty much the same time as we took Ritchie's (?) photo and Mr. Casey's(?) daughters, etc. I guess Kitty will know them. I forget their names or perhaps I never heard them.

I am very glad Kitty and Mommy are looking over the negatives as they can pick out a few interesting ones. I think there are about 8 or 9 dozen in a tin box (in dozen boxes) under the bed besides the ones that are in the pigeon holes in the desk. There are also some in the second or third bottom drawer of the desk.

That was rather a good joke of Arthur's to put up Sloane and Bill and himself as Maori chiefs. It is what his uncle would like to do, but I guess he didn't enjoy it against himself.

I am glad Dirk is behaving fairly well, still I am afraid there would be trouble in bringing him out here. You could write to the "Canadian Pacific Agent, James St., Liverpool" and tell him you are coming out in March and ask what it would cost to bring a hound of about 60 lbs. weight to Vermilion or Edmonton, and also ask if he would have to be quarantined on landing and if so, for how long. On board ship most dogs are kept merely chained and in charge of the ship's butcher, but it would be necessary to muzzle Dirk as well. Altogether it is doubtful if it would be worth while. If he would be quarantined, I wouldn't bring him.

Yours truly,

Billy

Elk Point
Dec. 13th, Tuesday

Dear Mother:

You will be glad to hear that I am living in my own house at last. I slept here last night for the first time. Landers and Jackson were here last night too, but they finished mudding the walls at about 3:30 today and have gone home now. The house seems very empty without them now, the alarm clock ticks so loudly that it seems to fill the whole place upstairs and down.

Of course the house is very far from finished yet. For instance, either of the floors isn't laid nor are the shingles on the roof. The roof at present consists of 1 inch boards laid lengthways and covered with tarred paper. It keeps out the snow and keeps in the heat fairly well.

I had to pay each of the men \$2 a day and feed them while they were plastering and \$1-1/2 a day while they helped me with the roof. Altogether the wages bill was \$22 and 50 cents; still it was worth it I think, as I was in a bad fix. It gave them enough to do too. They first shovel away the snow and then light a big fire, then while the ground is thawing a bit, they light another big fire and boil a tub of water. Then they shovel away the remains of the first fire and dig up the earth and mix it with the hot water. Then Jackson plasters while Landers mixes the mud and keeps it hot.

Once the outside was done, it wasn't so bad as I borrowed a heating stove from Landers and fixed it up inside.

I had to get up every two hours last night and stoke up the fire in order to keep the mud on the inside from freezing. You see, if you keep freezing and thawing it, it all tumbles off. I will have to do the same tonight and for several other nights, but as the logs are beginning to thaw out, I expect I need not keep quite such a fierce fire going in order to keep the house warm, so that it may do to get up every three hours. The alarm is very handy now, as thanks to it I don't have any bother sitting up. It takes nearly half the day to saw enough wood for the night.

When Arnott went to Vermilion for his furniture, Mr. Drew didn't keep up half enough heat in their house, and the inside plaster froze several times. Consequently, it is falling off in spots now and they are all mad. That was a good lesson for me. I had one narrow escape too. I made up the fire at 11 and got up at 1, 3, and 20 past five. The temperature near the floor was about 40 each time except the last when it was only 33 or 1 degree above

freezing. I must try and do better tonight.

I got the Constitution with the announcement of Uncle Frank's wedding in it last Friday. Uncle Harry ought to go and do likewise now.

The Arnotts are rather nice. I think you will like them. I had dinner and tea there the last two Sundays. I like Mrs. Arnott. It beats me how she is so nice, seeing whose daughter she is. Still the old lady isn't so terribly bad, though rather a boss I fancy. At any rate, Mr. Drew can't cough when she is in hearing. He, Mr. Drew, is a bit nicer than he was, too. I expect it is that they are more comfortable now.

That was a nice rowdy strike they had in the South Wales colliery, wasn't it. Worse even than last year's strike in Cork.

I see the Veto Conference broke down as it was pretty sure to do, so that there is to be a new general election almost at once. I wonder will Mr. Barry(?) have the cheek to stand again. I expect not. Willie Wood ought to have a good chance. I expect the election will be all over before you get this. It looks to me as if the fiscal reform party would get it this time.. I expect there will soon be as much bother with the English Customs as there is now with all the rest of the world.

I just got a letter from Eva Munton and one from Foster. Eva invites me down for Christmas; very decent of her, isn't it. Not much chance of going though. She says I ought to tell you to bring out your china, linen, and woollens as she says they are so dear here.

