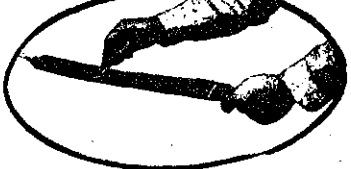


The Tragic Story of the Wilderness Mail

By JAMES OLIVER CURWOOD



The New Strop that Means Shaving Comfort

Here is our latest production—the new Torrey Honing Strop—made possible by our discovery of a wonderful sharpening preparation. It is the result of half a century of strop making. This new preparation is worked into the sharpening side of the

New TORREY Honing Strop

giving it a surface that keeps a razor's edge in perfect condition all the year round. The finishing side is of specially prepared and treated leather. The new Torrey Honing Strop will bring you shaving comfort. It will keep your razor so you can shave smooth and close every day without the slightest soreness of the skin. Ask your dealer to show you the new Torrey Honing Strop—if he hasn't got it write to us direct.

Price \$50, 75c, \$1.00, \$1.50, \$2.00 and \$3.50.

Dealers in every town should write for our special proposition.

Get a Torrey Razor—the Best Made
J. S. TORREY & CO., Dept. AC, Worcester, Mass.

WILLOW PLUMES, 36 in. x 30 in., reg. \$24, value, SPECIAL \$12.

2 WILLOW PLUMES
18 in. x 14 in.
\$12. Value
SPECIAL
\$6.00

One Profit System
Manufacturer to You

Genuine French and Willow Plumess

At prices that never before prevailed in the history of the stretch feather business. Just look at the prices below and you will agree with us that you are getting better value in cheaper plumess than ever before offered.

Hereafter our business was confined to the trade exclusively and never before sold by mail. These plumess are best made stock, direct from our own farms in South Africa. Plumess are usually full, long and beautiful.

THESE PRICES WILL CONVINCCE YOU

WILLOW PLUMES	FRANCE PLUMES
18 in. x 14 in. \$2.50	18 in. x 14 in. long, \$2.50
19 in. x 15 in. \$2.60	19 in. x 15 in. long, \$2.60
20 in. x 17 in. \$4.10	20 in. x 17 in. long, \$4.10
21 in. x 18 in. \$4.55	21 in. x 18 in. long, \$4.55
22 in. x 20 in. \$5.90	22 in. x 20 in. long, \$5.90
23 in. x 21 in. \$5.95	Other French
24 in. x 22 in. \$6.90	Plumess, up to \$50.00

Charles A. Schaefer, Mfr., 148 E. 117th St., New York

DO NOT VISIT
THE PANAMA CANAL
Or the West Indies,

without sending for the booklet of the 21-day limited cruises, Jan. 11 and Feb. 4, 1913, of the New Touring Steamship ST. LOUIS.

RED CROSS LINE,
Visiting Colon, Panama, Hamilton, Bermuda, Port Antonio and Kingston, Jamaica and Havana, Cuba.

21 DAYS \$100.00 UP.

Limited to 100 passengers. Ample deck space owing to small number of crew. No difficulties in obtaining carriage or conveyance at ports of call. Send for handsome illustrated booklet.

HOWLAND & CO., 17 Battery Place, N. Y.

Play Better Billiards

My ten papers of practical instruction insure certain and continued improvement in stroke, accuracy, generalship and position play. Most difficult shots simplified so you can get professional results. Written and diagrammed so they readily help. Endorsed by leading professionals. Priced at \$10, entitling you to special additional correspondence on request. Send 20 cents for sample lesson on draw shot.

AL TAYLOR (High runs 205 at 18.2).
118 Pleasanton House, Milwaukee, Wis.
Former instructor Chi. Ath. Assn. Exhibitor in Paris. Reference, Brunswick-Balke-Collender Co.

Make 30 to 60 Weekly

Selling our new and unequalled portable automatic table and machine. Large

PIERRE COUCHEE was a dark, slim, sinewy French half-breed from the Fond du Lac country. He was a Hudson Bay Company's man, and twice each year took the mail through that deep wilderness country between Reindeer Lake and Fort Churchill, on Hudson Bay. A week before he had started up from Nelson House. Two days later he had been caught in a terrible storm, and now, with the temperature at fifty degrees below zero, he was dragging himself wearily over a bit of open plain, with the gloom of early night already settling about him. He was traveling on snowshoes and without sledge or dogs. The factor at Nelson House had warned him against this, but Pierre and the wilderness had been one since he had first opened his eyes and he had set out unafraid.

