

For now he knew that he loved her, that he would have loved her from the first had not his honor held his heart in check. He cried out in the night, sometimes, with the pain of his great longing. There was this difference between himself and the woman—her sense of honor and loyalty bound her even yet, blinded her and fettered her heart so that she *would not* know. Her only hint of the state of her sentiments was the significant one that Dan's cruel charge ran so often in her memory—and this she would not interpret!

III

AND so matters might have gone on, but that one day Michael made the mistake which he had escaped through all his service and got an ugly burn. For a week he was delirious in the fever that came of it. It was during that week that Mrs. Lennon, in the midst of her nursing of him, happened to remember that this was the fifteenth day of the month. Leaving her patient in charge of Nellie Dyer, she made her way to the office of the insurance company whose address she had found upon her policy. As her introduction she said that she had come to draw her money, and laid down her policy. The clerk picked it up and examined it in perplexity; then he frowned and took it back into the office, where he inspected books and files and records. He was still frowning when he returned to her.

"No policy was ever issued by this company in the name of Daniel Lennon," he informed her. "This paper is a rank forgery, so clumsy that it would be laughable if it were not criminal. Why, it is made out over an advertising sample of one of our policies, and you can see for yourself that the word 'Void' is printed clear across its face in big red letters!"

He kept the policy still in his hand. It was his evident intention not to give it back to her. Crushed and bewildered, she turned away, but a thought sent her again to the wicket.

"But I have been getting my money on it for nearly four years," she urged; "forty dollars every month."

"You have!" said the clerk incredulously. "Who has been paying you?"

"Michael Dyer," she answered, "a neighbor of ours. He lives next door. He was a friend of my husband's."

The clerk looked at her curiously, and presently he smiled.

"I shall have to keep this policy and look up the facts," he told her, still with that curious smile that had an unwonted trace of gentleness in it; "but I don't think just now that any prosecution will grow out of it. If Mr. Dyer has been handing you this money he must have been paying it out of his own pocket."

For a stupefied moment she looked at him aghast; then a crimson wave suffused her face, and turning away, she hurriedly left the office. Now that the clue had been given, she knew that the clerk's conjecture must be true. It was like Michael to do this big and generous thing—to give up to her more than a third of all that he earned, and never to let her know by word or hint!

She went home with her head in a whirl, and turning into her own house in a breathless panic of thought, sat down in the dim front room. What revulsions of feeling took place within her there, what tearing away of prejudices and ideas and habits of mental process that had hedged about her soul, she could not tell; but, no matter how it came about, she was a different woman when, a half-hour later, Nellie Dyer came running over, beaming with delight.

"Oh, Mama Lennon!" cried Nellie. "Papa is awake and in his right mind at last, and he's asking for you!"

The words thrilled her strangely, and suddenly she knew that in the half-hour in which she had sat alone she had gained an understanding of greatness, that at last she had a glimmering of the true bigness and tenderness of the heart of Michael Dyer. With a catch in her throat she hurried over and into that other dim room where Michael lay with his eyes turned wistfully to the door through which she might come. As she hurried to the bedside and caught his hand he smiled at her, and sighed his relief in her presence.

"It's so good to have you here," he said. "At our age, friends are not so many but that we miss them when we are in trouble."

"Friends, Michael! Friends?" and, suddenly sobbing, she knelt swiftly down with her arm across him and laid her warm cheek against his upon the pillow.

Not a single applicant has ever been refused admission to the Muskoka Free Hospital for Consumptives because unable to pay. Money is urgently needed to extend and carry on this work.