Foster writes in rather a grown up, perhaps(?) swallowed, style different to what he used to do. He seems to think you and the girls will find things terribly hard here. I often think the same, though it seems to me like a foretaste of heaven to have a house to get into out of the cold. For instance, it's lovely to have to stand the pan on the stove when you are washing the crockery and not to find the cups frozen onto the saucers when you go to wash up, and not to have the forks and spoons clinging to your fingers. I didn't get frozen since, but Arnott got his finger tips frozen on Sunday. They keep their oil can outside as it leaks, and he went out for some oil without his mitts. He wasn't out for five minutes. It hasn't been more than 30 below zero yet.

A week ago last Monday, yesterday, Arnott and I had to start out on one 9 mile trip for hay. It was 15 below zero and a beast of a wind against us. I hated to go, but couldn't help it. When we got to the hay stack, a cake which we

took with us for dinner was frozen. Still we chewed most of it. It wasn't so bad coming back as the wind went down about sunset.

On long trips like that, it is safer for 2 to go as we can then take turns to walk to keep warm. I wish you could see my house. I am awfully proud of it. The others all say it is the highest in Elk Point, but I think Markstead's is as high. His is a lot bigger and has a cottage roof so doesn't look so high. The roof of mine is just over 27 ft. long, the front end being supported on poles and forming a sort of veranda which we can case in later if we like. It looks funny in front but the design is good and properly braced from an engineering point of view, which is more than I can say for Arnott's. I am tired of advising Arnott to put cross pieces to keep his rafters from spreading, but he keeps putting it off. I don't think they will, but I would not be a bit surprised if they did spread and smack down any day.

I didn't get any letters from home last week. I suppose you are writing long Christmas ones.

Yours truly,

Billy

Elk Point
Vermilion
22.12.10

Dear Mother:

I expect you will have got the kitchen window decorated now with holly and roses. There doesn't seem to be any holly round here.

It looks as if Christmas will be rather tame here, however as it is a Sunday, it will be rather quiet everywhere.

Mary(?) and Florence Ward got a lot of presents, didn't they; by the way, what's an epergne. They got several, whatever it is.

Quite a lot of things have happened round here lately. Arnott had a very narrow escape a week ago today. He and Landers had gone to the lumber mill on Wednesday and were coming back with two loads on Thursday. Landers wasn't able to get the loan of a sleigh, so he took a wagon and Arnott took a sleigh. Coming up the hill on their way back they had to put the 4 oxen on one load as usual. Just as they got to the top with the wagon, the hind wheels skidded off the trail and the whole thing upset, breaking one wheel. Arnott was sitting on the load and jumped for his life as it went over. Luckily the load didn't roll over a second time or it would have caught him. They had to leave the load and go back for it and the wagon next day.

On Monday last we had to go for a load of hay. I drove on the way back. The runners of a sleigh are a lot closer together than the wheels of a wagon, so that it needs very careful driving. I got on famously over the most dangerous bit, but when I thought I was alright and had sat down nice and comfortably, the left runner of the front sleigh struck a stone and over the whole load went. We had to undo the ropes and pike every bit of it off and then when we had righted the sleigh, I forked it on again while Arnott peaked it. We had about a ton of hay so that it took a long time. In the end it was 10 o'clock when we got back here.

They have got up a literary society here. It meets every Wednesday at 8:00 p.m. at Elk Point school house about 2-1/2 or 3 miles north west of me. I am to speak next Wednesday to prove that a woman is as good at business as a man. Last night was the first meeting I went to, as I didn't hear of it till then. There was a good crowd there, some of them came a long way too. The river is frozen solid enough now so that there are people from the other side there. We had a tip top time too. There were two recitations, a reading, two songs,

a speech, a short debate on whether it pays to homestead in Alberta or not, a mandolin and guitar duet, and a mouth organ solo accompanied by the guitar. The same man played both; he fixed the mouth organ to his shoulders by a wire bracket so as to have his hands free for the guitar.

Musical talent is abundant here. Boyd the telegraph man is the best of all. He is a sort of Music Hall on the fiddle and very good on the mandolin and the banjo, and plays the cornet better than I do. The other day I was passing his house and heard the cornet, so I went over to see and there he was practising while he was cooking his dinner. It is a trumpet cornet he has.

I felt awfully down in the mouth for the last week, ever since Landers and Jackson left, but last night's meeting seems to have done me a lot of good as I don't feel half so bad now.

By the way, how will you manage for beds and blankets when you get here first. I expect you will pack up all your blankets, but then you see, they won't get to Vermilion till a long time after you do. I think I had better get one bed and blankets for it next time I go to town, and you and Fan and Kit could all tumble into it till your own stuff came along. What do you think?

Will Tom come out here first for a bit before he goes to work. It might possibly pay him to look round at the land north of here as soon as the snow melts.

