

The Tongue-Tie

There seemed to be nothing wrong there. She stretched her lips wide and felt around inside her cheeks. Nothing unusual there ~~either~~. Then she lifted up her upper lip and peered at it closely. A worried expression came over her face. She tilted the candle closer to the mirror and looked carefully again.

Something was there! It seemed to be an extra layer of flesh connecting the lip with the upper jaw, tying it down, as it were. That must be it! She was tongue-tied!

The horror of the situation burst upon her suddenly. Now she knew for a certainty that her mother's anxiety to be next on the dressmaker's list was concern for her and her deformity. She knew nothing personally of hospitals, but whenever they had been mentioned in her hearing, it ~~was~~ always in connection with the serious illness or death of some friend or acquaintance.

Right then and there Sara resolved that there would be no hospital for her.

Anna had been watching anxiously. When Sara turned and Anna saw her sister's stricken face, she gasped, "What is it, Sate? Oh, what is it?"

"I'm tongue-tied," groaned Sara in a sepulchral tone, "That's why they're going to send me to the hospital!"

In the shock of her discovery, plans began to seethe and then take form in her mind. Carrying the candle she hurried over to her father's room and found his big sharp razor.

The mirror here was more clear. She would need all the light she could get for what she was about to do. For a moment she hesitated -- the razor looked bigger and sharper than it ever had before -- but suddenly, frantic with apprehension, she lifted her upper lip, with one hand, took the razor with the other and slashed the offending strip of flesh entirely through.

The cut was deep. For a moment Sara was numb with shock. Then when she saw the blood streaming, she began to scream. The household came running -- Anna frightened out of her wits, the father and mother, the brothers.

Sara was unable to talk, and at first they couldn't make head nor tail of Anna's frantic explanations. Her words were a jumble of "new dresses," "tongue-tie," "hospital," "Jenny Perkins," none of which seemed to make sense. Only when first aid had been administered, Sara's sobs quieted, and Anna's tale put in order, did my grandmother realize what mental suffering had caused her little daughter to take such desperate measures.

"Oh, Sara, Sara, you had no tongue-tie," she cried with tears in her eyes. "Why didn't you come to me first!"

Sara's lip healed in time, but for a long while it was dreadfully swollen and stuck straight out. She was so embarrassed over her looks that she fled whenever anyone came to call.

When I was a little girl I would climb on my mother's lap and look for the fraenum which wasn't there any more, and beg, "Now Mamma, tell me the story about how you used your father's razor."

She would tell the story and, very dramatically, always end it with, "Wasn't that a silly thing to do!"