THE UNDERSTUDY.

(Continued from page 2, Col. 3.) self to dance violently for half an hour. Always her eyes kept watch of the tall man who stood about, with his arm in a sling, looking on. At first she feared he would leave since he was out of the fun on account of his injury, but, as time passed and he seemed content to remain, she gave herself up to playing the game, until she deemed it diplomatic to make the move she was living for.

When the time came, she freed herself on some trivial pretext and happened to run across David Lane. He was standing alone, looking tired to

"You're not dancing, of course, are you, Mr. Lane?" she said. "Why don't we go and sit out somewhere? I've had enough of it, myself."

He roused himself and smiled down "Really? Are you sure?" he asked, politely. "It's awfully good of

Where shall we go? "Let's try the library," she answered, and led the way to a room that seemed remote and was pleasantly gathered into one circle of light from a tall lamp and the fire.

'This is the best room in the house, day or night," Virginia said, over her shoulder. She wandered to the fire and then turned back to him. "I'm going to sit down and have a peace-ful smoke. Is there any place where you can be comfortable with your broken bones?"

He laughed a little.
"Any place that's soft would be good enough for me tonight. I wish were in a hay-loft!"

She laughed appreciatively. "Don't mind me the least bit. I don't care what you do. Cuddle up somewhere, Mr. Lane, and I'll be good

company and not say a word."
"That listens great!" Lane said. "But I don't expect ever to lie down again. I expect to have to sit up for the rest of my life. Did you ever have a polo-field hit you in the neck, Miss Starr? Then you know how I

His spirit appealed to her. "You are a game one!" she nodded, smiling. "Marion told me you

"I'm not," he retorted, with a sudden change of tone. He turned, abruptly, to a big leather chair and sank into it. But in that moment he had regained his flippan-

"Solid comfort!" he cried, grimacing his dissatisfaction to the girl, who apparently watched him with only sympathetic amusement. "If ing-room, where, from a window, she you weren't here, I'd think I was in hell taking my punishment!" He was confronted by David Lane, himself, gazing idly forth, with a cigarclosed his eyes and lines of pain were ette in his hand. He smiled a surpris-

ia looked down into depths. "You don't need to-tell me," she said, and moved away to the fire.

She felt him close behind her and waited, consciously, to gauge the tone of his voice. It reached her so hoarse

as to be without quality.
"What do you mean? What do you She turned and he was there before her. She lifted one hand to his well

shoulder and, as if in sudden weakness, bent her head against her upstretched arm. "I saw the game this afternoon—and I've been thinking about you ever since, David Lane," she cried, and for a few seconds they stood in stillness.

Virginia, swept with compassion

for him, thought nothing of herself. Nor was Lane thinking of her. The hand on his sholder, the slight weight she leaned upon him, meant nothing. He removed her gently but quite mechanically, and he stepped back to the chair he had left and sat down on the edge of it.

"Don't judge me," he said, numbly. "I never have been a quitter—but now—I don't know what I am." "I know," Virginia told him, from

where she stood. "You've been under a long strain-and you've been too knowledge that she would be there much alone.

The words appeared to reach his brain slowly. His eyes returned to hers with a vague look of defense.

"I could bear it better that way at first," he said, and repeated. "But now—it's got to me—I have to keep among people—acting, all the time."
"Yes," said the girl, "beacuse —"
He watched her come toward him,

and then he felt her arm slip round his shoulders. From above him he heard her finish the sentence she had

begun.
"Because—now—you're afraid to be

She held him lightly against her, as simply as if it were her right. She went on speaking as naturally as if she had known him always.
"You mustn't mind my knowing,

David," she said. He sat stiffly within the circle of her arm. Her heart stabbed her suddenly with consciousness of his atti-tude and of what she had done. But as she moved to withdraw, he caught at her hand and held it there. Pres-

ently she spoke again.
"I think—it seems, as if there always should be one person to whom we might take our sorrows—we naturally don't take them to the crowd, because we're sports—but being a sport lays the way open to a horrible loneliness, sometimes. A crowd can be the loneliest place in the world. And yet—one so seldom finds the individual."

Wirginia said. "Perhaps just to know there's some one you can tell will be enough."