We have had glorious weather now for a week. All the neighbours say they never remember such a fine winter up here.

I have more than half of the upstairs floor planed now. It is rather a tough job as the wood is green and not dried yet. Would you rather have one good sized bedroom 16x12 for yourself and the girls, or two little ones 8x12 each. If you have two little ones, you will have to go through one to get to the other.

I got the proper joists for the upstairs floor in today. There are 12 of them. It took me pretty nearly the whole day to get them up and fit them.

Yours truly,

Billy

Elk Point
Vermilion, Alta.
28.12.10

Dear Eda:

Many thanks for your letter which arrived the day before Christmas Eve, also for the Advocates. It was really very decent of you to write to me and tell me lots of news which my people left out.

I would give a great deal for a chance to go to the Town Hall once or twice now. I didn't even have the time to try ice skating this year, although there is a lake on the estate here and it was frozen for a long time before the snow came.

You see, I was in such a hurry to get this house up that I didn't like to take even a half holiday. It takes quite a while to build even a log house. I had to choose the trees (and they don't all grow straight even here), cut them down, trim the branches off, chop off the lengths I wanted, then get the two oxen to haul the logs out of the wood one by one with a logging chain, load them on a wagon or sleigh and fetch them here, and after that hoist and fit them. There are 80 logs in this house which means about 75 trees, as I think 5 trees made 2 logs each.

I only went twice to the rink in Edmonton as it wasn't much fun. The pace is entirely too fast for my taste. It gave me all I could do to keep up, then it was badly managed or rather it wasn't managed at all. You wouldn't have liked it either if you were there.

I am glad to hear that Foster is to be Secretary to the Leaders meeting as it will do both good. I expect it will do Foster a big lot of good as he is rather like a Hermit Crab; he likes to get into a shell and stay there. If he would only go skating now, I would have hopes of him being some good after all.

It is a good job that the old manse has been let again. It should be a good place for a veterinary surgeon. We have got a grand "Mutual Improvement Society" here, only they don't call it that. They call it a "Literary Society", still "a Rose by any other name would smell as sweet". It meets at Elk Point school house every Wednesday at 8 p.m. The school house is just an hour's walk from here. People come from miles around to it, so that it is usually packed. Last night I had to stand as all the seats were occupied, even though the temperature outside was 12 degrees below zero. I made quite a

speech there last night to the effect that "a woman is as capable of managing a business as a man". Rather an ambiguous title for a debate, isn't it, but the people here seem not to have seen the second meaning, so I didn't enlighten them.

They have odd methods of managing a debate here. Before beginning, each side chooses one judge, and the chairman chooses a third. Then these three sit up in front like a jury. They then have 4 speeches, 2 for, 2 against. The leaders then reply, after which the judges each write down the verdict and put it in a hat. The meeting is then open to the public who say what they like. Then the hat is opened and the verdicts announced. Then a critic who holds office for 4 weeks gets up and criticises the whole thing, speeches, speakers and all. The procedure seems odd to me, but it works well. There is lots of musical talent in the settlement, both vocal and instrumental, and one or two very good reciters, so that we have usually a very good programme.

I hope it will continue as well as it has done so far. It does me a lot of good to go there as it is very lonely here, where very often I don't see anyone for quite a while.

Kitty and Mr. Copithorne would have had a great time on the Continent if only he had been a bit stronger, still I expect they saw a lot. Don't you wish you had gone with them?

I can't think of any name suitable for this place unless I copy your example and call it "Glenford". The Dominion Government knows it as S.E. 34-56-6, W.4. This doesn't sound very practical, does it.

It isn't exactly a height and it isn't a hollow; it is nearly flat, about half of it is wooded poplar and spruce. There is a little lake on it. You can see Moose Mountain to the north. It looks close, but it is nearly a day's journey. I went there for a load of lumber and it took a day to go and load up and a day to come back and unload. I stopped at the lumber camp alright. Lumber men seem here at least to be a very much descenter sort than you would think from reading stories.

Glad to hear Mother is looking well. I think it is quite likely that she may like this country in the summer anyway. If she doesn't, I suppose we will all have to pack up and come home again.

I expect Mr. Wolfe will feel very much annoyed about that invoice. Mr. (Michael, the customs broker tells me he had to send it back again as the Customs officer "Frank Osborne" would not accept it, unless the country of origin was marked on the front. I am very sorry to be the cause of so much

trouble to him.

("Mui...bile dictu") it wasn't I put the (matrimonial?) ed in the advocate.

S.E. 34-56-6 W.4
Elk Point
Vermilion
29.12.10

It's odd that you get chill blains. I never do, although I sometimes get frost bitten. I wonder which is worse. W.F.W.

