MY LADY TONGUE.

By Amelie Rives, Author of "The Quick or the Dead."

They had ridden about twelve miles, when Boughton began with some astonishment to listen to the tremendous beating of his mount's heart.

"Just hear this beast," said he to Judith. "I hope he's not going to die. I never heard a brute's heart go like this."

"What is it?" she said, reining up.

All her brown curls were in her eyes with the wind, and the weird light from the weather-glim full on her golden horse and his trappings. She was perfectly beautiful, Phil thought, or, what is so much better, imperfectly beautiful.

She laughed a little when he told her what alarmed him, but looked worried.

"Dad's miles ahead by this time," she said. "That isn't Trumpeter's heart. It's his dia—dia—oh! I never can say it. He's foundered, you know. Get down, and let's look at him."

She was off horse in an instant, and Phil beside her.

"Poor old beastie," she said, slapping Trumpeter's crest coaxingly. "I say, Phil, do you know how to bleed a horse? In the neck vein, you know. You don't. Dear me! Well, then, I'll have to try. Give me your knife. Don't say you haven't one. Gad! how he's breathing. Thank goodness, you have one! Now, come on! help me."

With Boughton's assistance she cut the bars of Trumpeter's palate, and as well as she could got the best part of her own and her cousin's whiskey-flask down the poor brute's throat.

Boughton was a good deal impressed, at the same time that he was provoked at being shown up in all his flagrant ignorance of the ills that horse-flesh is heir to.

They had a tiresome walk the rest of the way, for Judith would not remount Eyebrows, and poor Trumpeter, emulating his name behind them, was anything but a cheerful companion.

How Phil did wish that he had been able to spring from the foundered horse, all the time having a full cognizance of what ailed him—have whipped out his knife and bled him, and administered the whiskey, all without a word from Judith. And how he fumed over that idiotic speech about Trumpeter's heart. He thought Judith must have a contempt for him.

And, to tell the truth, she did. She blushed to think that some of the neighbors might have been with them, and heard her cousin's remarks, and seen the helpless way in which he stood about, while she righted things as best she could. Her eyes were still a good deal more red than brown whenever she allowed her thoughts to dwell upon him.

That night, as he came into the drawing-room just before dinner, he found Judith in the arms of a slim young man in a very elaborate costume—or rather, if the truth must be told, the slim young man was in the arms of Judith, who appeared to be alternately laughing and wiping her eyes as best she could on the lapel of his coat.

As Boughton came in, however, she stood erect and put up her hand to her curls, which were a good deal rumpled. Her eyes were brown as rain-washed autumn leaves now. No red in them whatever.

"Dick, your cousin, Philip Boughton," she said, speaking pretty coolly. And Boughton found himself in possession of the slim young man's hand.

"Er—glad to see you—er, just from Paris? Cold here, isn't it?" said the boy, languidly.

He was only a boy, after all, with a face something like Judith's seen in a spoon, and the same red-brown curls. His eyes, however, were a pale gray.

"No; I am from start to finish," said Boughton, gravely.

"Eh?" said Dick.

He did not laugh, neither did Judith. She scratched the chin of the black kitten in the Toby-collar, and looked gravely at Boughton between its ears.

"Oh, I see" said the boy, finally. "Been out hunting. Deuce of a time you had, Judy here tells me. Horse foundered. Awful nuisance, having one's horse foundered. Do you like hunting?"

"I haven't done much of it," said Philip, honestly, wishing devoutly that he had. He had eyes keen to look with as well as to look at, and saw the little downward clip of the girl's mouth, as she went on cosseting the little kitten.

"I've done a lot of it in my day," pursued Dick, laughingly. "And I must say it rather bores me."

"Oh, does it?" said Boughton. "It doesn't seem to bore your sister."

"Nothing bores Judy," Master Dick assured him in the same languid tone. "I tell her to wait until she's grown up."

"She's a bit more 'grown up, than you now, isn't she?" said Boughton, dryly.

"How do you mean?" Dick asked, allowing his eyes to open themselves, as it were, in despite of his own will, while Judith stopped scratching the kitten's chin, and looked a good deal astonished.

"Why, as you stand there together, I'm quite sure she's a good inch taller," said Boughton, calmly, with one hand in his pocket and the other meditatively at his moustache. "Yes, a good inch, I should say," he repeated.

