

2008.1.1.1.1.99

Marie Steele to Sam Steele

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Macleod, Mar 9<sup>th</sup> 1898.

My own darling Husband,

Your two letters forwarded by Major Perry reached me by yesterday's mail, which being five hours late only came in about nine p.m. To say how pleased I was & am at having them before me, to read & re-read as often as I like would be almost impossible. I have sighed & longed for news from you until I am almost heart-sick. I hoped but in vain, that you would be able to tell ~~you~~ me, you would not be kept away very long & now I fear, we may be parted for many long months, if not years. Surely it is not possible that you will be in charge of those detachments for good & that we will have to live away from you, my darling. With such a thing in view, life seems dark indeed, for as time goes by, I miss you more & more. If you had only had more time at your disposal before you left, I might have been more reconciled to you going, but it was such a shock, that it seems to overpower me yet. How I prayed for you when on your journey & how my heart was torn with anxiety when I read of the terrible storm that raged on the 8<sup>th</sup> of Feb.

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I told you how kind Mr. Haney had been in setting my fears at rest, but that cannot make up for the awful loneliness I feel at your absence. I know you arrived safely, but how will the climate agree with you? – will you be as careful of yourself as you should be? These are questions I ask myself fifty times a day. Navigation is so dangerous along the route you are compelled to travel by, that one is constantly anxious & I scan the papers, especially the B.C. ones, as I never did before. The boats should not be allowed to leave for such perilous trips if not in better trim & with such bad accommodation. It must have been nice for you to have an old friend in the cabin with you, as Capt. Armstrong is an old acquaintance, is he not? We read the most awful accounts of Skagway & exactly what you tell me of. I fancied that if you were compelled to live up there, we might perhaps be able to reside in Skagway, but suppose from the state of the place, that

such a thing is impossible. They say Jenkins, the M. Policeman who injured his back when driving out of the coal shed when he was stationed here, was one of the passengers on the "Clara Nevada" – is such the case? – they would know in Skagway, as he was there the day previous to that vessel's departure. Elmes is delighted that Inspr. Belcher is with you, as he says he is such a fine fellow & can be depended on. Mrs. Strickland will find life hard

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still she must be getting accustomed to the country by now. You cannot imagine what a balm it is to my heart to know you miss us; that is selfish of me you may think, but I have wept & longed for you so much since you left us & still with my heart so sore, have to put on a bright face & smile in order that others may not know the weariness of my life now, that it comforts me to learn you feel the parting too. The dear little ones miss you as much as they did when first you went away. March 11<sup>th</sup>. I commenced this two days ago, but being interrupted by a visit from Mr. Jarvis, have been unable to continue until now, when having a few leisure moments purposely found to devote to you, I shall continue conversing with my darling. Mr. Jarvis told me to tell you he had a letter from Mr. Edwards & that everything was all right: I understand he alluded to a claim of his near "The Empire" but will ask him about it again. I enclose you a letter from Mr. Herchmer (in answer to me I wrote concerning the withdrawing of the rations) which speaks for itself. The Insurance Company "Great West" has raised the premiums on Policies of men in the Yukon \$10.00 per \$1.000 which means another \$50.00 per year. "the [T.O.F.s]" have also raised theirs to \$8.00 per month, so you see what I have ahead of me. Now withdrawing the rations from me which would I suppose amount to at least \$25.00 per month, butter, meat etc included, simply means that it is going to be very hard for me to get on at all, as Cowdry has to get \$52.00 for month of February, then I have the [Canteen] for Dec. (which was a large a/c as you may remember) Jan & Feb too. I hate troubling

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you with these details my pet, & in fact, do so with tears in my eyes, but I have no one to turn to but you my darling, when it comes to discussing these private affairs & I feel that you should know. Sending you away on such short notice should make the authorities a little lenient I think – in fact, the grass widows whose husbands are in the Yukon are quaking for fears the quarters will be taken away next. Inspr. Macdowell of Moosomin is all

packed under order for Calgary & there are no quarters there except Mrs. Woods – will they rent a house for him in town, when he is to be in charge & they are on the economy line? hardly likely. Mr. Davidson has been packed up since you left & is in the same predicament. now that they have taken away the rations, I expect anything, only your being so very far from me makes it very much harder than were you near to cheer & comfort me in trouble, for the trouble that is now worrying me would not be near if you were. Your increase of pay \$1.25 per day will scarcely be sufficient to keep you in tobacco up there & any little extra you may need & taking away even the single ration means that you are in fact, getting less pay than you did here on a/c of the increase in the Insurances. Do not think hard of me dear for bothering you with all these weary details but, forgive me please, & when you write tell me what you think it best for me to do. Regie says should they take the qrs from me, he wants me to go & live with him. my mother wants me to go & spend the summer with her. & Father Cocola told Regie they would give me comfortable rooms at the new convent in Ft. Steele & a very warm welcome. When you have any idea of the length of time you may be away be sure & let me know.