Dear Tom:

This is to wish you many happy returns of your birthday.

Mummy tells me that you never wore either vests or drawers when you got here. You will wear them fast enough and wish you had two or three sets on sometimes. Not only will you wear drawers under your trousers, but you will wear overalls over them. I wouldn't bring out any overalls though if I were you, as they are cheap enough here. It would be well to bring drawers and vests, about 3 each, a reasonable number of pairs of socks, as you wear two pairs at once in the winter. On real cold days I wear three pair. Boots are a lot cheaper and I think as good or better at home than here. If I was you I would get one pair without hooks, that is eyelets all the way up, as the western stirrups will smash the hooks at once. Get the boots to fit you with only one pair of socks on, as they are only for summer use. You can't very well wear them in winter what you put inside them.

Tell Mummy that my trunk was a good deal damaged. The cornet case which was inside it was not smashed, but the cornet itself is damaged a bit. If I were you I would put the clarinet in your cabin luggage, and Pindy had better bring her violin in the cabin too. Pack the fiddle with soft paper in its case, lock the case and put a "wanted" label on it, but don't wrap up the case.

I think me C. Kelly is right that canvas or sacking is the best thing to pack clothes and blankets in. The best thing to pack ware in seems to be light barrels like apples and some sorts of biscuits are packed in.

Mr. Hosford or Ben Hill could tell you any day what berths and cabins are vacant on any CPR steamer. This would save you writing to Liverpool.

Mummy says you say Kit would be too soft hearted to use a whip driving cattle. I never even carried one when after them; of course I didn't do much driving.

What you do is just get after them with the horse. They usually run fast enough, and if they don't, your horse will bite them if you let him. The

usual trouble is that they go the wrong way or scatter. By the way, whatever you do, don't be fool enough to try to homestead so late in the year as I did. If the weather had been bad I don't know how I would have managed, even as it was I had a pretty hard time. I wouldn't do the same again for a good deal. The first of September is the very latest one should get to this place. I didn't get here till Oct. 1st.

Yours truly,

Billy

Elk Point
Vermilion, Alta.
1. 1. 11

Dear Mother:

The mail service out here doesn't seem to be very good, as this week I didn't get a letter from any of you, but I got the Christmas Strand and the Cornet Cards and the note paper as you see, not to mention the "Use of Life".

I won't have to go to Vermilion so soon after all, as I bought a heating stove from Lars Johnson on Friday for \$15. It sounds a lot of money, but it is a decent looking stove and I was in an awful way without it.

I have been living in the house now since Dec. 12th and it was comfortable enough till this day week when I had to return Landers' stove. Ever since then it had been cooling down in spite of the cooking stove. You see, the heat escapes a good deal through the side of the roof that isn't shingled.

For the last few days I could never get it hotter than freezing point and at night it was much colder.

Friday night was the worst night of all. As it was late when I got back I couldn't fire the stove and of course as I had been out all day, the house was colder than ever. When I got back I sat up till about 12 so as to warm it a bit, but I had to pull the bed clothes over my head to sleep at all and in the morning as soon as I had the fire lit, I looked at the thermometer and it was only 3 degrees above zero downstairs, and I don't how cold in the bedroom. I hated to get up but I knew it would be worse if I stayed in bed any longer.

However, all that is over now and I can enjoy life again, thanks to the stove. The house is quite comfortable again, and last night was alright in here, although it was the coldest night we had since I came to Canada, 35 below zero.

Today is a lovely day - clear, cold and sunshiny. The snow has ceased for the present. I guess you can hardly have any idea of how happy I feel now that I don't have to keep as close as possible to the range. I quite enjoyed being out today as the sun was shining, and when you know you can go in to warm up whenever you like, you don't feel cold outside. I am glad not to have to go into town too, as if it snowed heavily on the road I would be in a bad fix. I won't go now till I like the look of the weather.

You were asking if there was anything I wanted you to bring out. I think you

might bring two of those little tubes for getting the milk out of a cow with a sore tit. You see lots of cows here that have lost the milk in one pump, and I think it might have been possible to save them if they had been treated rightly. Anyway, the tubes don't cost much and are small and won't be much load. Bring two in case we lose one. I can't think of anything else that I didn't mention before. Don't forget the salt cellars and spoons, also egg spoons. Canadians eat eggs like pigs I think. I have 6 egg cups and half a dozen cups and saucers and plates, knives and forks and teaspoons, all good of their kind. I have a kettle, a tea pot, a sugar bowl and butter dish, two enamel basins, one for washing up, the other I mix cakes in, a porridge pot and one other pot.

By the way, you might bring the jam saucers as I have not seen such things here. When they have jam here, they serve out a certain amount to each person on a saucer like pudding.

