

Talbot ceased abruptly in the midst of a somewhat tedious political yarn. He let his pipe die out, unheeded, while he followed the words of the singer, and the shadow on his face deepened. The parson broke the silence. "What is it Ross," he said kindly. "Is it anything I can share?"

Talbot moved impatiently in his chair. "Basil," he began, unconsciously making use of the boy-hood appellation, "it's Nora. She—the baby—I can't tell her. She's so young, so hopelessly ignorant in regard to such things. It never occurs to her that Lily is unlike—seriously unlike other babies; that is, undeveloped—" he foundered helplessly.

Keith was leaning forward in his chair, a puzzled look on his kind face. "Is she so different?" he asked quietly.

Talbot's face darkened. "It's paralysis," he answered shortly. "She will never walk, nor speak." He broke down suddenly. "Jove! I've wished a thousand times since we were married that I was a lawyer, a business man, anything rather than a doctor, and yet be helpless to prevent this."

"You knew her child was not—not right before you married her?" began Keith.

"I knew she was not, right," he admitted with professional brevity. "So far as my personal knowledge went she was not right. Since then, we have been to New York, to Philadelphia, to the Johns Hopkins, always with the same result—no cure."

"And Mrs. Talbot is quite ignorant of the fact?" the parson's face was a little stern.

Talbot's boyish face flushed a little. "She's so happily unconscious," he said in self-defence. "How can I tell her that her child is a helpless cripple—a life long sufferer? You blame me, Keith, but is it an easy task? Is it easy to break the heart of one whom you would give your life to protect? Is that what one's marriage vows mean? Do they not mean, rather, that I am bound to shield her from the knowledge which brings pain and sorrow into her life? We have been married three months. In all that time, except for the momentary anxiety she feels for Lily, I believe, I can honestly say she has been perfectly happy. She has the cheerful disposition of her race, and," he hesitated slightly, "she believes in me. I sometimes fancy she married me for Lily's sake," he broke off at Keith's vehement protest.

"She's only a child, Basil," he went on passionately; "convent-bred, innocent. God knows how she kept her innocence and lived for almost a year with that man. It was an arranged marriage. Her mother, who is French, took her from school for that purpose. He, also French, was a scoundrel; but he was good to her after a fashion. She never loved him, and, undoubtedly, his death was a great relief to her. The baby was born a month afterwards. I attended her. She was ill for weeks. I fell in love with her—can you wonder, Keith? We were married just a year after his death."

And then his voice grew husky. "O, the pity of it," he muttered, as he often did when alone with his trouble. "My bright faced little Irish girl; she will know the truth some day, and then God pity her."

"You are wrong, Ross," said Keith, gently. "Forgive me for saying this; but you are treating your wife wrongly. She is not a child, she is a true, tender hearted woman, with a woman's privilege to hold your confidence and to suffer with you—for you are suffering, Ross. You are not the light hearted lad she loved and married. Don't you know I am right?"

And then, as her step was heard, "Believe me, she is being robbed of what should be her dearest possession—your entire confidence."

She came over to where they were. "What a beautiful night," she said. "Don't get up, Mr. Keith; I always sit in this chair. I'm not the least bit chilly, Ross. I want Mr. Keith to tell me the legend of Qu'Appelle. It's such a cosy, spooky sort of night. I feel quite in the mood to hear it."

Both men laughed, and Keith laid

down his pipe. "I'm not so sure of it, Mrs. Talbot," he said in his deep voice; "but I believe it runs somewhat after this fashion:

"A young warrior who lived on the shores of one of these lakes, fell in love with an Indian girl, who returned his affections. He left home on an expedition of war, and when returning to claim his bride, he was puzzled to hear his name called from across the lake apparently. 'Qu'Appelle? Qu'Appelle?' he shouted, but only the echo of his own voice answered his question. On reaching home he found to his great sorrow and despair, that his love was dead. According to his superstitious belief, it was her voice he heard calling to him from the shores of the Great Beyond. Since then, the valley has been called in the French tongue, Qu'Appelle, literally meaning 'Who Calls.'"

