

Harry Prior gave a sudden start of surprise. "You remember the Lichfield case, then?" he said with interest, for questions of the sort belonged especially to his own department. "You knew that Lichfield used curari?"

"Well, yes," Sir Arthur answered, with a certain show of reluctance in his voice. "I had reason to know it. The Lichfields were once intimate friends of mine. Poor Lichfield was a doctor, as you must remember, and he poisoned a patient, an uncle of his, who, he had reason to know, had lately made a will in his favour. That was twenty-five years ago, I should think. But of course you've read all about it, Mr. Prior."

"I have," Harry answered. "I recollect the case extremely well. Lichfield was himself a worker at poisons, just as I am, and I feel particularly interested in the Erith murder, because of a very curious coincidence which happened to me, myself, some months ago. I had just invented what seemed to me a plausible theory of the action of strychnine, and I sent a paper on the subject to the 'Transactions of the College of Physicians,' detailing my principle. To my immense surprise, the secretary sent me back a copy of a paper, contributed nearly thirty years ago to the same 'Transactions' by Dr. Lichfield, in which the very theory I had hit upon was distinctly foreshadowed, and almost in the very self-same words. It shows how much alike two minds may work on a single subject, that Dr. Lichfield used several of the very same illustrations and exam-

ples and analogies that I did, and that his style and manner were all but identical in every way with my own."

Sir Arthur looked at the handsome dark young doctor's large eyes inquisitively for a moment. A shade seemed to come across his bronzed brow. Then he said abruptly, "Lichfield was a very handsome dark man, with most peculiar eyes. I can see him now standing before me. Poor fellow; I was always profoundly sorry for him. Though he committed that terrible, monstrous crime, he always seemed to me, as far as I could judge, a very affectionate, kind-hearted man. I suppose the love of gain overbore everything. And yet we never thought him an avaricious man. It was curious, curious. I was always glad he never lived to get through his trial."

"He died while the trial was in progress, I think," Harry said, suggesting.

"He died while it was in progress. Died of grief and shame, I suppose, for the evil he had wrought. Couldn't face the degradation of his wife and children. He advised them to go away from England and live elsewhere under an assumed name, where the memory of his disgrace could never touch them. Then his heart broke, and he died in prison the very night before the verdict would have been given. I was glad for his poor wife's sake that he didn't live through it. If he had been hanged— But the idea is too horrible!"

"He had children, then?"

"Yes, two children: a boy and a girl; the boy a fine, handsome, dark-