Over at Arnott's they have had trouble with the fowl as I knew they would. I went over for a few minutes at 8 last night, and they had brought the whole dozen into the house then. Mrs. Arnott told me that one poor hen had her feet frozen and that she had just thawed them out in cold water. She was afraid the hen's feet would drop off, but they won't this time unless she gets them frozen again.

Really Mr. Drew is very cruel to those fowl. It makes me mad; as I said to Arnott if he froze them all up and let them die in one night it would be bad enough, but to keep them all the time half frozen is infinitely worse. The government experts in Edmonton told him that the fowl needed plenty fresh air, and I suppose air is good for them, but a temperature of 15 or so below zero is not good for them I'm sure, as they aren't polar bears. The sooner they die, the better I think.

Be sure to tell me as early as you can both the date you will sail and the expected date of arrival, and the port. I expect it will be St. Johns, so that I can meet you in Vermilion. You see, I want to make sure you are dressed wisely for the drive out here.

Very many thanks to Fan for the Strand.

Yours truly,

Billy

Elk Point
Vermilion, Alta.
5.1.11

Dear Kitty:

Many thanks for sending me the cornet cards, Use of Life, etc. I am at last able to enclose you a few photos. They are not very well toned as it is difficult to get good material here. By here, I mean in Vermilion, as it is of course impossible to get any photographic stuff nearer than that.

I think some of the views are rather pretty, don't you. I have some ones of the house taken later, but I could not find the film the evening I developed these.

My house is lovely and comfortable now, downstairs at least. The upstairs is still very cold, as I didn't get the shingles yet for part of the roof. So I moved my bed downstairs and laid paper all over the upper floor to keep the warm air down.

All the settlement is interested in my house. Some of them admire it and it amuses others. Mr. Hood the postmaster told me it was like an old Swiss chalet, and said he thought that all the houses round here were too much alike, and that it was a good thing to introduce a new style. Landers and Jackson call it Wolfe's Castle. They wanted me to take the Cornet and climb up to the ridge and play "The Cock of the North" the first evening we slept in it.

It looks a little like this sketch. The roof is 27 feet long and as the house is only 16 ft. long inside, it leaves a sort of verandah in front.

Sketch of house here

Later on we can board up the upper front of this if we like and so make another room.

I had all I could do to hoist the two half way up logs that run out to the front poles of the verandah and Landers helped me with the two top ones. Except these two top logs, I hoisted every log myself, and of course I cut down the trees, trimmed them, loaded them and unloaded them alone too, so you see I am as proud as Lucifer of the house. I got a letter from Foster in which he had the cheek to call it a hut.

Arnott and I went down to the store at the ferry on Monday. Of course there

is no ferry there now, as the river is frozen this long time. In the morning it was very cold indeed, 30 below zero when we started. Arnott, against my advice, took a rubber hot water bottle which soon froze up solid. He can't walk yet since he put the axe in his big toe, so we went into Mr. Fisk's to get warm. This is only about 3 miles of the way. Arnott went in to Stockwell's again, 8 miles of the way. They asked him to fetch them a lamp glass, so we did. When we got back to Stockwell's it was just 8 p.m., and although the evening had warmed up a lot, it was still very cold so we both went in. Mrs. Stockwell asked us if we had had any supper and then gave us a good feed. Coffee, hash and fried potatoes and bread and butter, and best of all some wild black currants which she and Jennie her daughter (Colin West's intended) had gathered last summer near here. They wanted us to stay all night. I would have liked to, but Arnott was afraid his people would think he was dead. We got to Elk Point post office about 10 p.m. The Hoods were in bed, but as we had some sugar and flour for them, Hood had to get up. We went in there for a bit and Hood stoked up his stove a bit so we got warm again. Finally we got to Arnott's at midnight exactly. It was only 6 below zero then; a good job too, as we were cold enough even then. I knew my house would be cold and that it would take a couple of hours to warm it, so as I had two rugs with me, I rolled up in them and lay down near the stove at Arnott's.

A year ago I would never have dreamed of calling in at a house on the side of a road and staying to tea or dinner, but out here it seems natural enough. Any place you go, if it happens to be anywhere near a meal time, they ask you to stay. It's really very nice of them, isn't it. Especially in cold weather as it's awfully nice to get a warm up.

The cold spell didn't last long. It snowed a good bit yesterday (Wednesday) and today was calm and sunny and the temperature about 26 most of the day, so that I went about with bare ears and hands all day.

Mrs. Arnott is having her first bit of dissipation today. She and Arnott and Gordon went down to Fisk's for dinner and have gone to Tom Arbow's for supper. They left the baby with Mr. and Mrs. Drew. I bet she'll catch it when she gets back; still I am very glad she went, as she has had rather a time since she came here, and she is really awfully nice. Gordon and the baby are lovely little monkeys too.