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I hear Major Walsh has been recalled to the coast & that he has cost the govt. \$130.000 – it was in some of the papers, but I have not seen it. it is now the talk of the town here. Mr. Perry is styled “The Govt. confidential Commissioner in the Yukon” & gets all the credit for everything that is being done. It has as I say already begun to cause comment & I fancy The Comr. & Capt. McIlree must feel the snubs very keenly – all the orders are direct from Ottawa & they do not even get answers to the official correspondence, the latter who is now here says. Capt. Deane left a week ago to inspect the line & will be away a fortnight or more. Capt. McIlree came up four days before he left to take charge during his absence. Things are such as present, since you went away, that all those I see are wishing they were with you – if you are going to remain away, lots of them will ask to go I feel sure. Sergt. Hefferman arrived very unexpectedly from Regina on Wednesday for duty in the Pass – he has only two months more to finish his time, when he returns to Eng. his father bring in command of something at Portsmouth, I believe – he is Maj. Gen. He spent last evening here with the S.M. being a friend of Elmes’ & seems a nice fellow who thinks a great deal of himself. Gertie wrote me a long letter received on Tuesday – her children are better but weak after their scarlet fever. She says Richard sent you a “Certificate of the Montreal Bar” in the fall & asked you to return it as

it was important. he did not get it back & asks me to send it. Do you remember getting it & if so, where did you put it, as I will return it myself. You did not mention it to my recollection. Mamma is going to move but where I know not, but see that 237 is to let by "The Star". Alice is still in Lethbridge, but may return

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may return with Alec who wrote the S.M. yesterday saying he wanted a "Black Diamond" meeting for the 15<sup>th</sup> & asked him to notify them, especially Mr. Hyde. He said he would much like to see the S.M, but nothing more. [Clarry] gave up "The [illegible]" as you see. Morgan when he brought over the notice said "I do not want to be impertinent Mrs. Steele, but did the Major make over any of his property to you". I said, no! "too bad, as it would perhaps save him a lot of bother". I also have to pay \$30.00 to the "Saving, Loan & Building" this month of Mar, else \$37.00 in April, or else "the shares & all money paid thereon will become forfeited to the association". Mr. [McLean] says if you would like to withdraw, owing to your being away for long, he could send the papers necessary for you to sign & you would get back all the cash paid. I told him I would mention it. "Mr. Jonas Smith" who had a registered letter addressed to your care, called for it, so you need not worry about that. Regie has not written since I wrote you last, but expect to see or hear from him soon. I hope my letters will reach you – this is the 4<sup>th</sup> I write since you left – two addressed to Vancouver & the last to Skagway, just as I will address this one, but you must tell me your exact address when next you write without fail. O! my darling, how I do wish I could take your dear face in my two hands, look into your dear eyes & give you a sweet kiss at the same time: but Heaven alone knows when the pleasure will be given me. Poor baby!, he looks at your large picture in the dining room & cries when held up to it. Gertrude & Flora miss you as much as ever & I do not believe they will get accustomed to your absence as long as we remain here, where every corner of the house is hallowed by your presence. I see you everywhere –

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as soon as I enter the drawingroom [sic] I see you on the lounge – I could not look into the smokingroom [sic] without seeing you in your own old chair – in fact, you are everywhere & constantly in my thoughts. By the by I paid, through Mr. Casey the premium on the "Great West" – it was \$96 or \$98, but have no receipt as yet. the [T.O.F.s], your messing a/c or mess sub, & for Mr. Heron & when all was paid had \$1.40 ct. on your Jan. pay left. Of