Dick flushed, but Judith grew positively scarlet. The intense blush seemed to spread into her very eyes, and they reddened ominously.

"You are entirely mistaken," she said, in the small, still voice which is generally supposed to be monopolized by conscience. "Richard is a half inch taller than myself. We were measured only last June."

"Perhaps you have grown since June," suggested Boughton, quite unmoved.

"Not in grace, eh, Judy?" put in the boy, good-naturedly coming to the rescue. "You've got her in a perfect temper, cousin Phil."

"How can you speak so, Dick!" cried Judith, turning upon him, and dropping the kitten, which fell with a furry bounce upon the polished floor. "I see that you have even less consideration than before you went away. And, besides, you know very well that you are a half inch taller than I am."

"Suppose we test it," said Boughton, who somewhat felt an unaccountable pleasure in exasperating her. Perhaps he was reveling in the delight of taking the superior pose in his turn. "Here's a good block to measure with. If you will stand back to back with your brother——"

All the blush was in her eyes now. Her face had grown quite pale.

"You are insulting," she said, with her teeth shut, and walked out of the room.

This was a great deal more than Boughton had expected. He stood staring after her with the book still in his hand, and then opened it blankly and looked in it as if for an explanation. It was a volume of Miss Hannah Moore's private devotions, and so he closed it and replaced it on the little table whence he had taken it.

"Don't you mind her," said Dick, easily. "She's always twice as sweet after one of her tantrums."

This seemed in truth to be the case. She came in to dinner as suave as May, and took her seat beside Philip with a smile.

"How cross do you think I am?" she said, leaning toward him, and making a cushion for her round chin with her palms, her elbows being on the table.

"I am afraid I was very provoking," he said, eagerly. "I am sorry; will you forgive me?"

She said nothing, but went on smiling, so he took his forgiveness for granted, and partook of more green goose with a light heart.

Now it was very dangerous to take anything for granted with this young lady, especially when there were little sparks of vermilion in her eyes, as there were to-night. But Phil could not possibly have known this; the smile she bestowed upon him was so enchanting that he did not look higher, and so noticed nothing peculiar about the eyes.

Dick was to stop over until Monday, and the next day all three went out for a walk. This ramble happened to be very eventful. I may as well state that there occurred the time-honored episode with the bull, but Boughton neither transfixed the infuriated animal with a pitchfork, nor leveled it with a well aimed blow from his muscular fist.

It happened this way. They were passing through what was then known at Carylon as the "Mill Meadow," when a peculiar kind of rumbling noise attracted their attention. Dick was the first to look back.

"Good heaven's! Judy," said he, "it's Priddie's bull."

"Is it?" said Judith, losing color for an instant, and following the direction of his eyes. "Yes, it is, and not a fence within two hundred yards. Oh! what are we to do?"

"I tell you," said Boughton, straightening himself and feeling an abominable clutch in the hollow between his ribs, "run as hard as you can, while Dick and I—— Why, where is Dick?" he said, blankly.

"I'm—going—for—Priddie!" came back in broken bits over the shoulder of the flying youth. "He can—manage—him!"

Boughton said nothing. He turned again to Judith.

"That's all right. Run, now, as fast as you can, and I can easily keep him off with stones until Priddie comes."

"And leave you here for that brute to gore and trample?" said Judith, bristling in a moment. "I see myself!" she added, with fine scorn

All this time the bull was making a tremendous tow-row, and using one of his horns as a plow-share. He was coming nearer, too. They could see his little red eyes distinctly.

"Judith, I beg of you," said Boughton, giving her a not too gentle push.

"Well, I will," she said, suddenly.

She lifted her walking-skirt, and with a quick gesture, slipped off the red balmoral petticoat which she wore underneath. This she took in her hand and started off at a long, even run, before Boughton well realized what she was about to do. When she was within fifty yards of his bullship, she gave a view-hallos which did more credit to her lungs than the occasion, and flourished the red skirt in the air.

Boughton's heart did actually stand still. He gave a dragging breath, got the best of his horror, which was inclined to make him week-kneed, and started off after the girl.

But the brute was before him, thundering on at a great lumbering pace, only stopping now and then to plow the ground with that ugly left horn of his.

