

army, Yvonne asked me to come and stay here. I had no other place to go, for my people are all dead; so I came; and I have stayed on here ever since. Indeed, I haven't had much choice. As you can see, I'm not good for much. Some days I am better than on others; but I couldn't, unless my health improves very much, undertake a steady job. My pension is all I have to come and go on; and to tell you the sober truth, I do not think I could live on it. On the other hand, Yvonne and the youngster cannot live on their pension. The only way we can make ends meet is by pooling our resources and living under one roof. Even so, it's not all beer and skittles."

Silence fell between the two men. Windermere, his lower lip thrust out, ruminated apparently on the problems of existence; China Macdonald, his face still grave and impassive, turned over in his mind the various aspects of the situation which Windermere had unfolded. It was a situation in which he found the old familiar landmarks of little use.

It was China who broke the spell.

"Do you mind," he asked, "if I ask a question or two?"

"Not at all," said Windermere. Then with a grim smile, "Now that I'm in the confessional, I may as well go through with it."

China cannot have enjoyed the thrust about the confessional, but he was not to be turned aside.

"Do you mind," he went on, inexorable as a prosecuting counsel, "telling me what your feelings are towards Mrs. Cadwallader?"

Windermere looked him straight in the eye. "There is nothing I would not do," he said briefly, "to make her happy."

"Then," said China bluntly, "why not get married?"

Windermere looked at him in amazement, and then burst into discordant laughter.

"My dear old Padre, do you mean to tell me that you have been all these years in the army, and yet you do not know that when a soldier's widow

marries again, she loses her pension? No, no, that is not the solution. Why, we should be on the street in a month. Thanks, old man, but I prefer the frying-pan to the fire."

China, a bit shame-faced, admitted having overlooked this aspect of the situation; but, unwilling to admit himself routed, he returned to the attack with a further question.

"Are you quite sure that there is nothing you could do to supplement your pension, so that you could assume the financial responsibility of your household?"

Windermere shook his head. "The trouble about that plan is that if you show any capacity for earning money, the Pensions Board is liable, I hear, to come along and reduce the amount of your pension. But if there is any way in which I could earn a living, I should be only too glad to hear about it. The doctors tell me that if I try office work I shall in all probability have a break-down, and manual labour is obviously out of the question."

China rose and stood before the fire-place. His great, rough figure seemed to dominate the room.

"I don't want you to think," he said, "that I don't appreciate fully the difficulties—the great difficulties—you have to face. If I had my way, chaps like you would be removed from the thought of want for the rest of their lives. But unfortunately I am not in control of the Canadian House of Commons; I am even debarred at present from expressing publicly my opinion of that body, or what it ought or ought not to do. We can only at present take things as we find them. And if I were in your position, I think I would strain every nerve—I would leave no stone unturned—I would move heaven and earth—to find some way of earning a competency. You owe it to Mrs. Cadwallader to do this; you owe it to her small child, who will some day grow up and be your judge. Remember, nothing is farther from my mind than to blame you. Had I been in your position, I dare say I would have done very much