Yours truly,

Billy

Elk Point
Vermilion
7.1.11

Dear Mother:

It will be a week tomorrow since I wrote to you last, yet I expect you will get the two letters together. Arnott is going over to Caskeyville tomorrow, Sunday, and will post this there if he doesn't forget it.

I got your letter and Kitty's on Friday saying you had booked your passages by the SS Empress of Ireland to sail February 24th. You will probably land on March 3rd and get into Winnipeg on Monday morning March 6th, probably very early in the morning. If I were you I would go to a hotel and stay one or two nights, as you will be awfully tired. I was nearly beat out myself when I got there. The Alexandra is the C.P.R. hotel and has an entrance on the station platform. It is very dear, but is very handy if you get to Winnipeg in the middle of the night.

I suppose you will come the rest of the way to Vermilion on the Canadian Northern. It is the only railway to Vermilion, but of course you could if you liked go to Edmonton by the C.P.R., and back to Vermilion from there. One good job is that you will have no bother with your luggage in Canada. After you get it passed by the Customs, you can get it checked through to Vermilion by the railway agent who will come on board the boat. All you have to do then is to stick to your half of the check till you get your luggage in Vermilion. It is about a 29 hour train journey from Winnipeg to Vermilion, so you will need a rest in Winnipeg.

If I was you I would not bring too much cabin luggage, as the cabins are rather small. You will have to take a goodish bit as you can't get at your big luggage for about a fortnight; a week on the water and a week on land. I would bring smelling salts and a little brandy in case you get sea sick and some cascara sayrada(?) as you will very likely want them on the train, a good comfortable pair of slippers and a pair of comfortable boots; you need not be too particular of appearances. Still, a boot brush and polish is handy.

I agree with you that the Skeeses(?) were as cool as anything about Willie coming here with you. I don't want him anyway and besides if he did anything nasty on the boat it would not be pleasant for you.

If you don't like the Colonist on the train, don't hesitate to change. Make Tom get the tickets changed on the train for you. In any case, just after the

train starts, you can walk right through it and see how the first class people are fixed up.

I think it would be a good idea if you brought out some garden seeds with you. Nothing heavy, just some radishes, carrots, parsnips, etc. Can you get celery seed and rhubarb seed.

You might ask Tom to get half a dozen snap fasteners from Mr. James Wolfe like the one I had for fastening onto the pony's halter in the stable at the mill. It looks like this when half open. The sketch is a bad one, *Sketch of fastener here*

but I guess Tom will remember the kind I mean. The black thing is supposed to be a lever for tightening the link that goes over the nose of the big hook. They use all sorts of snaps here except that particular one, which is the best of all I think.

I don't quite grasp Grandma's idea in thinking it selfish of you to come out here. It seems to me to be rather the reverse as this place isn't exactly a heaven below yet. However, things aren't so awfully bad either. I expect we must be half way through the winter now. At any rate, the sun is already noticeably higher in the sky, and the weather hasn't been so very hard. We have had some very hard spells, but they never lasted more than three days at a time. All the neighbours say it is the windiest winter they ever saw, but it has been calm compared to the weather we get at home.

I got Eda's letter alright and replied to it too. I am afraid she is a bit of a hypocrite though, as there was more skating than current news in it.

Tell Kitty most of the ladies I have seen in the winter wear very thick woolen stocking caps. They pull them down over their ears and the backs of their necks and down to the eyebrows. Then they wear very high fur collars to their cloaks, so that when they are driving, you only see their noses and eyes. It's very hard to tell who's who.

Things aren't going any too smoothly at Arnott's. Mr. and Mrs. Drew are a great nuisance to both him and his wife. Mr. Drew keeps telling them all the drawbacks of the country, and he is as pleased as punch when he can find some fresh fault with it. As Arnott says, it takes all the strength out of a fellow to have him all the time at it. Of course lots of what he says is true, and lots isn't, but anyway he might very well try and encourage them a bit, or at any rate not discourage. Arnott built a pretty big house especially to please the old people, and besides that he goes out of his way to be nice to them, and he will certainly never get any thanks. The big house

is rather a drawback too, as it takes a lot more firewood to keep it hot.

The fowl too are a joke to the whole settlement. I think I told you about one hen getting her feet frozen. After they had her near the fire for 3 or 4 days they put her out again, and she got her feet frozen again in about 10 minutes. Now the cock has got the top half of his comb frozen and it is falling off. Of course none of them has laid as yet, nor will they either till the weather gets warm or they are put in a warm house. The best of it is that the Fisk's fowl are laying and so are the Austen's and they aren't treated scientifically at all, but are fed and kept warm. When anyone meets Arnott the first thing they say is "how are the chickens doing". It is really hardly fair as it wasn't his idea to get them so soon.