Away went this modern Europa, in the direction of the nearest fence. Half way between it and her pursuer she dropped the red petticoat, and this his eminence tarried awhile to toss and worry and mix with the red clay.

Boughton had an awful fancy which he had no time fortunately to countenance. He seemed to see Judith being trampled and mangled in the same fashion as her pretty skirt, by those brute feet and horns. But thank, Heaven! it was only the next instant that she reached the fence and literally rolled over into the next field.

Then, for the first time looking back, she saw him.

"Get over! Get over—er!—quick!" she called, in what voice remained to her. "If he sees you he will—kill you—oh!——' This as Boughton just managed to put the rails of the old snake fence between himself and the bull, who rushed alongside bellowing like a bovine demon, with his tail an exact reproduction of Hogarth's line of beauty.

"The—straw—stacks," Judith panted, as Boughton reached her. "He may—tear—that—fence—all—to—bits!"

He took her hand, and they ran together to a group of straw stacks some ten yards away, up which they scrambled together, loosening avalanches of straw, and slipping several times before gaining the top.

Once there, Judith cast herself down, making a little hollow of her two arms, into which she thrust her face. She was shaking from head to foot, not trembling, but wrenched with a convulsive movement, which went to Boughton's already not too calm heart.

He leaned over and put his arm about her as she lay, and then, as she did not pull away or remonstrate verbally, he ventured to rest his other hand on the red-brown curls. Something in their soft, almost living clasp upon his fingers went through his veins strangely.

"Judith," he said in a voice that he did not himself quite recognize. Then he cleared his throat and said it over again—"Judith," and then "darling!"

That roused Judith better than sal-volatile or a pail of ice water would have done. She sat up, and a little away from him, and said:

"There comes Priddie—and Dick."

Priddie, armed with a pitchfork, was running with all his might, and Dick, in the far background, was running also, but with very little of his. He had made at least thrice the time when he went for Priddie.

Then the bull was secured, and marched off meekly, with a prong of the pitchfork through the ring in his nose, and the whildom pedestrians also betook themselves dinnerward.

The colonel swore extensively when he heard about it all, and called Priddie some very ugly names, which gave the soul of Boughton infinite comfort. He vowed, moreover, that he would not rest in his four-post bed untill that bull was made into beef.

"And gad! if I wouldn't like to make that —— fool eat every square inch of him!" he ended, thunderously, fisting the table until the spoons and glasses gave tongue shrilly.

Boughton did not see Judith alone after that for more than a week. It was within ten days of Christmas, and she was endlessly occupied about something or other.

But she found time, however, to give him plenty of smiles and gay words in passing. And he had sent to New York for something which he knew that she very much wanted, so that altogether, though tantalizing, it was not very unpleasant. Phillip, moreover, was rather anxious to find out whether he was only deeply smitten, or very much in love, and he thus found time to discuss that momentous question with his inner man—that individual who is always such a loose or tight fit for his outer representative.

Of course the colonel had insisted upon his remaining until Christmas; and he was to hang up his stocking, of course—ha! ha!

And there should be some young folks, and bonfires, and what not. Also, there were some sleighs sent up from Richmond, and the place was literally resonant with the voices of expectant nigs, big and little.

On Christmas eve, however, Boughton managed to find her alone, although Dick had arrived, and she seemed busier than ever.

He was going along the corridor to his room, when he caught a glimpse of her through the half-open door of a little paneled room, which she called her "Tea Caddy." She was standing on the grey deer-skin rug before the fire, in the cream-white frock he liked, and wearing the identical blue beads and bow which he remembered so well. Her feet were sunk out of sight in the thick fur, but he fancied that she also sported the bronze shoes.

There was a glisten in her eyes which Boughton did not think was all firelight, and she clinked the beads of her necklace hurriedly together.

"Do let me come in," he said, pushing the door further open.

She looked up vaguely, as though from a dream, and said, "Certainly." So in he went, shutting the door behind him. It was a pretty room, with much blue chintz on windows and furniture, and many hunting traps about. There were two old chairs on either side of the fireplace, which could have held six Judiths apiece, and in one of these she now placed herself, still keeping her hand on the beads at her throat.

