

2008.1.1.1.1.123

Marie Steele to Sam Steele

[pg 1]

508 St. Urbain St., Montreal,  
Jan 19<sup>th</sup> 1899.

My own darling Sam,

As usual the first thing I must do is to apologize for my long silence, but it is the same old story, when I remain in to write, the children worry me so, that I cannot do it at all. not so much ours, as the others: the six are a trial to any one who wishes to pen a line & when night comes, I am usually so tired that I cannot write, try as I will. Gertie's youngest is more than any one can stand – she will hurt the little ones, that I get nervous & fit for nothing. I am going to live with Mamma in May, I think. Gertie will move & so will Mamma. Louise having gone to Pincher Creek to keep house for Regie for a while, Mamma is without a daughter near. Mabel is very nice, no doubt, but not as considerate as one of

[reverse]

her own would be, so as the arrangement seems to please every one, that will be my next move. I have been looking for your dear letters my pet & find that of Nov 1<sup>st</sup> which has not been answered – it came some time before Xmas or shortly after. I cannot keep track of the dates always now; as soon as the letters from Papa come, the envelopes are snatched away & torn before I can get them again. My poor darling, I fear you will think me very negligent for not sending the photo's as promised, but as soon as the little ones get well, they take fresh cold & as they cannot look well, when suffering from that, I put off from day to day: however, I trust I can bring them soon now. The weather has been such that they have been out very little this winter. I feel sure from the time that has elapsed that your letters written previously to the 1<sup>st</sup> of Nov were lost in the mail that went through the ice, as stated by the press. I sincerely hope your annual report was not among the matter lost as it would necessarily give you a great deal of work to do over, poor old pet!. It must be very nice to have so many congenial

[/pg 1]

[pg 2]

spirits at the mess – meals are so much more pleasant when eaten in

favorable surroundings & seem to be more palatable also. I wish I could fly up there some time & see you enjoy a good story, unknown to all – if such things are possible, you must feel me near sometimes, for I think of you constantly. You widowers must envy Starnes now & then, but perhaps some are delighted to be away from a scolding wife for aught I know. I am so pleased to know you have enough to eat – the papers frighten one with the terrible prospects of famine they write about. Your description of the first & I hope only funeral so far, is very interesting, & one could see it all from what you said. You have seen Father [Gandreau] I suppose – strange how small the world seems at times – meeting in Macleod, then in the Yukon!. It is always sad to hear of a death, but particularly so under the circumstances, so far from all those near & dear & to rest forever so far from the spot one calls home. I see the Indian murderers have been reprieved. I am sorry as I know it will have a very bad effect in the country. I told

[reverse]

Auguste what you desired me to tell him & believe he had an opportunity of telling Uncle Henry, as he spent a few days at de Lotbiniere's a short time ago. I am still going to Dr. Helen [Macdonald's] for local treatment but am much better & expect to cease that part of the cure in a short time, being so much better. The operation I have ahead of me I have not decided when it shall be: things are in such a way, that it is very hard to know what to do. If I go to the Royal Victoria it will be very expensive I hear. Gertie is without a girl & it will be a great undertaking to have it done here, with so many children about. I shall however do for the best as you well know, so will not worry you on that subject any longer for today, at any rate. I paid the premium due "The Great West" a few days ago & will have the \$150.00 due "The Federal Life" next month. it is a large sum & will take all I have for one month, which means economizing very much to make the two ends meet for a while – however, I must pay it, at no matter what cost. I have not been [sic] as regular in my payments to Cowdry as I should like to be, but, my poor mother was in trouble & I lent her

[/pg 2]

[pg 3]

some money that had to be found & she could not know. I know you will not blame me for it – she will return it as soon as convenient I know. Mr. A. B. Macdonald was here for a few days, he has gone to Glengarry, but returns in a fortnight or so & will remain longer here. I went down to see him at the Hall, accompanied by mamma, Gertie, John & Mabel. we spent a pleasant evening & he seemed pleased. He told me 89 head of stock had been sold

at \$38.00 per head. he will give me all particulars on his return. Alec was to write me all about it, but has not written me a line since my departure from Macleod. He is at present in Toronto re "The Empire" deal, but I am in the dark as well about that. As I told you, he never came to terms with Ross, but it is just as well. Jim Clarke will look after your interests well, I hope, as Alec really drinks so much that I am afraid to trust him. I have just been surprised by

[reverse]

a short call from Mrs. C. E. D. Wood – they came down before Xmas, but have been going about & came here on Monday. she looks pretty well – Alec will come down here some time, but when he is here, he has such a good time that he cannot transact much business. Richard is getting on better now – he had been drinking very heavily for some time & especially just before the N. Year – on that day he signed the Pledge for one year & I hope he will keep it well – my brothers were determined to interdict him if he did not change. liquor made him perfectly crazy & we all feared his brain would give way – he has been indulging for a long time, but Gertie always hid it, until my being here made it impossible any longer. I cannot tell you all, it would take too long but must say I never would have remained except for Gertie's sake – he made one's life very uncomfortable & I put up with it for her sake, as without our board money to go on, they would have been very badly off, I assure you. They were in want often before & would have been again. I hope he will not break the pledge, as he is getting work, although he does