In the storm of that second day he had fallen through a "trap" in crossing a small lake, and to save himself from death he had dropped his rifle and freed himself of his pack, so that when he dragged himself out upon the ice he had lost everything—food, blankets, fire. And yet not quite everything—for he still carried that precious, small, rubber packet in which was his Majesty's mail. For nearly five days Pierre Couchee struggled on, without fire and with almost no food. To warm himself he burrowed deep in snowdrifts, and for food he ate an owl which he shot with his revolver. On this night of the seventh day he had seen a light ahead of him. The light came from the window of a trapper's cabin, and when Pierre opened the door he fell forward upon his face. He was terribly frozen and he died that night.

According to the unwritten law of the wilderness, his Majesty's mail had passed into the hands of Henry Perrault, and with dawn Perrault was away to the north and east with his dog team. A hundred miles through the frozen desolation he carried the mail, until, on Etawney Lake, he struck an Indian camp, with one foot partly frozen; and here, without the loss of an hour, an Indian took the mail and continued with it to Churchill. Close to Perrault's cabin there is a grave. Over it the Royal Northwest Mounted Police have placed a wooden slab, into which there have been burned with a red-hot iron the words, "P. Couchee, died 1909, O. H. S."—the O. H. S. meaning "On His Majesty's Service."

This is but one of hundreds of true stories of courage, romance and adventure that might be told of the mail carriers of the far north. Those people who receive their mail two and three times a day, and who become irritated whenever the Post-office Department takes a half holiday, can scarcely realize what it means to receive a letter in the deep wilderness of the Hudson Bay and the arctic country.

It is comparatively easy to reach friends in Alaska and the Yukon, but between the eastern boundary of British Columbia and Hudson Bay there is a vast and almost unpeopled region, twenty-two times as large as the State of Ohio, into which the mail is delivered twice a year—and this in spite of this remarkable fact that there is in this vast territory a population of not more

than a few hundred people. The only figure in the "day's work" of his Majesty's service in the far north. And the work is slow as well as dangerous. Two years ago I sent a Christmas present to Herschel, on the Arctic coast, early in September, and it arrived at its destination in April of the following year.

From four to six months seems a long time for a piece of mail to travel this distance of approximately two thousand miles; but after it reaches a country where a hundred miles scarcely carries one from cabin to cabin, progress is slow and depends on conditions. I received a letter once that had lain half the winter on a dead man's back. The dead man was the mail carrier, who had frozen to death "coming down" and whose bones now lie under one of the little wooden crosses up at Fort Resolution. I once wrote another letter to Fullerton that is still on a dead man's back somewhere in the far wilderness, for the man who carried it was never heard of after leaving Nelson House.

In this country the mail is literally more precious than gold. Only so much mail is allowed to go into it each season. The limit is six hundred pounds—six hundred pounds to be scattered over regions embracing a quarter of a continent. If there are six hundred and four pounds, the four pounds are cut out until the following mail, six months later. Last autumn—and autumn is the big season—ninety-two pounds were cut out at Edmonton. In the mail that went into the north there were 1,249 letters and fifty-seven postal cards. There are two mail routes leading into the far northern wilderness. One starts in from Winnipeg, via Prince Albert, for the Hudson Bay country, and the other leaves Edmonton. The first stop from Edmonton is at Lac la Biche, and the next at Fort McMurray. From there the mail goes by way of the Athabasca River, Slave River, Great Slave Lake and the Mackenzie. It is relayed from point to point, even the Eskimo taking a hand in its delivery when the pouch passes beyond the arctic circle.