Boughton sat down on the rug at her feet, Turk-fashion, and took his crossed ankles into a capable grasp.

"I never saw half such a pretty room," he remarked, looking about him. "It's you, Judith, all over again."

"Is it?" she said, still in that absent fashion; and then added, with a sort of laugh: "Yes, it is rather blue."

"What? Are you blue?" Boughton asked, convinced now that the glisten was not due to the firelight. "On Christmas Eve, too? That will not do the least in the world. What's wrong?"

She tossed herself back into the open arms of the big chair with a petulant gesture.

"Everything!" she cried—"Everything!"

Boughton sat a moment gazing steadily to the fire.

"Judith," he said, at last, "can't you tell me, dear? I might help you, you know?"

"You couldn't! you couldn't!" she said, still vehemently knitting her chestnut brows, which in that position was absurdly like her father's. "Nobody can. I can't myself. Oh! dear!"

It is impossible to express the rebellion condensed into that one "Oh! dear." The room seemed to reverberate with it.

Boughton could think of absolutely nothing to say just then, so he edged along toward her over the deerskin rug, until he could rest his arm on the arm of her chair.

"Tell me," he urged. "Do, Judith. One can never tell. Perhaps I may be the very one to help you."

But she said "No," very curtly, and stared over his head into the fire.

Presently, however, she burst forth again:

"Was there ever such a wild place as the University of Virginia, do you think?" she cried.

At that, "Oh!" said Phil to himself. Dick had of course been getting into trouble, and had cast his burden upon his sister's plucky little shoulders, after his usual brave fashion.

"I don't know much about it, you know," he made answer. "What has Dick been telling you?"

She looked at him a little sharply.

"Why do you think Dick has been telling me anything?" she asked, in a rather careful voice.

"How else should you know?" Boughton said, easily. "But of course don't tell me unless you wish."

Suddenly she leaned forward, setting one hand back down in the other as they rested on her knees. Her necklace swung forward from her bending throat, and the fire-light cast dainty, circular shadows from its beads upon the snowy white of her neck.

"Yes, I will tell you," she said, suddenly. "Dick is in debt—that old, old story to sisters—for how much do you suppose?"

"I don't know," said Boughton, stupidly.

He was not thinking in the least of Dick just then. He was wondering how many of those little soft round shadows there were on her white breast, and whether he could count them if he tried.

"Well, then—for eight—do you hear?—for eight—thousand—dollars."

"That's not so very bad," said Boughton, reassuringly. "We can pull him through."

"'We?'" said the girl, haughtily, on the defensive at once. "Who do you mean by 'we?'"

All at once he got his arms about her. She felt his breath in her hair, on her throat.

"Who should I mean but you and I—you and I—you and I?" he went on repeating, in a sort of intoxication. "Judith—kiss me!"

"Kiss you?" she said, "kiss you?"

She was absolutely rigid with fury. Was ever man so blind as Boughton?—so deaf, one might say. He leaned forward and kissed the pretty blue bow, and the space of white flesh encircled by the blue beads. He looked up and would have kissed her lips, but was stopped by the furious light in her eyes. He started back and freed her in a moment.

"This is the second time," she said, with shut teeth, as he remembered her once before to have spoken—"the second time that you have behaved like a beast to me."

"Judith!" he said.

"Yes—a beast!" she said, biting down on the word, as it were, with her sharp little teeth.

"Judith," he said again, "take care—take care!"

"Take care!" she repeated. "Take care of what? Of the womanhood that you don't respect? There! Your lips have touched them, they are vile!

She jerked at the blue necklace with a sharp movement which broke it, and the pretty beads went rolling this way and that over the fur rug and the polished floor.

The kitten in the Toby-collar pursued one into a distant corner, and thought the episode gotten up for her especial benefit. One or two rolled down into Judith's bodice, and felt very cold and disagreeable, but she was too much wrought up just then to think of physical discomfort.

She stood opening and shutting her hands in a sort of helpless gesture of rage.

"How dare you treat me so?" she said, breathlessly. "How dare you?—dare you?—dare you?"

He was on his feet, of course, by this time, and stood facing her with his head well up, and his hands well down in his pockets, an extremely angry man. The lover was quite taken up by indignation.