[/pg 3]

[pg 4]

not bring very much money in – if he can only pay rent & coal she can manage the rest with what I give her, although the living is not luxurious. I think the children will be better pleased when they are alone again, as six in one house, so near of an age too, are too many by far. the house is very cold & at times I am just frozen – today for instance, I cannot get my feet & hands warm – in fact, it is very uncomfortable & has been so ever since the cold weather set in, with few exceptions. You will say I am in a grumbling mood, but no! it is not that, only I feel I must tell some body who can sympathize with me – by the time this reaches you, spring will have come I suppose. Elmes & Mr. Harwood came down on Dec 21<sup>st</sup> – the former spent Xmas with his mother in Ottawa – the latter came down about a fortnight ago – she looks well. I spent a couple of hours at Oliver Smith's with Elmes one evening last week – we all went to Miss [Hollinsheads] Concert on Monday & enjoyed it. Mr. Harwood, Elmes, Mrs. Steele, Gertie

[reverse]

Mamma, Frank, Antoine, John, Mabel & myself. Mrs. Steele & Aunt Hannah called yesterday but I was out. I do not spend much money on amusement – I have been buying some dresses for the children during the cheap sales & have invested in a nice coat for Flora for next winter & hope you will be here to see her wear it.

Friday. I wrote this far yesterday when dusk put an end to our conversation & as I went out to spend the evening with John & Mabel at the [Caren's] I could write no more. We had a nice quiet time, there being Miss Kavanaugh, Henry, Arthur's widow besides ourselves, as well as a Mr. McGuire who says he met you some years ago when you were in command in Calgary – they are all related as you may remember my mentioning them often as very old friends. I am going to call on Miss Jarvis this p.m who is visiting her sister, Mrs. Hope. I wonder how she will receive me – the so called society world is so strange, one never knows who will deign to recognize one!. Of course, I do not go out much – my health first of all prevents my enjoying life very much, then my purse

[/pg 4]

[pg 5]

is not sufficiently full to enable me to dress extravagantly [sic], so that I keep pretty well out of the swim of the big ducks. Would you advise me to call on Mrs. James Ross? she is very much en evidence in society here & gives grand, fashionable entertainments. I suppose if people saw me there, they would think me just the thing – persons who accepted hospitality from my Father & Mother in the old days in Vaudreuil, cut her now & do not condescend to bow to me even when conversing with the same person – is not that disgusting? Of course, the woman who acts like that is not very smart intellectually & is not even blessed with good looks, but she belongs to the so called smart set! – I am just awaiting your coming & the thought of it sets me all tingling for I know they will seek you out & entertain you (for their husbands will make them) & then your little wife will not be left altogether in the shade – for all that dear, I am quite content & happy as I can be away from you, my own darling husband.

[reverse]

Sunday evening – Jan 21<sup>st</sup>. Although I commenced this on Thursday I have not written anything worth perusing & you will think I have become very indifferent to you, my own darling. In the first place I must tell you I have a deep cut on the first joint of my first finger & can scarcely hold my pen, my finger being too stiff to move so I trust you will forgive this badly written epistle. I went to call on Miss Jarvis, but she was out. Mamma, & Mabel

accompanied me, so we then went to the [Geoffrion's] & had a very pleasant visit there – she is a dear, nice woman & has always been the same – we have known them all our lives. her eldest daughter is very ill – general debility & I do not know if they will have her long with them. I see Mr. [Linkler] who has replaced Mr. Fawcett has arrived in Dawson – surely they did not make a mistake in relieving the former gold Commissioner of his duties!. You did not seem to know when you wrote on Nov 1<sup>st</sup> that such a thing was

[/pg 5]

[pg 6]

a thing was contemplated. Flora & Gertrude are well, although they have again been suffering from colds. Dubbie is a splendid, big, boy & very much admired by everybody – he can say anything he likes, sings any tune he hears, is in fact a wonder & so affectionate – he “lubs, lubs, Mamma, tight, tight” & kisses me over & over again with his arms entwined around my neck – he always speaks of “Papa” & points to your different pictures – poor little children! how they long to see you & how often they speak of Macleod & our happy home life there & ask me to live it over again – do not fear, dear. Your love for them is not stronger than theirs for you & when you do come back to us, you will find it as true as when you left us. You know, dear, your departure is the first deep grief that clouded their young lives & it seems to have strengthened their affection, if such a thing were possible. If I were the only one, I should follow you willingly tomorrow, but I cannot bring our tender little [budlings] up to hardships & cold-on

