

It had come so suddenly that afterwards neither of the two dauntless prospectors could have described the primal catastrophe or its later developments. David Rose seemed to see the great mountain slide into a plunging, distorted mass. In the arms of an avalanche he was carried thousands of feet, to be flung senseless into a frightful chasm. To his unconscious comrade it was a dim sense of motion and then nothingness.

Six months after that event a thin, ragged man entered the trading post at Vitma, with a brief mournful story and a simple request.

"Where from?" the superintendent had asked him.

"Picked up after an avalanche, my partner gone, penniless, sick, friendless, and taken in by an Indian family. I have tramped it 350 miles to get this far and beg work to start on my way home."

Thus Wade Rayner, this as an end of his hard earned savings. This the homecoming with the bright yellow gold that had lured him to peril and suffering, and, most mournful of all, the loss of the best friend he had in the world.

"There's a pack train starting next week," explained the trader. "It's all tramp, for the dogs are light, the trail bad and the sledges carrying all they can stand. Will you try it?"

"I would crawl over the trail on my hands and knees, but I must get home!"

"We'll help you do it," said the superintendent, but in his secret mind he doubted if the applicant would survive one-half the journey planned.

Ambition was dead in Wade Rayner, hope pretty near, but love!—poor, ill, beggared, still did love seem to shine, a beckoning beacon at the far distant end of the lonely desert trail.

At last! Heaven seemed near when finally the wearied pack train reached the first post of civilization. Wade Rayner had received a little package of gold dust for his services

as an attendant on the train. In an inside pocket he carried two minute nuggets. They represented all he had found in the land where he had expected to gather the yellow treasure all along the highways.

He converted these small possessions into current coin. Then a train for the East. More dreams, rapid, eager, suspenseful, and one evening—home!

The train ran five miles from the village and he had to cover the rest of the distance on foot. How strange to near the old sand pits, the creek stretch and then the hole in the fence! Ah! beyond that the loved one. Here had he seen May Woolson last. She seemed to beckon him on and he crossed lots to the little garden surrounding the Woolson home.

The house was lighted. How glad-some, how welcoming it looked! And there was a light in May's own room—and May herself.

She stood before a mirror dressed in bridal attire, wedding flowers in her hair. A chill struck the heart of the gazer.

"She believes me dead and—"

He tottered away. A man passed him by, stared at him, went on, looked back. In a vague, baffling tremor Wade Rayner made his way along back to the hole in the fence. There, leaning against the aged timbers, he looked out on the dark world beyond. Its cheerlessness seemed all there was left for him.

"Another's!" he breathed. "It must be true. I will go. What right have I, a beggar, a broken man, to intrude upon her welfare?"

He turned at the sound of footsteps. The man who had passed him with a stare was hurrying with a white robed form towards him.

"Wade! oh, my lost darling, Wade!" and May Woolson was in his arms.

He had come back—oh, that was all, enough, everything—she sobbed out her heart's devotion. Beggared?—oh, what was that against the flow-