

(260 mi. W. of Red R.)  
Wood End Depot Camp.  
Oct 12. 73.

My Dear Maama

I have just begun to realize that it is a long long time since I wrote home last. But as I have been on the move ever since I left Dufferin you must excuse.

I just returned here from the West yesterday afternoon. My furthest West point was 387 miles along the line from Dufferin & within a mile or two of the end of this years work. Here the country is high & hilly forming a part of the "Missouri Plateau" & giving rise to numerous small rivers & streams which run Southward, & in fact constitute the Northern Head Waters of the Missouri R.

I cannot of course begin to give you

Anything like a connected account  
of my travels out here at present.

We had about a week of horrible  
weather up on the Coteau which is  
about 3000 feet above the sea level.

Almost constant snow storms  
with high wind & temperature  
varying from wet to hard frost.

I was travelling W. in company  
with Col Forest at the time, & having  
very little wood to burn & small

chance of drying any wet clothes  
we had a pretty rough time, especially  
Col Forest's men who had run

short of nations & were living for some  
time on literally nothing else but  
bread & tea.

These equinoctial gales have been  
followed by beautiful Indian

summer weather. often almost  
hot in the middle of the day & frosts  
at night.

I propose leaving this Depot day after  
tomorrow & will gradually drift in  
toward Supevian & I hope not be a great  
way off when the summer winter  
appears.

All sorts of things are falling short out  
here just now. oats for the horses scarce  
grass all withered up & frost bitten.  
Twelve head of oxen which were driven  
out here for beef lost themselves mysteriously  
about ten days ago & no trace of them  
has been found yet. The men here are  
now only getting a pound of beef a  
day instead of two pounds, & if the  
cattle do not turn up, (which I fear  
they will not) there will soon be no  
beef at all. Today fortunately a  
trader passed here on his way to

Scrubena & I secured from him  
enough pemican to do my small  
party. With this & what beef we can  
get & now or then a duck we shall  
live sumptuously.

All last night & this morning  
we have been fighting a prairie fire  
which threatened to burn up camp  
& all.

Before I got out here one prairie fire  
had already swept fifty miles along  
the line. The fire first ran E for some  
days, then the wind changing at right  
angles to its former direction brought  
the whole breadth of it Southward.

Well several days ago some men  
belonging to one of the surveying  
parties about 80 miles W from here  
went out to establish a wood pile  
where a new camp was to be made.  
They made a fire for cooking & a  
gust of wind carried it among the

grass, & in about a minute  
they had to run for it & leave their  
wood pile to its fate. I was camped  
near the place at the time, & we were  
kept in a state of anxiety all one  
night. The wind however soon began to  
take it Eastward & left us safe enough.  
The fire since then has travelled on  
the average about 20 miles a day, &  
having swept round the whole southern  
side of the previously burnt ground,  
Yesterday made itself evident  
far to the S of this depot.

Towards evening the wind changed to  
the S.W. & the reflection in the sky became  
very bright, & I thought likely the fire  
would soon come down here.

A guard was put on, & at the time  
I turned in about 12 o'clock the smell  
of smoke was quite perceptible. In  
about half an hour I was called up

I found volumes of smoke  
through which the moon looked  
quite red, drifting past. The wind  
strong & carrying lots of ashes along  
as well as smoke. The whole  
southern half of the sky in a glare  
& the fire evidently - just at hand.  
Dr. Burgers was the only other officer at  
the depot & we consulted as to the  
best plan of defence. The camp  
was fortunately on a peninsula  
round which the stream winds  
on all sides but one. It seemed  
likely that though the brook was  
fringed with bushes & small  
trees full of dead leaves, the fire  
would not cross it in dangerous  
volume. All attention was given then  
to the narrow neck which was  
frazzy & had a fringe of bushes at

each side. The men of this time  
all called up set to work & cut out  
a clear space in the bushes at  
each side & drenched a broad  
track with water from the creek.  
A number of old oat-sacks & such  
like were tied to sticks to form  
"beaters" & a row of buckets filled  
with water placed along the line to  
wet them in. The fire very soon  
appeared over the crest of the valley  
& beating it out first in one  
direction & then in another occupied  
till about half past three.

I turned in again about 4 am. All  
immediate danger appearing to be past  
& the main body of fire burning  
away far to the East. Between 7 & 8  
another alarm was raised, the fire  
having crossed the stream several  
miles West was coming down on  
the Camp from the N side of the

Creek. All hands turned out  
again & worked the greater part  
of the Sunday morning getting  
this put out. Breakfast about  
11 & no one that I have seen  
seems to have felt disposed for  
much physical exercise during  
the afternoon. The fire still shows  
red in the sky to the S & S.

I feel quite a bundle of pills papers &c  
out at the end of the line the other  
day & you have no idea what  
a treat it was.

With love to all

Your affectionate Son  
George.

