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Wainwright, Alaska.
Nov. 4th 1915

My dear Mr. Shields:-

The mail is to go in the morning and it is now 11:30 P. M. So you can see that we have put off the writing of this letter as long as possible, you won't be a bit pleased to get it, as it's going to be the very kind you don't want written. You can not wish more heartily than we do that it didn't have to be written but after long deliberation we can't see anyway out of it if we wish to protect ourselves. You will have gathered by this time that it is ^{the} about our predecessors. We have written Mr. Lopp nothing about the state in which they left things in the Fuel Dept. or otherwise, and will leave it to you to write him what you think he ought to know as it would come better from you than from us. We regret very much that we have to trouble you with it but feel that it is our duty to do so and that you would wish to know it. When Van Valin's left they said if there was anyone who said they owed them to pay them and send the bill to them.

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There are several whom they owe for skins, meat
 sewing etc. Some done the last day when there
 was no possible excuse for their overlooking
 it if it had not deliberate intention. On the other
 hand there are numerous natives who ~~was~~
 Van Valin's fox skins to be sent out this winter
 and money. We have located fifty dollars and
^{about} twenty fox skins to date and feel sure there are
 more due as it is difficult to find out these
 things quietly. Most of the things that these
 are owed for are useless things that we
 learn the natives were persuaded to buy and
 many have been charged an exorbitant, for
 instance a washing machine which would
 cost \$4.80 in Seattle and besides is worn out,
 they sold to one of the reindeer boys for three
 fox skins. It stands in the reindeer room. This
 is simply an example. It seems to us as
 if there ought to be some way of lightening
 some of these unfair debts or at least balancing
 up some with those owed by Van Valin's.

Affairs in the Fuel Dept are even worse
 and will be more difficult to straighten out.
~~Three pieces of the Wolverine you saw up~~

stairs, the natives recognize with delight as having been on the Van Valin's parkas when they came here. The rest consists of three heads, five tails and some pieces that have no value. I do not know at what price they ~~are~~ listed as I can find no price list for Wolverine. A pair of worn out smoked glasses which the natives say were Mr. Van Valin's are priced at \$3.⁰⁰. I am seeking these things at the best price I can get for them. He has recorded the exchange of some few personal effects for goods in the Fuel Dept. We learn of a great many more which he has not. Several natives have come to us to buy things in the Fuel, proudly expressing their ability to pay for them. On telling them we could not sell them for money, they tell us Mr. V. did. Others have brought coal which they say is to pay for things they got from Mr. V. We can simply accept the coal without ~~making~~ ^{recording} it as we find no record of these deals. It is impossible to balance the accounts of the Fuel Dept.

The store business is no better. James Angasuk ~~was running a store here for Capt. Backland.~~

VanValin's took it over at the end of their first year did all the trading - paying from two to five dollars for fox skins - and had charge of the accounts. This year James finds himself nine hundred dollars in debt. He is unable to tell how he got there. He has no papers to show that he was credited with the goods on hand when V. took the store over. Mr. Edvardsen took the store over from them this year ~~from~~ through Capt. Backland. He found on taking charge that a great many things were short of the amount invoiced, that they had made a "mistake" of adding of \$126 and various other mistakes in the bill such as 16 yards of calico for \$6. A large part of the things are listed at ridiculous ~~expensive~~ prices. In a letter from VanValin to Capt. Backland (which he showed us) they accused James of stealing goods from the store all winter. Capt. Backland demanded an explanation of him and he and all the other natives denied it. We have found James to be both honest and industrious. Mr. Edvardsen called us in to witness some of these things. There is ~~found to be trouble between Vanl. Backland and~~

him and we thought you would like to know a few details before hand, especially as James will be involved.

There are several things in the Fuel Dept. at an extremely high price that V. bought for it from himself through Backland. I am reducing the price of some of these as they can buy them either at the local store or Barrow cheaper.

As to our own personal affairs they could not be better. We are both healthy, happy, interested and busy. Have really not had time yet to think about how far out of the world we are and in the three months we've been here we have managed to read a hundred pages of history.

The Northern Lights were beautiful the other night brilliant and faintly colored. There are so many fascinating things besides those of a more sordid nature but still interesting.

They went out on the ice here today for the first time. Got one oogrook.

We still have the two squirrels someone ~~sent in from the Bear~~ we never knew who.

Hoping that this finds you and yours in the best of health and that the things we have been obliged to write will not be held against us (we have put it very meekly under the circumstances) we are

Sincerely
Carl and Elizabeth Tourist

P.S. One little incident that amused us more than anything but which serves as an indication of character: the day we came they bought a piece of deer meat (a fact to which we paid no attention at the time) and we all ate it - we furnish-
ing most of the other eatables. A month later Segevan came to ask us for pay for the meat (three dollars) having left it to us. We paid it of course but