"It should have been called the 'Valley of Rest,'" said Mrs. Talbot, dreamily. "It is all so peacefully quiet."

"The Valley of Unrest" seems more appropriate, when one thinks of that poor girl's spirit denying itself the rest of Paradise, that he might be warned of the great sorrow awaiting him," remarked Talbot, thoughtfully.

Keith rose to go. "These old Indian legends are very beautiful," he said; "to my mind, it is a beautiful thought that someone is waiting for and calling us from the Home above. Don't think me, Mrs. Talbot; it was a pleasure to recall the story to mind. I will see you again to-morrow, Talbot, and perhaps we may be able to persuade Mrs. Talbot to try her luck at fishing."

He paddled down again in the early afternoon. It was only a matter of a couple of miles by canoe from the little white mission church to the Talbot's camp, a distance scarcely noticed by the man whose brawny strength and sound physique made him the admiration and envy of his young parishioners.

He found them all on the side of the cottage facing the road. Lily was lying with half closed eyes in her carriage. Keith bent over her with a comprehensive look of pity in his dark eyes. She was a typical little Lily—so frail, so fair. Her soft hair curled around a waxen forehead, long, golden lashes swept the pale cheeks, and heavy lids sheltered eyes, blue like her mother's, but so pitiful in their lack of expression.

Mrs. Talbot was in white linen. Always he remembered her as he saw her that day, with the sun shining on her bright hair, and her face all aglow with happiness.

"Mr. Keith!" she called, gaily; "come and see this dear wee Indian baby. They live in that shack just around the corner. Oh, do you know them?"—as Keith exchanged greetings with the mother, a shy, young looking woman, and picked up the soft brown bundle at her side.

"Here is another Lily, Mrs. Talbot," he said; "a little brown tiger Lily, she must be. Would you like to play with our baby, Lily," as she struggled to reach the sleeping child.

"How old is your baby?" asked Mrs. Talbot, curiously. There was something fascinating about this little brown baby who had the same name as her own child, lying, alas, so still and white.

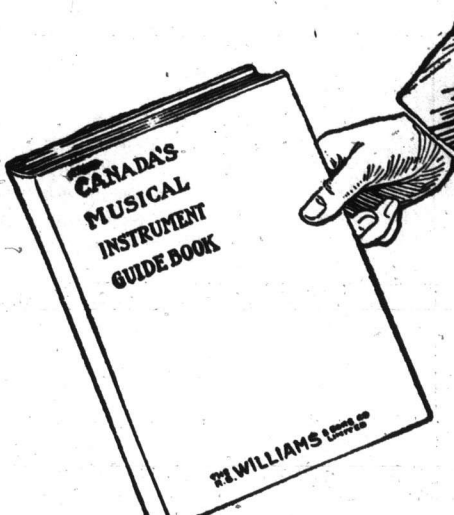
"Fourteen months," answered the mother proudly. She had been a mission girl, and her face was bright and attractive. "How old?" she added, indicating the white child.

"Why so is Lily!" said Mrs. Talbot, wondering. "My baby is just fourteen months, but she cannot walk or play, or even sit up alone. How can she be the same age as that little Indian child? Of course she is not strong—poor dear. But she is tall. Her limbs are quite long." She turned to her husband with a questioning look in her eyes.

"Your baby no good," said the Indian mother with unconscious cruelty. "My baby walk, two, three months." She caught up her child, and kissed her proudly.

The little one laughed delightedly as they went on.

Mrs. Talbot stood quite still. Already something seemed to be clutching at her heart. She put both hands to her throat. "Ross! Ross!" she said sharply, and then, when he would have taken her



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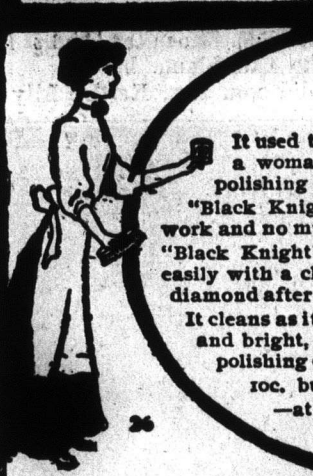
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