

daresay Sloyd here would put it better. But my money's in it, so I like to have my say."

Both the dislike and the reluctant respect of old days were present in the Major's mind. He felt that the quality on whose absence Iver had based his calculations had been supplied. Harry might be ignorant. Sloyd could supply the knowledge. Harry had that grit which hitherto the firm had lacked. Harry seemed to guess something of what was passing through his adversary's mind.

"I don't want to be anything but friendly. Neither Sloyd nor I want that—especially towards Mr. Iver—or towards you, Major. We've been neighbours." He smiled and went on, smiling still. "Oddly enough I've said what I'm going to say to you once before—on a different occasion. You seem to have been trying to frighten us. I am not to be frightened, that's all."

Sloyd whispered in his ear; Duplay guessed that he counselled more urbanity; Harry turned from him with a rather contemptuous little laugh. "Oh, I've got my living to earn now," Duplay heard him whisper—and reflected that he had never wasted much time on politeness, even before that necessity came upon him.

It was strange that Sloyd did not try to take any part in the discussion. He wore an air of deference, partly due no doubt to Harry's ability, yet having unmistakably a social flavour about it. Harry's lordlinesses clung to him still, and had their effect on his business partner. Duplay lodged an angry inward protest to the effect that they had none whatever on him.

"Perhaps I'd better just say what we want," Harry pursued. "We've paid Masters twenty thousand. We may be five hundred more out of pocket. Never mind that." He pushed away the plans and elevations. "You're empowered to treat, I suppose?" he asked. Sloyd had whispered to him again.

"No," said Duplay. "But as a final offer, I think I can pledge Mr. Iver to go so far as five thousand (over and above