"How dare you treat me so?" he returned, with rather ominous quietness. "Do you think it is very—er—ladylike to call people 'beasts?'"

"'Ladylike!'" panted poor Judith, who for the time being could not resist echoing him. "Ladylike!" she cried again.

"Ladylike—the Devil!" she said for a third time, bringing down her teeth with a vicious little snap over the terrible word.

Boughton was actually livid.

"Pardon me," he said, bowing and turning on his heel. "Good evening." But as he reached the door he wheeled around and came back to her. "Judith," he said, in a voice that she did not at all find familiar. "I meant to ask you just now to be my wife. Of course I leave at once. I will concoct some story to tell your father and Dick. Good-by."

He went without so much as touching her hand and closed the door, opening it again, however, to thrust a little mat out of the way. He did not again look over in her direction. Then he went finally.

And she stood staring at the closed door, thinking in a vague way that it was Christmas Eve, and that she had better ring for her maid to gather together the scattered beads—and that Boughton had gone, and that she had lost her temper and forgotten herself utterly.

There was a rigorous wind a-romp in the narrow hallways and the locust trees without, and in a distant corner the kitten was still scrabbling about with one of the fallen beads. It was quite still save for these noises, and the sound of the wood fire, which was busily "treading snow."

She stood there until the room seemed receding in a golden haze, and then she turned stiffly, and, stooping down, began to pick up the blue beads from the floor. The kitten, seeing her kneeling, scampered up, expecting a frolic. She lifted the pretty little brute to her white breast, and held it thus while she went on in her laborious search.

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Judith did not see Phil again until three years afterward, when she was 21, and the civil war had broken out in all its horrors. He was a colonel on General ———'s staff, and happened to be encamped near Charlottesville, and Colonel Page asked himself and the general to dinner. The latter declined for some reason or other, but, much to Judith's amazement, Boughton came.

She watched him dismount from his horse, looking through her closed window blinds, and her heart emulated the action of poor Trumpeter's diaphragm on the memorable occasion three years ago. She saw that he had broadened a great deal and was browner—very much browner—in fact, quite dingy as to complexion, and that his undress uniform was abominably shabby.

Then she turned slowly away and went down stairs. She had thought a good deal over her toilet, laying out the four gowns in her possession on her narrow bed. Among them was the creamy one with the little blue bow at the bodice. She was as slender as ever, and could have worn it very well, but she tossed it aside decidedly. She finally clad herself in a gray serge, which had originally been a vivid pink, and belonged to one of her great aunts. A rosy tinge was still discernible here and there in the folds, after the fashion of that in a gray cloud at sunset. She put on a little tucker of old lace, which, alack, had been "done up" with bluing, but there were no bows, nor beads, nor bronze shoes this time. As for herself, she looked precisely the same as she had done three years ago, save that there was rarely any red nowadays in the brown of her eyes.

She went down slowly, coming to a halt on each shallow stair of the oak staircase. She was not at all sure of her reception. Would he stare grimly, and be very icy to her? Or would he merely ignore her? Or would he indulge in covert sarcasms, that only she could understand?

She made up her mind at last, however, and turning the knob of the drawing-room door, entered abruptly and noiselessly.

The colonel was established in his red-leathern half-way house, with his gouty foot on a stool, and Boughton sat astride of one of the various spindle-legged chairs, with his arms resting on its back, and his chin on his arms. He got up when Judith entered, and came forward to meet her, holding out both hands.

"Well, my Lady Tongue," said he, with the smile she remembered.

There was not a trace of bitterness, of sarcasm, of coldness in his voice. It was absolutely natural, if a trifle mischievous, and somehow this perverse young woman wished that it had been either one of the other three, rather than what it was. She found spirit enough at her command, however, to answer saucily:

"Well, Sir Oracle!"

He still held her hands, and looked down at her.

"You haven't changed the least," he said, presently. "Er—that is—have you?"

"No," she said, with all her old curtness this time, resenting the still very decided mischief in his tone.

"I don't know that I'm sorry," he said, gravely, and then the colonel called to him, and he turned away to answer.

They saw him very often during the next fortnight. He was always riding down at unexpected moments, and stopping in to dinner or tea. It is true that his conversation was chiefly with the colonel concerning war matters, and what had been, and what was to come, etc.

