

At that he could only draw her to him again. She herself must needs bring him back to the point.

"You have decided?"

"I could of course refuse the succession. That would throw the whole property into Chancery; the personalty would go to the mother and daughter, the real estate to whatever legal heirs could be discovered. There are some distant cousins of Lady Tatham, I believe. However — that did not attract me at all."

He rose from his seat beside her, and stood looking down upon her.

"You'll realize? — you'll understand? — that it seems to me just — and] desirable — that I should have some voice in the distribution of this money, this and land, rather than leave it all to the action of a court. Everything — as things are — is legally mine. The personalty is immense; there are about thirty thousand acres of land, here and elsewhere; and the collections can't be worth much less than half a million. I decline to own them; but I intend to settle what becomes of them! Nash and others say they will dispute the will. They won't. There is no case. As to the personalty and the land — well, well, you'll see! As to the collections — I mean to make them, if I can, of some use to the community. And in that effort" — he spoke slowly — "I want you to help me!"

Their eyes met; hers full of tears. She tried to speak, and could not. He came to kneel down by her and took her in his arms.

"Did you think I had sold myself to the devil last time I was here?"

"I was so harsh! — forgive . . ." she said brokenly.