Here is the history of one letter that left Edmonton early in September, addressed to a man at Fort McMurray. This man had gone northward when the letter reached McMurray, and the mail followed him by dog sledge in the Fort Macpherson pouch, reaching that point early in December. Two weeks before this, A. H. Bowen, to whom it was addressed, had gone with a Royal Northwest Mounted Police patrol into the Great Bear country, leaving word that he would locate for the summer at Old Fort Reliance, four hundred miles farther south, on Great Slave Lake. It was spring before the letter began its return journey up the Mackenzie, reaching Fort Providence late in May. On the fifteenth of August a patrol set off along the shores of Great Slave Lake, carrying Bowen's letter and about twenty others. It arrived at Old Fort Reliance on the twenty-second of September, one year and seventeen days after it had started from Edmonton.

It no longer bore a resemblance to the original letter. It had passed through the hands of more than twenty carriers—white men, half-breeds, Indians, and one Eskimo. At Fort Macpherson the original address had become so faint

only dogs and occasional Indians for company—the loneliness that has driven more than one man mad—and those other days of hunger and cold, when the temperature is fifty or sixty degrees below zero, and death hovers always an arm's reach away. In the little burial place at Fort McMurray there is a grave that is not that of a man or woman or child. It is the grave of a nameless dog. One bitter cold winter the Hudson Bay Company's man who was bringing the mail down from Smith's Landing "went bad," as they call it up there. That is, he disappeared. His body was never found. But before he died he fastened his rubber mail pouch upon the back of one of his dogs, and this dog, as loyal as his master, found his way to Fort McMurray. He was terribly torn and his feet were frozen. At the fort it was believed that he had fought with a wolf or a lynx. Two days after bringing in the mail he died.

Nearly every post and police station in the far north can tell its stories of the mail. I once traveled with the man who carried the mail to Fort Resolution. For a week after our arrival the people came in from the wilderness, and among these was a tall, gaunt, white-haired man, and the inspector there told me that he lived alone in a hut buried in a deep swamp, and that, while he was a good trapper and sane enough in some ways, he was out of his head in others. For six years he had come regularly for his mail, and in all that time he had not received a letter or a card. No one could learn his story. Last year he failed to make an appearance, and so unusual was this that a man from the fort visited his hut in the swamp. He found the old man with his shaggy head bowed upon the table in his cabin. He was dead. One of his stiffened hands still held the pistol he had killed himself with, and on the table was a slip of paper on which he had written, "I can't go any more. They will never write." What was the mystery in this old man's life? Was it a daughter or a son who had cast him off and who let him die for want of a word from home? Probably some one now living could answer those questions. The old man's name was Morris. His first name I withhold, because there are probably many Morrises now living who bear that name.

To Fort Simpson, on the Mackenzie River, the mail came once in a strange and tragic way. It was long overdue, when one day a canoe came floating lazily down with the current past Fort Simpson. An Indian boy saw it from the shore, paddled out to it and towed it in. Huddled in the bottom of the canoe was the missing mail carrier, a company white man named Thompson. He had been dead for many days. At his feet was a Savage .303 rifle, to which he had apparently securely tied the mail pouch, after buckling the rifle strap through a hole in the gunwale. A bullet wound in the man's abdomen told of the manner of his death. There was an empty cartridge in the chamber of the rifle, which led those at Fort Simpson to believe that he had accidentally shot himself.

At that time there was an old Indian at the fort who was locally known as Seventy-five Cents, but who went into official reports as, Joe Mudlake. Joe

Bo
I
n
need
tific p
metho
Dockr
unkno
author
ing, a
in the
classer
and ve
to him
knowl
are inf
or spe
that
is wr
Publis
"Th
the pe
from l
and vi
such
advent
next b
Mexico
advent
The C
The
tracte
she su
is stro
a weir
twins,
body,
man t
first
witchs
hearta
began
merely
gruesc
Philad
Price,
"Wi
13 (V
Marqu
previo
cal ref
newed
down t
It tells
person
are m
life.
Price,
"Fo
Hamil
through
strates
has re
hereto
dealing
the har
ters.
the sub
interes
to you
selor,
ing qu
grows
The bo
Sanitar
\$1, net.
S. E.
Inventi
lic a pr
the bej
things.
York:
\$1, net.
"Pho

WILLOW PLUME, 36 in. x 30 in., reg. \$24. Value, SPECIAL \$12.

