

CHAPTER XXX

THE great ship *Cleopatra* rushed on her way homeward through the night. A golden shape she moved, bathed in the light of a newly-risen moon, a gigantic orange disc hanging low in the horizon's verge. A fairy ship, the *Cleopatra*, and a silent one. No sound of music was heard on her, no gay chatter of passengers. In lowered tones they spoke, or paced in silence along the decks; for, below, a man lay dying, and under the shadow of death even the lightest souls cower and cease from their trifling.

From the open companion a woman emerged, and all eyes were turned towards her. She stood for a moment looking about her, then hurried away, up the deck, to where a man was standing, staring out to sea.

Hearing her footsteps he turned and hastened to meet her.

"I'll come at once," he said. "I hope you've not been looking for me."

"No, no, there's nothing. I want to speak to you, that's all. Not here, there are people. Come," and she led the way to a deserted part of the deck, then turned and faced him.

"Sir James," she said, "I have brought you here to ask you a question; it's one I've refrained from asking hitherto, but now I do, and—and I must, I will, have the truth."

The man frowned. Well enough he knew what the question was, having heard it many hundred times in his professional career, and also invariably declined to answer it. This woman, however, had not only for the time being the right to his exclusive services, having secured that