

LETTERS OF LA BELLE TO HIS PARENTS

In All of Them He Asseverates That the Killing of the Three Men on Murder Island Was Done by Fournier—Prays His Parents to Use All Their Influence That He May be Tried by French-Canadian Jury—The Journey to Eagle With Fournier and La Blanc Is Therein Described.

In the letters written by Edward La Belle and read to the jury in his trial yesterday afternoon, there is a constant iteration of his innocence and of the guilt of Fournier, who, he claims, killed all three of the men.

The letter was written from Wadsworth, Nev., shortly after his arrest there by Detective Welsh, and is dated September 1st. In this he tells of his arrest for murder, and calls God to witness of his innocence. The letter is here given in full.

Wadsworth, Nev., Sept. 1, 1902.
"Very dear father,—
"For the first letter I have written to you since I left you I see from here your tears, but I hope that with your aid and the aid of a good lawyer I will very soon get out of prison, for as you will see by this letter I have just been arrested for the murder of three Canadians. Now, dear father, I take God to witness that I am not guilty of this murder and you can judge for yourself, for I am going to explain the thing to you, and believe your son who tells you the truth and nothing but the truth. Here it is:

"In the month of June last I left Dawson with \$300 to go and see you again, for it was all I had been able to save during the winter. I had worked on some ground that I thought better than it was. In short after having paid my store bill, which amounted to more than I had left, I had decided to return with you and to work for you or for Henry. Then I went down to Dawson and was preparing to leave. Meeting friends we took several glasses of whiskey. Then a man named Fournier came to me and asked me if I would take him from Dawson to Skagway and that from there he would work his way to Seattle, and that he would reimburse me the money.

"Seeing him without money and I having a few drinks of whiskey I answered him that he could take the boat with me if he promised to return the money in Seattle. Then he got aboard with me and the first station we stopped at was Whitehorse, which is half way between Dawson and Skagway. I had paid \$10 for him and \$40 for myself. We had taken several drinks of whiskey every day coming up and in Whitehorse the first night I took one glass to many and spent all my money, all but \$40 that I still had.

"Then I found myself forced to return to Dawson. I could never reach you with that money. Then Fournier said to me, 'We will wait until tonight for the train from Skagway and we will take three or four companions, and buy a small boat which will cost us \$3.00 or \$4.00 each and \$1.00 for provisions; then we can return to Dawson.' Then I accepted the proposition. When night came I met three Canadians at the depot who found themselves in the same position as myself, not much money. I paid \$20 for the boat and the three others gave \$5 each, their share, for Fournier had no money, and we bought a little provisions and we left the same night, but before leaving my friend Fournier said to me, 'You remember when coming up the river we saw a moose that came to the river to drink, and that if I had a rifle we could without a doubt kill some coming down and that I could share with it at Dawson. Moose meat is worth from 30 to 35 cents a pound in Dawson.

"Then I went into a store and I bought a rifle, which I paid \$7 for, and we left the whole five, for Dawson is a small boat. The first six days went all right, only seeing a few ducks and swan and the seventh day in the morning as one of us went to make breakfast on the bank of the river, Fournier told me to take the rifle and make a tour of the island, for it was an island we were camped on, and I, not thinking of anything but making the tour of the island to try and kill something.

"I had not been gone more than a quarter of an hour when I heard shooting. Then fear seized me, for I began to understand that something was happening at the camp. I did not come back to the camp before an hour and a half at the least, and imagine it when I got back the three Canadians who had been with us were no more. He had killed them and had their money and had thrown them in the river.

"Now, dear father, to explain to you how Fournier killed those three men I am obliged to take the words he said to me when I arrived at the camp. He had a bag in which he kept what we call a Yukon bag, in which he had a big revolver,—a six shooter that he had always kept in his Yukon bag, and when I got back to the camp he showed me his revolver saying that he had got rid of his companions, and that he had a little money now. Imagine, dear father, that he had killed these three

men. One had \$15, the other \$30 and the other a \$100 bill.
"Now, dear father, put yourself in my place, what would you have done? He had killed the men and had thrown them in the river and he was there with his big revolver. He put his revolver back in his Yukon bag. Then I said to him, 'Let us fly from here,' and we left for Dawson. During the day he said to me he owed me \$45, and he gave them to me, and I was awkward enough to accept them for I had hardly any money left, but it was not for that, dear father, that I am arrested. I will tell you the reason for my arrest. I kept my rifle until we arrived in Dawson in hope of re-selling it, never thinking that I would be suspected of having killed those men. I kept the rifle in Dawson and two of my friends who were prospecting on a creek asked me if I did not have a gun; that they had seen a bear the night before close to their cabin. Then I told them that I had a rifle and that they could have it and they took it, and a few days afterwards they found one of the poor unfortunates floating on the river.