I got the little pendant Kitty sent safely. It is a little beauty I think. I showed it to Arnott and he is as green as the Convenenra(?) Marble with envy.

I may as well tell you another of Mr. Drew's crimes as I have not much news this time. I think I told Kitty that Arnott and I had to go the store last Monday and didn't get back till midnight although we had started early in the morning. When we got back, we found Mr. Drew had been telling the ladies that we had very likely upset the sleigh when on the hill near the Dog Creek. It is a bad hill, but even if we had both been hurt, which wasn't likely, he might have had tact enough to suggest that we had stayed all night at the store, or something of that sort. Altogether he is about as big a genius as Mr. Lloyd George.

By the way, I see Walsh only got in by the skin of his teeth. I didn't think the clergy would have had so much influence. I wonder at Barry having the courage to try at all after the way he behaved before. I haven't much doubt but that Uncle Harry voted for Walsh; at any rate, that was the side he used to favour.

If I was Tom I would not buy a second .22 rifle, as for deer or moose you need at least a 30.30 or 30.40. A .22 doesn't hit nearly hard enough for big game. Besides, you can't get very near them. Of course a .22 is very handy for grouse, partridge, gophers, etc. and is cheaper to use than a shot gun. Still one can't have everything. Guns, rifles, etc. are only very little dearer here than at home.

Will Tom come out here for a bit first or will he look for a job for himself. I imagine it ought to be rather hard to get work on a farm till the snow goes.

Talking of the snow reminds me of one very important thing I had forgotten to

tell you. You will each want a pair of very dark spectacles, otherwise you will get snow blind on the drive out. Snow blindness is no joke at all. In bad cases one is quite blind for 3 or 4 days. At this time of the year when the light isn't very strong it doesn't hurt, but in March things will be different as the days will be longer and the sun higher in the sky.

Yours truly,

Billy

Elk Point
Vermilion
18.1.11

Dear Kitty:

Thanks for the note book which I got safely by the last post.

I am afraid you will have to wait a good bit before you get any chance to ride here too, as I haven't been able to even get the logs out yet for the stable, and of course I haven't any fields penned either, so that we must wait a bit before getting a horse. The house isn't done yet either; the floors take a lot of doing.

Luckily the weather has got nice again. Since Sunday it has been lovely, especially Tuesday and today. I hope to be able to post this in Vermilion, as I intend to start about midday tomorrow so as to get there on Saturday night.

The trails are pretty good now as it hasn't snowed since last Sunday week, and they may not be so good again. Besides, I must get those shingles on before you get here, as the upstairs will never be warmer till I do.

The snow is nearly up to my knees in most places now, so that when you get off the trail it is quite hard to walk.

Yesterday the oxen ran away on me. I had gone down nearly to the far side of 26 for a load of fire wood, and when turning round in the wood they got tangled in a bush. I got off the sleigh to let them back it easily and the beggars made off at once. They had been nearly idle for about a week. I was afraid to get in front of them for fear they would smash the sleigh against the trees, so I just managed to get on to the runner of the back sleigh. I tried to walk the pole to the front sleigh but the jolting upset me and I fell off. I had to fall pretty well out so as to clear the back runners and of course I was buried in snow. When I got up they were going harder than ever and though I ran as far as I could, which in snow isn't far, I couldn't catch them. They went all the way to my house and stood there till I came up. I would have liked to lick them but it wouldn't have done any good, so I didn't. It took just an hour from the time they ran away to get them back to the same place again. I was afraid they would go home and as Mr. Drew, the old ass, always insists on leaving the stable door open, they would have tried to go in and smashed something. It really is a wonder they didn't. They never even touched a tree when getting out of the wood. The beggars are too airy altogether lately. When spring comes and they plough a bit, it will soon tame

them.

I made quite a fine chair the other night. It baffles description so I guess I will wait and let you see it for yourself. You won't swing on it much anyway.

I took these two photos last Thursday. They are very dark as they were taken inside in the house. I have rather a funny expression owing to watching the camera to see that it didn't upset when I pulled the string. It was the first time I had a linen collar on since September last so that I felt quite a swell. See the bag of Glenora flour and the flour sifter on the right. I had your Harp pendant on too. The third one was taken outside as you will see; it was a very cold day and I very nearly paid for my foolishness by getting my ears frostbitten. That was what made me try the others inside.

What do you think of the house. The boards sticking out over the end are only temporarily on to keep the paper in place.

