

I said merely it was Withers of London. I chose a name beginning with a W, because my initials were everywhere marked upon my linen, not in full, as C. G. Waterlow. Nobody had known I was on board the *Princess Amelia*. I hadn't said a word about it to the people at my lodgings, nor had I mentioned the use I meant to make of my holiday to Dr. Lichfield. I knew enough of the effects of curari to know perfectly that I must unintentionally have killed the Colonel. I thought my absence would be mistaken for flight, and that I would immediately be suspected of intentionally poisoning him."

"As a matter of fact," Serjeant Thorowgood interposed, "you were the one person whose character and motives nobody even for a moment called in question."

Dr. Withers nodded. "So I afterwards learned," he continued with an effort. "But at the time I could think of absolutely nothing but my own safety. Had I had the courage to tell the whole truth at once, I might have saved endless anxiety and distress to several innocent people, I know. But I had not the courage, and I feared too much for my own life. As soon as I was well enough, I sent out and got a newspaper. There I read the full account of the Erith murder, as everybody called it. I learned to my horror that Dr. Lichfield had died in prison, under the smart of this terrible imputation, and that nobody in England knew what had become of me. I felt sure there were only two people, besides myself, upon whom suspicion could possibly have fallen—Dr.

Lichfield and Mr. Flamstead. The doctor was dead, and nobody seemed to have doubted Mr. Flamstead. For the sake of my late employer's family, if I could have traced them, I might, a little later, have come forward and told the whole truth. But at first I was afraid, and later on, when I tried to track them, I found it hopeless. Mrs. Lichfield had disappeared into thin air, and all attempts to discover her whereabouts were utterly unavailing. I stopped in America, under my assumed name, and soon obtained a place as a doctor's assistant. I was an orphan, with very few friends in England: the few I had cared little about me: everybody said I had been spirited away by the Lichfields and their allies, and I had not the strength of mind to come forward and deny that baseless calumny. I know I have much need to ask you forgiveness—but for years and years I have suffered greatly. Can you forgive me?"

Sir Arthur Woolrych bowed his head. "You did very wrong," he said, "but I forgive you freely. Can you, Harry, for yourself and your family?"

"I can," Harry answered in a low tone. "And I thank you now for coming forward at last to make this statement."

There was a moment's pause, and then the Serjeant asked quietly, "Will you make an affidavit as to all these particulars?"

Dr. Withers bent his head in acquiescence. "Whenever you please," he said. "And the affidavit may be publicly printed in all the papers."

The Serjeant rose and moved towards the General. "Sir Arthur," he said, "give me your hand. For twenty-five