

South Coast, and Iver, with certain associates, meant to develop it. They had bought it up, and laid it out for building, and arranged for a big hotel with Birch and Company, the famous furnishers. But all along in front of it—between where the street now was and the esplanade was soon to be—ran a long narrow strip, forming the estate of an elderly gentleman named Masters. Of course Masters had to be bought out, the whole scheme hanging on that. Iver, keen at a bargain, hard in business hours (had not Mina Zabriská discovered that?), confident that nobody would care to incur his enmity—he was powerful—by forestalling him, had refused Masters his price; the old gentleman would have to come down. But some young men stepped in, with the rashness of their youth, and acquired an option of purchase from Masters. Iver smiled in a vexed fashion, but was not dismayed. He let it be known that anybody who advanced money to the young men—Sloyd, Sloyd and Gurney was the firm—would be his enemies; then he waited for the young men to approach him. They did not come. At last, pride protesting, prudence insisting, he wrote and suggested that they might probably be glad to make an arrangement with him. Mr. Sloyd—our Mr. Sloyd—wrote back that they had found a capitalist—no less than that—and proposed to develop their estate themselves, to put up their own hotel, also a row of boarding-houses, a club, a winter garden, and possibly an aquarium. Youth and a sense of elation caused Sloyd to add that they would always be glad to co-operate with other gentlemen interested in Blinkhampton.

Iver had many irons in the fire; he could no more devote himself exclusively and personally to Blinkhampton than Napoleon could spend all his time in the Peninsula. The transaction was important, yet hardly vital; besides Iver himself could keep his ear to the telephone. It was an opportunity for Bob to win his spurs; Iver proposed to him to go to town and act as his representative.

“I’m afraid you’ll lose the game if I play it for you, Mr.