2 WILLOW PLUMES
18 in. x 14 in.
\$12. Value
SPECIAL \$6.00

One Profit System
Manufacturer to You

Genuine French and Willow Plumes

These plumes are made before the advent of the modern machine. They are made by hand and will give you the same getting letter value in a shorter time than ever before.

Herefore our business was confined to the trade exclusively and never before sold by mail. These plumes are best made stock stores from our farm in South Africa. Plumes are generally sold by mail and beautiful.

THESE PLUMES WILL CONTINUE YOU

WILLOW PLUMES	FRENCH PLUMES
1" to 4" 14 in. \$2.50	12 inches long, \$2.50
10 in. x 15 in. \$3.50	14 inches long, \$3.00
20 in. x 17 in. \$4.50	26 inches long, \$4.10
21 in. x 19 in. \$4.50	16 inches long, \$4.00
22 in. x 20 in. \$4.50	30 inches long, \$4.50
23 in. x 21 in. \$4.50	Other French
25 in. x 23 in. \$4.50	Plumes up to \$50.00

Patrick Heads, 80 inches long, Special \$2.19

When ordering, send us sample of color desired, and we will match plume exactly. All colors without extra charge. Any plume sent G. O. D. on approval upon receipt of 25c to cover postage. If money is sent with order we pay shipping charges. If not, we will pay your full money returned. Bank references.

Charles A. Schaefer, Etc., 145 E. 117th St., New York

DO NOT VISIT

THE PANAMA CANAL
Or the West Indies,

WITHOUT SENDING FOR THE booklet of the 31-day mail-boat service, Jan. 11 and Feb. 4 1915, of the New Touring Steamship STEPHANO of the

RED CROSS LINE,
visiting Cuba, Panama, Hamilton, Bermuda, Port Antonio and Kingston, Jamaica, and Havana, Cuba.

21 DAYS \$100.00 UP.

Applied to the passenger. Ample deck space owing to small number carried. No difficulties in obtaining passages or conveyances at ports of call. Send for literature immediately.

HOWLAND & CO., 17 Battery Place, N. Y.

Play Better Billiards

My ten papers of practical instruction insure certain and continued improvement in stroke, accuracy, generalship and position play. Most difficult shots simplified, so you can get professional results. Written and diagrammed so they really help. Endorsed by leading professionals. Prepaid, \$10, entitling you to special additional correspondence on request. Send 25 cents for sample lesson on deflection.

AL TAYLOR (High run 265 at 18.)
918 Pleasanton House, Milwaukee, Wis.
Former Instructor Chi. Ath. Assn. Exhibitor in Paris. Reference, Brunswick-Balke-Collender Co.

Make 30 to 60 Weekly

Selling our new and unequalled portable gasoline table and hanging lamp for lighting city and rural homes, stores, halls, churches. Most powerful light known. Absolutely safe.

WE LOAN YOU SAMPLE

More billiard and many other cheap than gas or electricity. Guaranteed five years. Everyone a possible customer. No experience necessary. Large commission. Exclusive territory free. Write today.

SUNSHINE SAFETY LAMP CO.
250 Factory Bldg., Kansas City, Mo.

I can use 150 Men at \$30 a week to start

Would you like a steady job selling my goods, starting right away, earning \$30 a week, with a chance to be promoted to a position paying \$200 yearly? No experience is required. My agents have steady employment the year round. I am ready to give you a position right now where you can make big money quick. Just write me a letter or postal today sure and say: "Mail particulars about the position you offer" and mark the address

Personal for **E. M. DAVIS, President**
E. M. DAVIS CO., 533 Davis Block, Chicago

PATENTS

Our Hand Book on Patents, Trade Marks, etc., sent free. Agents procured through Munn & Co., receive free notice in the scientific American.

MUNN & CO., 359 Broadway, N. Y.
BRANCH OFFICE: 625 F Street, Washington, D. C.

himself of his pack, so that when he dragged himself out upon the ice he had lost everything—food, blankets, fire. And yet not quite everything—for he still carried that precious, small, rubber packet in which was his Majesty's mail. For nearly five days Pierre Couchee struggled on, without fire and with almost no food. To warm himself he burrowed deep in snowdrifts, and for food he ate an owl which he shot with his revolver. On this night of the seventh day he had seen a light ahead of him. The light came from the window of a trapper's cabin, and when Pierre opened the door he fell forward upon his face. He was terribly frozen and he died that night.

