

## CHAPTER XXXIX

### THE SEAL OF SILENCE

"I TOO recollect the affair quite well," Jack declared, tugging at his moustache, utterly amazed at my love's strange story. It was a plain statement of hard astounding facts, and she now stood clinging to me, looking eagerly into my eyes, reading every thought that passed through my mind.

"A great sensation was caused when the body was discovered. The squadron was lying off Naples about a week after the *Iris* had left, and while we were there the body was washed up near Sorrento. At first but little notice was taken of it, but by the marks on the dead man's linen it was discovered that he was Polovstoff, one of the highest Russian officials who had, it was said, been warned on several occasions by the Nihilists. It was, therefore, concluded that his death had been due to Nihilist vengeance.

Elma pointed to the paper, and made a sign that I was to read on. This I did, and the statement ran as follows:—

"The real reason why the Baron spared my life was because, if I died, my fortune would pass to my distant cousin living at Durham. Yet his manner