

touch it, and I won't touch it. So that's flat, Edie. It's the price of blood. Let it, too, perish with him."

"But oughtn't you at least to mention it to Elsie?" Edie asked, with her plain straightforward English common-sense. "It's her business more than it's yours, you know, Warren. Oughtn't you at least to give her the option of accepting or refusing her own property?—It's very kind of you, of course, to decide for her beforehand so cavalierly.—Perhaps, you see, when she learns she's an heir-ess, she may be inclined to transfer her affections elsewhere."

Warren smiled. That was a point of view that had never occurred to him. Your male lover makes so sure of his prey: he hardly allows in his own mind the possibility of rejection. But still he prevaricated. "I wouldn't tell her about it, just yet at least," he answered hesitatingly. "We don't know, after all, that Elsie's really the heir-at-law at all, if it comes to that. Let's wait and see. Perhaps some other claimant may turn up for the property."

"Perhaps," Edie replied, with her oracular brevity. "And perhaps not. There's nothing on earth more elastic in its own way than a good perhaps. India-rubber bands are just mere child's play to it.—Suppose, then, we pin it down to a precise limit of time, so as to know exactly where we stand, and say that if the estate isn't otherwise claimed within six weeks, we'll break it to Elsie, and allow her to decide for herself in the matter?"

"But how shall we know whether it's claimed or not?" Warren asked dubiously.

"My dear, there exists in this realm of England a useful institution known to science as a penny post, by means of which a letter may be safely and inexpensively conveyed even to so remote and undistinguished a personage as Alfred Heberden, Esquire, solicitor to the deceased, Whitestrاند, Suffolk.—I propose, in fact, to write and ask him."

Warren groaned. It was an awkward fix. He wished he could shirk the whole horrid business. To be saddled against your will with a landed estate that you don't want is a predicament that seldom disturbs a modest gentleman's peace of mind anywhere. But he saw no possible