"Now, dear father, when we started from Whitehorse we were obliged to give our names at the police station and they put a number on our boat, for the people who pass Whitehorse and come down in small boats are obliged to give their names, and they put a number on their small boat, so that they will be able to know if anything happens coming down. They have their names and the number of their boat. Then, dear father, seeing they had found one of the poor unfortunates—

"Three days later, after he had arrived at Seattle in custody, he writes again to his father, saying that his poor head is crazed with thinking of the accusation that is brought against him. With this letter he enclosed another which purports to have been written and signed by Detective Welsh, but it was explained to the jury that the detective had neither written nor signed it. This letter is as follows:

"Seattle, Wash.,
"September 4th, 1902.
"Sir,—After having consulted with your brother-in-law, Mr. Ed. La Belle, I perform a duty in writing you, and at the same time all the family, that I really think that with the help of a first-class lawyer of Montreal Mr. Ed. La Belle, accused of the murder of three Canadians, can be honorably acquitted, for Fournier, who is known by me and all the citizens of Dawson, is the real culprit, and his bad reputation proves it, for, believe me, sir, that this is not Fournier's first crime. I consider myself a friend of the unfortunate arrested—Ed La Belle."

"Dawson,
"W. H. WELSH,
"Detective of Dawson."

The letter which accompanied it, and which was signed by La Belle, read as follows:

"Seattle, Wash.,
"September 4th, 1902.

"Very Dear Father,—
"It is almost impossible for me to describe all the sorrow that I feel, for the first letter that I write you since I left you. My poor head is crazed in thinking of the accusation that is brought against me. You will probably have seen the thing before receiving my letter because the detective who arrested me told me he had telegraphed Ottawa immediately after my arrest and my dear father, also madame La Belle and all the family, I take God to witness, who will some day judge me, that I am not guilty of the crime, that it is another Canadian who had no money and who asked me to take him out of the country of Alaska and that he would repay me his passage in the city of Seattle. How I would like to tell you the thing by mouth, but as it is impossible for me to do it I am forced to explain in my letter. Here it is: 'Dear father, also all the family: Oh pay attention to this dear parents, that it is my blood that speaks even as yours, for if I am not heard by you, not having any money to defend me, we can all think of the hangman's rope, and on the other side if I have a good lawyer to defend me and you and madame La Belle here my detective answers for it that I will get out of all trouble—even the gaol. I am sending to Mr. Emil Leonard at the same time as this one a letter written by the detective himself which you can read also for the real guilty one, and he says that the guilty one is I, but you will judge for yourselves which is the guilty one.'

"The beginning of June I came in after having worked 8 months on a piece of ground which brought me \$350.00 after my grocery bill had been paid. On arriving in Dawson I decided to go out of the country and to go back to you. Having waited two or three days for a steamboat

I met quite a lot of Canadians in town, and we took several drinks of whiskey. The last day at night before my departure I met a man named Fournier, whom I had known when I came into town and who asked me if I would pay his passage as far as Whitehorse, and from there he would work his way and that he would remit me the money in Seattle. Having had several drinks of whiskey and seeing him without money, and he said the country was too hard on him, I consented to pay his passage as far as Whitehorse, which amounted to \$30, and he left with me the same night, but before boarding the boat there is always the police who examine all the baggage that leaves Dawson. The police examined my baggage and told me to get on. Then Fournier came along and tried to go on without having his stuff examined but the police stopped him and told him to open his blankets, which he did. Then the police found a big revolver about a foot long and a belt full of cartridges. As it is permitted to carry fire arms in this country as long as they are not loaded the police let him pass. I did not have any fire arms. On the boat on the way up I continued to take several drinks of whiskey and I took up four days to reach Whitehorse. Arrived here I was three days drinking some all the time with the said Fournier, and remember well that he had no money and that it was always I who paid, and remember well that whiskey costs 25 and 50 cents a glass in this country. I was kind of troubled and it seems to me that I could feel that which was going to happen. However, at the end of three days when I wanted to take the train to Skagway I found that I had not enough money for to go and see you, and work by the day for \$1 per day was something I did not want to do. Then Fournier said to me, 'You will buy a small boat with a little provisions for five or six days and we will return to Dawson,' and that is what I did. I paid \$24 for the boat and then he said to me, 'If I were in your place I would buy a rifle to go down the river, for you know that there is considerable game there. The fact is we had seen a bull moose come and drink at the river and I knew that if I wanted to sell my gun at Dawson I could get my money for it. Then I bought a rifle which I paid \$8 for. That was in the morning, and he afterwards said that if we would wait for the 4-30 train we could probably get someone to come down the river with us and would help us to pay for the boat. I waited until night. Three Canadians got off of the train who asked us if we were going to Dawson, to which I answered 'yes,' that we had bought a boat that we had paid \$24 for, and that if they wanted to pay \$5 each they could come down with us instead of paying \$40 on a steamer and that is what they did. They each gave me \$5 and we each bought \$2 worth of provisions excepting Fournier. He was obliged to feed, he had no money and we left the same night, for it is daylight all night here in the summer. Now I will relate to you the morning of the murder and I take God to witness, dear parents, that I am writing you nothing else but the truth for you will judge yourself and from the word of the detective who arrested Fournier and who afterwards arrested me. He told me to tell you that he is known as a man who never worked in Dawson, nor before coming into that country, and that he had killed a man in the city of Seattle on a bridge and afterwards threw him into the river after taking the money he had on him. The detective tells me that the man had only \$300, and they killed him just the same. The detective told me that they telegraphed to several cities and everywhere they got the reputation of a bandit. The detective told me and told me to tell you that it is impossible that he should escape the rope. He is in jail without money or anyone to defend him, as I will be if you do not come, for as you will see I was with the gang and he says that it was I who committed the murder. Then, dear parents, here is the story, and nothing else but the truth: I take God to witness what I am about to say. In the morning of the sixth day we were on the river and it was the last one, as we should reach Dawson that night. We all got up as usual and we were preparing for breakfast on the shore. Fournier said, 'Take the rifle and make a tour of the island; for we were on an island, and said to us 'I thought I heard a noise before I got up.' Then I took the rifle on my shoulder and left to make the trip of the island. About a quarter of an hour after I left I heard shooting and I counted five gun shots. It was then I began to suspect that which was happening at the camp and I did not go back