course the money you left me has kept me going, paid Marie etc. then Elmes insisted on my taking \$15.00 which he said he owed you & I must take. I have left McCartin & gone to Macmaster who sells better & cheaper meat & will endeavor to pay some to McC. every month if possible. I will pay McM. Monthly too, but you see again what another expense that is, no rations. Mr. Jarvis came in a few moments ago & told me he had paid the draft & will pay the amount still due on the surveying of the claim on Empire on the 13<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Edwards said it would be registered & made all right. He is so anxious to get away from here. Capts. Deane & McIlree are continually finding fault with everything – meals & all, so life cannot be all couleur de rose for him. they are not very well & accustomed to different kind of cooking, I suppose. Dr. Fraser was married to Miss Bare on the 1<sup>st</sup> in Maple Creek – he was ordered to accompany Inspr. Primrose, but was delayed on his way from Battleford I presume. He started with his bride, but was ordered to send her back I hear, & continue alone – she will no doubt return to her father – a nice state of things, eh? Marie has just told me Moore told her this a.m, his time will be up on the 29<sup>th</sup> of April – if the men are ordered to go to the Yukon, whether they volunteer or not, he is not going to take on again, as he is not going to leave his wife & family the way things are now. He would not tell me at present, thinking

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I have enough to worry over. Sergt. Hefferman said last night here, the men who re-engage now have no alternative & must go if ordered: that is the state of things in Regina & the orders from Ottawa. Sergt. Roby was yesterday reduced to Corporal – drunk again no doubt, but am not sure of the cause of it. a bad time when the Asst. Comr. is in charge. Old Mr. Duff died a fortnight ago – apoplexy, which killed him, after being unconscious for five days. They say Dr. Haultain is ill & that Kennedy says he will have to go to a moist climate or to the seashore, his heart being affected – he has worried over his trouble with Capt. Deane, as the Asst. Comr. took the same stand & will not let him do – hospital duty, if he does not attend wives & families as well, & as there are several of the men's families ill with measles, he considered he was not strong enough to do it. He gets no sympathy from the townspeople as they say "he goes to bed if he has a pain in his toe" - & she is so peculiar, they do not seem to care much for them. Mr. Casey is not very well, suffering from Influenza, I believe. Regie has just sent me the \$100.00 for the Manager of the Vancouver Hotel by Mr. Herron who looks very well indeed & seemed glad to see me for a few moments. He said he feared there would be lots of trouble with "The Black

Diamond” – I believe Mr. Alec is much to blame & that he was too fond of his spirits all the time he was in Kaslo. You know him of old & when in that condition, he is fit for nothing & cannot transact any business whatever. We sent him telegrams from Stevens in St. Paul & he simply ignored them, so we got the letter I sent from him in answer to one Elmes wrote explaining matters. Jarvis wanted me to write Alec but I said there was no use: he thought women cannot understand business

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& consequently, would simply tell me to mind my own affairs. However, people are very much displeased with him. I had a letter from Auguste today in which he tells me of his engagement to Marie Masson, a daughter of the Hon. Rodrigue Masson, ex Sr. Gov. of Quebec – charming, etc etc. I was surprised & so will Alice be, for she does not seem to have any idea of it at all & has never mentioned her to me, so fancy she may not know her. Mr. Herron said he had a letter from you & Regie had one too, so they reached their destination safely. I am sending you some papers so that you can read for yourself what these blows say. Was Major Perry present when the Canadian flag was hoisted, for if he left on the 17<sup>th</sup> & it was put up on the 23<sup>rd</sup> I do not think it was possible for him to be? I think you had a hand in that & every one here as soon as they read it said so too. If so, why do they not give you credit for it. You will also see that Oliver has bolted on the Yukon railway bill. Mr. Herron was delighted when I told him, as he came down with a pocket full of Resolutions, the result of a large meeting in Pincher Creek, to be telegraphed to Oliver & inserted in “Gazette” & that was one of them – an all Canadian route. You will be disgusted with the awful length of this letter, but my dear old boy, I feel as if I had not said half that I desire & every minute think of something else to be mentioned. March 12<sup>th</sup>. Elmes was anxious to write last night but could not settle his mind to it so will do so tomorrow. Mr. Jarvis is gone down to wire the hundred to the man of the Vancouver this morning – that is the exact amount, is it not? another Resolution in Pincher Creek was “Insufficient protection to settlers, owing to removal of so many police”. Well, my darling old Boy, do not I beg of you feel too bad over all my troubles. they may look bad on paper, but with your love to brighten my lot & our dear little ones to knit our hearts more closely together, I should be a happy woman & my  
[reverse]

happiness would be complete were you near me. The little ones join me in fondest love & talk of you many times a day. Hoping to hear from you soon again, believe me,

Your own true, warmhearted, loving, devoted wife  
Maye.

Mr. Casey was I believe to blame for Roby's trouble – some  
misunderstanding about a pass & of course Mr. McIllree being here, people  
are very anxious to do their duty –

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