According to the unwritten law of the wilderness, his Majesty's mail had passed into the hands of Henry Perrault, and with dawn Perrault was away to the north and east with his dog team. A hundred miles through the frozen desolation he carried the mail, until, on Etawney Lake, he struck an Indian camp, with one foot partly frozen; and here, without the loss of an hour, an Indian took the mail and continued with it to Churchill. Close to Perrault's cabin there is a grave. Over it the Royal Northwest Mounted Police have placed a wooden slab, into which there have been burned with a red-hot iron the words, "P. Couchee, died 1909, O. H. S."—the O. H. S. meaning "On His Majesty's Service."

This is but one of hundreds of true stories of courage, romance and adventure that might be told of the mail carriers of the far north. Those people who receive their mail two and three times a day, and who become irritated whenever the Post-office Department takes a half holiday, can scarcely realize what it means to receive a letter in the deep wilderness of the Hudson Bay and the arctic country.

It is comparatively easy to reach friends in Alaska and the Yukon, but between the eastern boundary of British Columbia and Hudson Bay there is a vast and almost unpeopled region, twenty-two times as large as the State of Ohio, into which the mail is delivered twice a year—and this in spite of the remarkable fact that there is in this vast territory a population of not more than twenty-five thousand people. The mail goes directly to the Hudson Bay Company's posts or the Royal Northwest Mounted Police stations. Its arrival is the most remarkable event of the year, and when at last the "mail man" comes with his rubber packet, word travels quickly, from trap line to trap line, from trapper's hut to trapper's hut, and men with dog teams and on showshoes come in from hundreds of square miles about.

Ordinarily a letter mailed in New York City could travel five times around the world before that same letter could be taken to Fort Macpherson, on the Mackenzie River, close to the Arctic Sea. On its northward journey, after reaching the edge of the wilderness, no train or ship would help to carry it along. By canoe, dog sledge, pack and snowshoe it finds its way—a few miles to-day, a few more to-morrow; through forest and swamp and over mountains, week after week, and month after month; handled by white men, Indians, French and half-bloods, all of whom

In this country the mail is literally more precious than gold. Only so much mail is allowed to go into it each season. The limit is six hundred pounds—six hundred pounds to be scattered over regions embracing a quarter of a continent. If there are six hundred and four pounds, the four pounds are cut out until the following mail, six months later. Last autumn—and autumn is the big season—ninety-two pounds were cut out at Edmonton. In the mail that went into the north there were 1,249 letters and fifty-seven postal cards. There are two mail routes leading into the far northern wilderness. One starts in from Winnipeg, via Prince Albert, for the Hudson Bay country, and the other leaves Edmonton. The first stop from Edmonton is at Lac la Biche, and the next at Fort McMurray. From there the mail goes by way of the Athabasca River, Slave River, Great Slave Lake and the Mackenzie. It is relayed from point to point, even the Eskimo taking a hand in its delivery when the pouch passes beyond the arctic circle.

Here is the history of one letter that left Edmonton early in September, addressed to a man at Fort McMurray. This man had gone northward when the letter reached McMurray, and the mail followed him by dog sledge in the Fort Macpherson pouch, reaching that point early in December. Two weeks before this, A. H. Bowen, to whom it was addressed, had gone with a Royal Northwest Mounted Police patrol into the Great Bear country, leaving word that he would locate for the summer at Old Fort Reliance, four hundred miles farther south, on Great Slave Lake. It was spring before the letter began its return journey up the Mackenzie, reaching Fort Providence late in May. On the fifteenth of August a patrol set off along the shores of Great Slave Lake, carrying Bowen's letter and about twenty others. It arrived at Old Fort Reliance on the twenty-second of September, one year and seventeen days after it had started from Edmonton.