before an hour and a half because of the fear that I had of returning. However, I decided to go back, and I saw Fournier alone on the shore who looked at me and said, 'I have a little money now.' What could I do at the time? He had killed our three companions with his big revolver above mentioned. If you think that I was not afraid for myself, figure the thing to yourself. He told me one had \$35, the other \$20, and the other a \$100 bill. Then I said to him, 'Let us get away from here as soon as possible for Dawson, and imagine it he had thrown his revolver into the river, and I still had my rifle and kept it until we got to Dawson and the police have it in their possession now. But that does not excuse him of the crime; for his revolver was one of the largest calibre that could have been examined at Dawson by the police before leaving for Whitehorse at the boat, and we have the name of the policeman and date the boat left. Now dear parents, there is another thing more serious against me, which is this: All small boats which leave Whitehorse to go down the river the occupants are obliged to go and give their names at the police station and the police put a number on the side of your boat. Then the night before we left Fournier said to me, 'If you wish we will not give our proper names at the police station so that no one will know that we have returned to Dawson,' and I, without thinking any more about it, gave the name of Ladouceur to the police, and Fournier he gave the name of Peter Forrest, and when the police arrested me they said it looked bad my having changed my name. Then I told him that it was Fournier who had asked me to do the thing, so that no one would know that we had left and had been obliged to return to Dawson, not having enough money to go outside. The detective told me that that would not amount to much. He is the only friend I have had since I have been arrested, for he has every faith in my case. His name is Detective Welsh. It is he who arrested me. He is from Dawson. Now dear parents, believe me they did not arrest me in Dawson. When with Fournier I left the place where he had killed those three men he said to me an hour afterwards, 'I

owe you \$35, here they are,' and I, thinking of nothing but getting away and being afraid that they would find those men, I accepted the money, and on arriving in Dawson I took another boat for the city of Seattle, for I had a little over \$125. I went to work on the railroad in California and it was there they arrested me, and it is on my way returning to Dawson that I wrote you this letter dear father, and as you see it is, in the city of Seattle that I write, not having had the chance before, for I was five days on the train, and the detective here gives me all the things I want to write you. I will be in Dawson about the 12th of September in the jail for my trial. When you receive this first letter tell Emil to telegraph me immediately so that I will know if he received my letter and what to do. Papa, see Judge Oulmet at once and ask him if I can have a French Canadian jury. It is almost always Judge Dugas of Montreal who judges the criminal cases. Papa, I want to see you here as well as madame La Belle, and Hector. Do not hesitate a moment and I will write to you as soon as I arrive in Dawson so that you will all know when to come. Madame La Belle, do not imagine that the rifle is hard to get off of the steamer at Dawson. The trip will take 10 days. It is no use my trying to explain all this, for you know my head turns with fear when I think that probably you will not answer your son who implores the assistance of his family, but do it. I will be there. Tell Emil to telegraph me immediately on the receipt of the letter from the detective so that the authorities will know what to do.

