

confided his perplexities. It was a hasty interview, for the stage was about to start.

"My wife will sure take your girl and welcome; don't even have to ask her," the kind-eyed old fellow assured Hilliard. "We'll be glad to have her for a couple of months. She'll like the kids. It'll be home for her. Yes, sir" — he patted the excited traveler on the shoulder — "you pile into the stage and don't you worry any. I'll be up at your place before night and bring the lady down on my sled. Yes, sir. Pile in and don't you worry any."

Cosme wrung his hand, avoided his clear eye, and climbed up beside the driver on the stage. He did not look after the trapper. He stared ahead beyond the horses to the high white hill against a low and heavy sky of clouds.

"There's a big snowstorm a comin' down," growled the driver. "Lucky if we make The Hill to-day. A reg'lar oldtimer it's agoin' to be. And cold — ugh!"

Cosme hardly heard this speech. The gray world was a golden ball for him to spin at his will. Midas had touched the snow. The sleigh started with a jerk and a jingle. In a moment it was running lightly with a crisp, cutting noise. Cosme's thoughts outran it, leaping toward their gaudy goal . . . a journey out to life and a journey back to love — no wonder his golden eyes shone and his cheeks flushed.

"You look almighty glad to be going out of here," the driver made comment.