It no longer bore a resemblance to the original letter. It had passed through the hands of more than twenty carriers—white men, half-breeds, Indians, and one Eskimo. At Fort Macpherson the original address had become so faint that the letter was wrapped in a piece of buckskin, and Bowen's name was written on that. And the letter's journey did not end at Old Fort Reliance, for Bowen had returned to his home in Regina. The letter reached him there in February. It had been on his trail for eighteen months and had traveled fully five thousand miles through the wildest and most unexplored parts of North America. And the uncanny humor of the whole thing was that this letter, in the delivery of which men had suffered and risked their lives for a year and a half, contained a tailor's receipt for a bill which Bowen had forgotten until the last moment and which he had paid by mailing a check just before he left Edmonton for the upper north.

The history of the "wilderness mail" is filled with stories of tragedy and romance of which the big outside world seldom hears even a rumor, and few can guess the perils and hardships the courageous "runners" of the north go through to perform their duty—the days and weeks and months of loneliness, with

in the far north can tell its stories of the mail. I once traveled with the man who carried the mail to Fort Resolution. For a week after our arrival the people came in from the wilderness, and among these was a tall, gaunt, white-haired man, and the inspector there told me that he lived alone in a hut buried in a deep swamp, and that, while he was a good trapper and sane enough in some ways, he was out of his head in others. For six years he had come regularly for his mail, and in all that time he had not received a letter or a card. No one could learn his story. Last year he failed to make an appearance, and so unusual was this that a man from the fort visited his hut in the swamp. He found the old man with his shaggy head bowed upon the table in his cabin. He was dead. One of his stiffened hands still held the pistol he had killed himself with, and on the table was a slip of paper on which he had written, "I can't go any more. They will never write." What was the mystery in this old man's life? Was it a daughter or a son who had cast him off and who let him die for want of a word from home? Probably some one now living could answer those questions. The old man's name was Morris. His first name I withhold, because there are probably many Morrises now living who bear that name.

To Fort Simpson, on the Mackenzie River, the mail came once in a strange and tragic way. It was long overdue, when one day a canoe came floating lazily down with the current past Fort Simpson. An Indian boy saw it from the shore, paddled out to it and towed it in. Huddled in the bottom of the canoe was the missing mail carrier, a company white man named Thompson. He had been dead for many days. At his feet was a Savage .303 rifle, to which he had apparently securely tied the mail pouch, after buckling the rifle strap through a hole in the gunwale. A bullet wound in the man's abdomen told of the manner of his death. There was an empty cartridge in the chamber of the rifle, which led those at Fort Simpson to believe that he had accidentally shot himself.

At that time there was an old Indian at the fort who was locally known as Seventy-five Cents, but who went into official reports as Joe Mudlake. Joe looked at the remaining cartridges when they were taken from the rifle, bit hard on the end of one and grunted. Then he examined the wound in the carrier's stomach. It was as big as his fist, and he grunted again. That same day this Sherlock Holmes of the wilderness left the fort. Two weeks later he returned with a Dog Rib Indian as his prisoner, whom he turned over as Thompson's murderer. The Dog Rib confessed, but how old Joe Mudlake knew that he was the murderer and ran him down, no one ever learned. All that Joe divulged was this—that the cartridges in Thompson's rifle were loaded with Savage steel-capped bullets, which make a wound scarcely larger than one's little finger, while the wound in the carrier's abdomen had been made by a soft or "mushroom" bullet, fired from another rifle. The Dog Rib had killed Thompson because of a personal grievance, but, still loyal to that unwritten law of the wilderness, "Preserve the mail," had allowed him to float down to Fort Simpson with the rubber pouch.

ne
M
n
Th

tra
she
is
a
w
tw
bod
mar
first
with
hear
begs
mer
grue
Phil
Pr
"

13
Mar
prev
cal
r
new
town
It tel
perso
are n
life.
Price
"
F.
Hami
throu
strate
has r
heret
dealin
the hi
ters.
the su
intere
to you
selor,
ing q
rows
The b
Sanita
\$1, ne
S.
Inven
lic a
the b
thing
York:
\$1, ne
"
"P
togra
for us
sugge
in th
treat
each,
publi
"
"P.
by C
State
in a
collec
room
the a
a bit
arous
of trade.
Comp
ronto.
"
"St
Them.
strike
of wo
the er
and s
autho:

In answering advertisements please mention "Ladies Weekly."