"I conclude in kissing you all and recommending all the family to go to communion so that God will give me the strength and courage to wait until you are near me to defend me. Your unfortunate son,
"EDOUARD LA BELLE."
In addition to the written confession of the prisoner published in the Nugget yesterday, another statement of the whole affair which he had written was read to the jury. The translation of this makes eight typewritten pages, and was probably intended for use in his defense. This is much the same as the description of the murders is concerning, and what led up to them, but it concludes as follows:

"The next day I met Dave LeBlanc with Fournier, and Fournier told me that LeBlanc had a boat, that he would like to go down as far as Eagle City; that there was work there for him; and that he thought we could get work also. Then I spoke to LeBlanc and he told me the same thing and we went down.

"Not being able to find any for myself I told Fournier that I was going to return to Dawson and we came back. That same night we arrived in Dawson Fournier commenced to drink again and when I saw he was changing his \$100 bill at the Labbe

hotel, and saw the bill was torn in half, I said to myself, 'He will certainly be taken with so much money as that,' and seeing that I was with him I did not know what to do.
"Labbe took it and went to the bank and he came back with the change and Fournier paid Labbe what I owed him for a couple of months' lodging. I had owed him since last fall. When we arrived from down the river we arrived in Dawson on Sunday. Monday morning I saw in one of the last week's newspapers that one of the poor unfortunates whom he had killed had been found. Then I said to myself, 'I have no longer any business here.' And I left for Whitehorse on Wednesday night, I think."

The last letter of the series is translated as follows:

"Seattle, Sept. 7th, 1902.
"Very dear father as well as all the family,—

"My poor head leaves me. As you see I no longer know how to address a letter, especially in a limited time I might say for myself for if you do not come to my assistance with a good lawyer although I swear to you on the holy altar that it is through trying to render a service to a man whom I did not know as a murderer, that I had never seen anywhere; that when I came to Dawson I saw him doing nothing there, but that did not tell me what he was capable of doing. It is for that reason, dear parents, that with the help of a good lawyer and you, papa and madame LaBelle you can be sure that my innocence will be proven. Dear father, see Monsieur le Judge Aldenque Duimet with Emil and ask through him, the privilege of having a French Canadian jury; that they will see that things are arranged. I do not know for what reason Dawson City is in Canada and I always see an English jury at the criminal court although there are enough Canadians here; the population is more Canadian than English and Judge Dugas who comes from Montreal, who is a Canadian, will not accept a French Canadian jury. I can see myself in a court of justice not understanding half of the questions that will be asked me and I of my side unable to explain myself as I could in my proper tongue. I desire to say my vote. You understand the thing as well as I. Now, dear parents, my address that I sent you in my first letter you probably will have some difficulty to understand. Here is a letter one for the Dawson City post. Mr. Edouard LaBelle, Dawson City, Yukon Territory, Canada; care of Dawson Harbours."

"Now once again have Mr. Emil Leonard telegraph as soon as you receive this letter so that I will know what to do, and so that I will know when my trial is to take place. However, do, for the best, dear parents, and be certain that you will all get out of the terrible danger I have brought you into. My heart breaks in seeing the pains you must endure, but I cannot help myself. Now, I am

awaiting your help. Truly if I were guilty, dear parents, I would allow frankly that it would be useless to go to that expense for me, but I swear to you that my innocence will be proven.

"Good-bye, dear parents. I will write again and often. I am still in Seattle city, but I should embark for Dawson City Sunday and I will not be able to write to you before I get to Dawson."

"Your son who implores your help,
"EDOUARD."

"Kruger's Book.
London, Oct. 9.—Lehmann, who is making Munich the centre of the German publishing trade, has faith in the selling power of floor literature. The new controls four floor books, namely: Kruger's, Dewet's, Viljoen's and Kasteel's, and is reported to have invested over £20,000 in these various undertakings.

ATTACKS CHAMBERLAIN AND MHLER
The political chapters of Kruger's book, now in the press, reveal more bitterness in dealing with Mr. Chamberlain and Lord Milner than in the treatment of the late Cecil Rhodes. Mr. Chamberlain is charged with complicity in the Jameson raid, the telegrams between Flora Shaw and Mr. Rhodes, produced before the parliamentary committee, being cited as evidence of his guilt, and large inferences being drawn from the suppression of other telegrams, and from the Colonial Secretary's defence of Mr. Rhodes after the close of the investigation.

CAMPBELL OF PROVOCATION.
Mr. Chamberlain is accused of organizing a systematic campaign of provocation against the late Lord Milner after the failure of Jameson's dash, and is reproached for misrepresenting the facts, embittering British opinion, and bringing on the war. Lord Milner is described as a marplot, who acted rashly and without reason at the Bloemfontein conference, and as an accomplice of Mr. Chamberlain in harassing and provoking the Dutch allies.

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