Dick had just joined Boughton's regiment, and the Colonel was as anxious to know all about him as though he had been in several engagements, whereas he had not been in any. He came jingling down with Boughton one day, in all the pride of his new trappings, flushed and really looking quite gallant. Judith had still the advantage of that half inch, but the boy was sturdier than at seventeen, and carried himself very well.

They arrived about sundown, and the Colonel, being confined to his room by a very sharp attack of gout, they had some chocolate in Judith's "Tea Caddy." The hard times of sweet-potato coffee and blackberry-leaf tea had not yet chanced, and Judith's chocolate was above praise.

Boughton cast a rather curious look about the room as he sat down, and Judith handed him one of the wide, shallow cups that he remembered. It was all just the same, all except the kitten in the Toby-collar, who was now a sedate matron with two children, who had each inherited a Toby-collar, as much like their parent's as possible.

Boughton took one upon his knee, and Dick captured the other, while Judith ministered to their mamma, with bits of cake soaked in the chocolate.

"I say," remarked Dick, suddenly, "by ——! if it isn't only a week from Christmas. Do you remember the way you trotted off and left us on Christmas Eve three years ago, Cousin Phil? You do, don't you, Judy?"

Judith said, "Oh! yes," that she remembered, of course.

Boughton, who was smoking one of the colonel's old Cabanas, lazily stroked the paw of the kitten on his knee with the unoccupied fingers of his cigar hand. Judith thought she detected a smile—the wraith of a smile behind the smoke haze. She drew herself up, and a very haughty look came over her clear, firelit features.

"Assuredly I remember it," said Boughton, all of a sudden, when Dick, who was busily engaged in tormenting his kitten by pulling its Toby-collar half over its ears, had forgotten that he had put the question.

"I should think I did," he went on. "The thermometer was only 15 above zero, and the waggon got stalled in a snow-drift before we were half-way to the station."

Judith again waxed perceptibly taller. She would have added two or three cubits to her stature if she could have done so. She told herself that she hated her cousin Philip Boughton very much indeed.

"Well, Jude certainly made a lovely present out of you, anyway," laughed Dick. "And I must say she appreciated it. I don't believe it's been off of her arm for the last three years."

Boughton could not repress a quick look in Judith's direction. She was making a fire screen out of one of her long hands, and he could not see her expression for the shadows from her fingers. But by-and-by, when Dick went out for something or other, he pitched his cigar into the fire, and went over beside her.

(To be Continued).

Another Trifle.

"Send it, mum?"

"Oh, dear, no! Most of the things we had sent last year came along about a week after Christmas. My husband will carry it."

"But isn't he rather heavily loaded, mum?"

"Not a bit of it. He says he carries a millstone round his neck down town, and I'm sure these little things won't bother him much. Here, Sammy—another trifle."

He Wanted to Copy.

Mrs. Jason—"Jehiel, I've had the awfulest scare. I opened the door and found the worst looking tramp I ever saw. Why, I couldn't say a word for ten minutes." Mr. Jason—"Do you know which way he went? I would like to get his make-up if it had that effect."—*Terre Haute Express.*

Words Could Express It Painfully Well.

Young Borrowe (who has been accommodated with a small loan—gushingly)—Oh, my friend, words cannot express the extent of my obligation to you for this kindly action!

Old Van Loan—Eh? Yes they can. Just sit down here and make a little thirty-day note.

The Proper Title.

In the Boudoir.—Radiant young wife (arrayed for the reception)—You solemn old boy! Don't you like my new dress?

Bearish old husband (critically, through his eye-glass)—H'm—well—I like it for the honesty of its title. It is decidedly a nude dress.

Lost Illusion.

"What, is everybody wicked, mamma dear?" "Yes, Bertie." "Are you wicke yourself, mamma, dear?" "Not so goo as I ought to be!" "And—the police? *London Punch.*

Large quantities of lambs and shee are being shipped from Elmira, Ont., t Buffalo.

Teacher—Tommy may tell us what shap the world is. Tommy—It is roun Teacher—How do you know it is round Tommy—'Cause you told me yourse Teacher—Yes; but my telling you th world is round doesn't make it round. Ho do I know it's round? Tommy—I s'pos omebody told you.