

ENOCH CRANE

Joe strode over to the motionless form in the chair and caught sight of the haggard face.

"Mr. Crane!" he exclaimed. "Why—you're ill—what has happened?"

"Sit down," returned Enoch slowly. "Joe, I have something to tell you. My wife died last night."

"Your *wife*!"

"Yes, my boy—my wife. Rather alters a man's life, Joe. I had been hoping for twenty years she would pull through—some of them do," he added, staring into the flames. "I saw some indications of it last Sunday," he went on before Joe could speak. "I spent the morning with her as usual—again last night—for a brief instant I saw what I believed to be some recognition—a faint hope. It was only a flash before the light went out." He raised his hands helplessly and let them fall.

Joe, who had not yet taken his seat, turned to the crackling fire, and stood for a long moment looking down at the flames.

"I did not know you were married," he said at length, breaking the ensuing silence—"that—your wife was an invalid."

"She was insane," replied Enoch evenly.

"Insane! Oh! Mr. Crane!"

Enoch lifted his head.

"She has been insane since the first year of our marriage," said he. "Sit down, won't you?" he pleaded, motioning to the chair in the shadow of the chimney-piece. "I have much to tell you. Come a little