[reverse]

so must remain where I am, I suppose. I now take your dear letter of Nov 16 & 29<sup>th</sup> & needless to say the sorrow I felt when I learned of the loss of the mail which left Dawson on the 15<sup>th</sup> contained several letters for me. The children also received their letters & were as pleased as myself to get them. I hope you enjoyed your musical evening at Mrs. Davis’ – tell me who the performers were when you write. You must be careful of the stoves dear, it is so very dangerous when the walls are covered with cotton, poor chimneys & big fires kept burning. This house, is at times very cold & mine the coldest room in the place, still I prefer that the little ones should be comfortable & the winter is getting on apace. I am, you will be pleased to know getting much better – the local treatment at the Dr.’s hands will soon cease, but I will have to continue myself for some time & will have the operation later on. I may go to Mamma’s instead of to the hospital, but cannot say yet. The papers say you have had a chinook so the weather must have changed considerably from 46 below. I am drawing exactly

\$150.00 per month & get it about the first

[/pg 6]

[pg 7]

week. I paid the "Great West" premium & went to see Mr. [Popham], manager of "The Federal Life" here finding him to be the husband of an old friend who promised to attend to it all for me, transferring of policy, etc. but every cent of my next pay goes in that way, fancy that - \$96.00 premium & the \$50 extra for Yukon; then the [T.O.F.]s must be paid too. I do not waste a cent of the cash allowed me as I told you before. You will no doubt, be asked often to dine out & not always by the nicest people, but the thought of the little wife far away will whisper to you when to accept. Your letters are often open completely at one end, so the envelopes are not thick enough to stand the trip. Richard also had your last & intends answering soon. I had such a nice letter from Uncle John thanking me for a gift of \$20.00 at Xmas. I knew it would please both of you, so sent it. Alec is, I hear, ill in a hospital in Toronto, that is all I know. I do not think it is anything seriously – gripe, may be – there has been a great deal of it owing to the changeable weather. I have had the furniture insured for \$2.000 including your uniforms [reverse]

but I think that is pipers news. Auguste & his Marie are very happy & will increase the population some time in June I am told – all are not as reasonable as we were, eh! dear. Marie, de Lotbiniere's wife has been very ill, but is better now – she is rather delicate & an exceedingly nervous woman, much too fond of society for her husbands pleasure & happy home life – still I hear, things go better now than they did. money is not always happiness!! We have had no news from Mexico for a while – I hope Alice is not ill, but she is peculiar & although she told them at home, before leaving, that she did not want them to write, she gets angry if they do not – she was very queer with me, after all I did for her & if her health was good, she can thank me ~~me~~ without a doubt. Elmes is going to take me to the Opera this week, to hear "The Three Dragons" something new by De Koven. There is not much news of interest. I enclose a few clippings which may interest you. I would love to send "The Star" but cannot see how it can possibly be managed in any way, the

[/pg 7]

[pg 8]

mails are so irregular. Well, darling it is now late & as I may have more to say tomorrow will bid you a fond, happy good-night. Heaven bless & protect you, my darling for the sake of your own true wifie. Monday evening, Jan 23<sup>rd</sup>. Here again I come my dearest, to converse a few moments more with

you. I went to the Dr.'s this a.m & paid her \$25.00 for professional services – she is exceedingly reasonable in her charges, I am told. Alice sent some photo's taken in Macleod today. Mamma had a letter by same mail & the poor child has been very ill – a mishap – a very bad beginning. she got my letter & was delighted. I sent small trifles to all the old friends in Macleod at Xmas, so paid the debts I owed for any kindness received. To Mrs. Sanders a pretty silver seal with her initials engraved – to the children a charm for one, a chain for the other both in silver from our little ones – to Mrs.

Wroughton, a writing pad with perpetual calendar on the cover finished in brass, with pearl silver handled envelope opener & pearl penholder – to Mr. [reverse]

Wroughton, a white metal ash tray (these from the children) – to Mr. Casey I sent an embroidered handkerchief, & the children a silver belt pin to Norah & lace pin to Clare. To Mrs. A. B. Mac. I sent a pretty equestrian statue in bronze & an ash tray to Mr. Mac – to Regie a nice set of carvers, to Alice an embroidered handkerchief. I of course helped Louise in her journey, as she could not get on without it. Gave presents here & at home so was generous as you see. they were all much appreciated, but were inexpensive I assure you. I feel that I have done my duty & need do nothing more. Gertie calls me “her good fairy” & says I do so much good with my money. The photo's need no introductions but in case you have forgotten them I marked them. be sure & keep them preciously as they are the only ones we have. All here are well & send much love to you, my dear old boy. God bless you & write soon – with many sweet kisses from your dear little ones & fondest love from myself, believe me

Your true, devoted, warmhearted wifie

Maye.

[/pg 8]