

ENOCH CRANE

He spoke with an effort, as if each word was painful to him.

"Dat I suttinly will, marser," declared Moses and watched him in silence as he continued up the short flight of stairs leading to his door—awed by the change in him. Then he rushed down to tell Matilda.

Enoch entered his sitting-room, felt in the dusk for the matches, lighted the Argand burner on the centre-table, turned its flame low, struck another match, kindled his fire, drew a deep sigh, laid his overcoat and hat on the table, and sank into his chair.

For a long while he sat there immovable, staring vacantly into the slowly kindling fire. How long he was not conscious of. Now and then his lips moved, but he uttered no sound; a thin tongue of flame struggling up between the hickory logs played over his haggard face, rigid as a mask. His hands lay motionless on the broad arms of his chair. Thus an hour passed, an hour full of tragic memories. So absorbed was he that he did not hear Joe spring up-stairs and rap at his door.

Joe rapped again.

"It's Joe!" he called sharply.

Enoch slowly roused himself.

"Come in," he said hoarsely, clearing his throat.

"Good heavens," cried Joe, entering briskly, "where on earth have you been? The whole house has been worried about you."

Enoch did not speak.