

For a few minutes after her departure, the conversation turned on those friendly inquiries usual with men who have not met within a period of time. But a trace of nervous volubility persisted in Windermere's manner; and even China was conscious of a sense of restraint, due mainly to a desire on his part to avoid treading on embarrassing ground.

At last, however, Windermere's innocent query as to where China was staying let the cat out of the bag.

"The rectory," said China succinctly.

Windermere smiled a wry smile. "I'm afraid you will have heard little good about us there. The rector and I are hardly on cordial terms. He tried to interfere in my domestic arrangements—said some very uncalled-for things about Mrs. Cadwallader—and I'm afraid I was rather rude to him. If he hadn't been an old man, I'd have been a damn sight ruder."

"Yes," admitted China, "the rector told me something about your—ah—disagreement." Then, with that directness which was one of his most engaging characteristics, he added, "I hope he was entirely in the wrong."

Windermere, sitting huddled in an easy chair with his crutches nursed beside him, paused before replying. He seemed to be debating within himself how much or how little he should say. But the pause was only momentary. Looking up at China's rough, impassive face, he began to speak, at first slowly and jerkily, then with gathering ease and vehemence:

"I'm not an authority on ethics, Padre. Your ideas are perhaps different from mine. You may consider that the rector was right. Perhaps he was. God knows it hasn't been easy for me to decide what I ought to do. There have been so many things to consider—practical as well as theoretical. No one knows better than I do that there are objections to my present course of action. The worst of it is that it is hard on Yvonne. She is avoided like a German spy by some of the pretended Christians of this

place. But we have made up our minds to do what we are doing, and our consciences are quite easy and clear about it.

"Let me tell you how we are situated. You will remember that poor old Cadwallader and I were both hit in the show at the Orchard. I was, I think, hit worse than he was; but with him gas gangrene set in, and he died at the clearing station. I was in the next bed to him, and before he died he gave me some messages and one thing and another to give to his wife. He made me promise to go and see her, and help her if I could. I think he was worried about her and the youngster; he had no private means, and he must have realized that the pension of a subaltern's widow would not see her very far. When I told him that I would see she was looked after, and that he was not to worry, he seemed more contented. Not long after that he went west.

"As soon as I was sent back to England, I wrote to her, sent her his messages, and told her about his death—how easy and peaceful it was, and that sort of thing. Then when I was transferred to hospital in Canada, I got leave and came out to St. Kitts to see her. I found her living in this cottage, which was the cheapest place she could rent. I asked her how she was getting along, and at first she swore up and down that she was getting along quite alright. But I knew from what Cadwallader had told me that she must be pretty hard-up. On questioning her more closely, I found that she was really being worried sick about making ends meet. She was behind in her payments to the tradesmen, and she was too proud to ask for help. I went around to the tradesmen, and paid off her arrears; and, greatly against her will, I made an arrangement with her landlord by which her rent bill was sent to me. I was still at that time on army pay; and being in hospital, I did not have much to spend my money on.

"When I came out of hospital, and was given my discharge from the