Ask Mummy to get a couple of flat files for sharpening a mowing machine knife from Mr. Cormier or J. W. Wolfe. The files here are too soft and wear out at once, so most people use grindstones. And tell Tom he might as well pack in the big condensing lens that I bought for the home made magic lantern. I don't suppose we will want it much, but it wouldn't fetch much if sold and it cost a good bit.

P.S. I don't really (I think) look quite as big a fool as I do in the photos, so cheer up. The photos are all fixed, though they are toned brown instead of black.

Yours truly,

Billy

Vermilion Hotel

22.1.11

Dear Mother:

As you see by the address, I got into town alive at any rate. I left at a quarter to twelve on Thursday, got to Paul Lloyd's that night late, got to bed at 2 a.m. and up again at 4:30, got to Edouard Labequins, a half breed's that night and here last night at about 5:30. Paul Lloyd came in too. I brought a part of his load in. He brought about 25 cut of his wheat in and is taking it back again in the form of flour, bran and tailings.

We had a hard time on Friday as the cattle got played out and it got dark and we got off the trail. We let them rest a bit while we poked about in the snow till we found the trail again. Then I stood there to mark it while Paul drove one team onto it. Then I went and got the other. We were very glad to come to Ed's house.

Yesterday was the coldest day of the three and we were on the more open country too, so we got the good of the wind. I got the tips of three fingers on my left and two on the right hand frozen very slightly. I put them inside my coat and overcoat under the arms and warmed them. Needless to say, we walked nearly all the way so as to keep warm. You can't walk down hill, as if you do, the oxen are apt to upset the sleigh or run into one another. That is, the back team overtakes the first one, and bang into it.

Last night was very windy, so the trail will be all drifted in and be very heavy travelling. I guess we will hardly get started till early Tuesday as it will be late tomorrow before the flour is ready, and besides it will take me a while to get the mattress for you and the shingles, etc.

Long trips with oxen in the winters are very nasty. I think I needn't come in again till I come to meet you, when we will have longer days and warmer, I hope. I would bring a veil each if I was you, if you get a good dark one, it would do instead of the goggles for snow blindness as well as for warmth. You might as well bring the phonograph I think, and some of the best records. If convenient, bring a few flat files to sharpen a mowing machine knife, as they don't keep very hard ones here.

You will be likely to get this letter earlier than usual and likely enough you won't get any next week as the trail is reported to be drifted so I will hardly get home till Saturday, thus missing the post.

Yours truly,

Billy

Vermilion
23.1.10

Dear Kitty:

This is to wish you many happy returns of your birthday. I don't expect to get home till after Friday so I would not be able to post you any more letters till Feb. 3rd, and even if I direct these to the Empress of Ireland at Liverpool, it is very doubtful if you will get them.

I hope you will like the needlebook as much as I like the Harp that once you sent me.

I got my cheeks frozen again when coming in to town. I didn't know it till today. It's odd, isn't it that you don't know it when you freeze sometimes. It isn't too bad, just a bit sore. Oxen are too slow for long journeys. I hope to get back alright as I have got a face protector now.

Both Paul and I loaded up on sleighs today so that we can start at day break on Tuesday (tomorrow). I expect I will stay one day at Paul's place to rest the oxen as the trail is bad owing to the wind drifting in the snow.

I got a bedroom set today for you and Mummy's use. It isn't a beauty, but it is I think the nicest in town as I tried two places for it, and went back to the first one finally.

I had intended to go to see the Sullivans but I won't now as I will try to follow Louis Johnson out. He has a load and will improve the trail a bit. As you will have seen by the time you get this far, I can't think of any news.

I can't get your letters till I get home. I'll chance at least a letter to the boat so look out for one in the rack in the reading room when you are feeling at home on board.

Yours truly,

Billy

Tuesday
24.1.11

Dear Fan:

We haven't started home yet, or rather we didn't get very far and came back again. We only went as far as the top of the hill at this side of Vermilion river, and as there was a hard east wind and it was 30 below zero and snowing pretty thickly, we came back.

The day was bad till about noon and then the snow stopped, and the temperature is dropping since and so is the wind. It is still cloudy. I hope the morning will be better anyway.

One good thing is that there is quite a collection of teams gathered now for the north trail. There will be at least five, but I expect when it comes to actually starting out, some will back out.

When you get to the station in Liverpool, no matter at what time of the day or night it is, if you wait about a bit you will see a representative of the C.P.R. in uniform on the platform. If you show him your luggage, he will give you a check for each piece, and then you needn't bother anymore about it. He will see that your wanted luggage is put in the right cabin, and the heavy trunks in the hold. So you can enjoy yourselves till time to go on board.

Yours truly,

Billy

