

CHAPTER XXXVI

During those few hours of strenuous, almost fierce work into which David threw himself after the funeral, he found in a collection of belated cablegrams which his secretary handed him an explanation of Letitia's half apology, an explanation, he told himself bitterly, of her altered demeanour towards him. The old proverb stood justified. Even this, the wildest of his speculations, had become miraculously successful. Pluto Oil shares, unsalable at a dollar a few weeks ago, now stood at eight. Oil had been discovered in extraordinary and unprecedented quantities. Oil was spouting another great fortune for him out of the sandy earth. He paused to make a calculation. The Marquis's four thousand pounds' worth were worth, at a rough estimate, three hundred thousand.

"Extraordinary news, this, Jackson," he remarked to the quiet, sad-faced young man, who had been his right hand since the time of his first railway deal.

"Most extraordinary," was the quiet reply. "I congratulate you, Mr. Thain. You do seem to have the knack of turning everything you touch into gold."

"Do I?" Thain murmured listlessly.

"I took the liberty of investing in a small parcel of shares myself, just to lock away," the young man continued. "I gave seventy cents for them."

"Not enough to make you a millionaire, I hope?" Thain asked, with some bitterness.

"Enough, with my savings, to give me a very com-