"No—I want you to hear it." His

rible—I'm sick with it. It's become so horrible that—" He rose suddenly and faced her, and the hand he had never released, he gripped tighter. "You're about that, too—I am afraid as hell, that sometime—left alone—left al my nerve will go back on me-Thank God, you've come, Virginia Starr."
She closed her other hand on his.

"Don't go back to the club to-night.
Stay here. They can surely put you up," she said, earnestly.

He stared at her blankly for a sec"Was she—your age, David?" she

ond, and then his face relaxed. "What would you think of me- if stayed?" he said, oddly; and then on rather a grim note, "no-I'll take

He saw Virginia's eyes and parted lips ineffably tender and understanding. With a little jerk he withdrew his hand and started away from her, only to stop again and speak with-

out looking back. "I'm more afraid to stay, now, than to go-You know-a light-where there's been no light-sympathy like

"You'll get used to it, David," her voice came to him, softly. She didn't move; she waited; but

he left her. She found that, all things considered, she was pretty well unnerved herself. There was no sleep upon her pillow that night. Watching the clouds break and the dawn grow fresh and fair, she felt a strange nearness and communion with that other girl who had loved David Lane.

"You don't misunderstand, do you?" she seemed to be urging. "I'm only trying to help, and in no way to take your place. There is no place in his heart for any one but you. You've seen him; you know; he is in sad need of help."

The first rays of the sun shot forth at that, crowning a new day. The glory of it thrilled the girl fantastic-

"You do want me to help, don't you! Perhaps you even chose, yourself, that I should be the one to help. I love your trust. I shall do my ut termost."

And then a brisk northwest wind came, adding to the inspiration of the day and of the mood. After bath and David?" breakfast Virginia forgot that she had only slept an hour or two. She greeted Marion Hendrick's suggestion of golf with enthusiasm, though upon arriving at the club, a lazier form of diversion seemed suddenly to appeal. "I'd rather drive about in the little car, really," she said ingenuously. "Perhaps I can find Mr. Lane, and make him go with me."

And since there were plenty of

golfers in sight, Marion agreed care-

lessly.
So Virginia escaped and ran round the corner of the piazza by the smok-

She laughed as she looked him over.

"If I were to paint your attractive smile today," she said, "I should paint it a pale pea-green."

"You've a fine eye for color," he applauded. "Come in."

"No, come out," she cried, "I've got the car and Marion's playing golf."

David gave her a war glance.

David gave her a wan glance.
"Don't you like it pretty well here, by the fire?" he ventured. "And the chairs are—fairly soft—and you don't have to bother to blow your horn or

anything." He never failed to amuse her.

"But I can't stay in here," she protested. "Come back to the Hendrick's where we won't be disturbed."

"No," he countered, with whimsical resignation. "Fate hasn't prescribed for me a rest-cure. I'm to go jouncing over all the roughest roads on Long Island. Come along-the writing's on the wall!"

Virginia turned reluctant, but he

had his way, and they drove off rather silently into the gorgeous weather. Watching him and noting the same lifelessness that had marked his expression in the early part of the previous evening Virginia felt a troubled inadequacy. Naturally enough he hadn't told her that, after the unformer sales of the previous had been sales of the same that her the sales of the same that her the sales of the same that the sales of the same that the sales of the s foreseen solace of her sympathy, he had returned to his lonely quarters and in reaction had known the deep-est depression of all, nor that the in the morning had seemed to him to be all that kept him fighting through the night.

He was game, for all he denied it. There was a gameness that hurt in his characteristic streak of humor. As they drove on, he taunted Virginia. "You're cheating," he said. "You're

picking the good roads—very slyly, of course, but I'm on to you!"

But when they stopped the car in a sylvan dell, sheltered from the wind, and with a southern exposure, he admitted that she had planned well. Then abruptly, he slipped down in his seat, took off his hat, and, as if he had reached the limit of his strength, collapsed with his head on her should-

collapsed with his head on her shoulder. In fact, his actual words were:

"Believe me, Virignia, I wouldn't do this if I could help it, but I can't!"

"That's all right, David," she returned, smiling. "I owe it to you."

"No," he said haltingly. "What I mean is—is life to be nothing but one shortly requirement of the properties."

ghastly reminiscence after another? -You see-I've never spoken of this -I'm feeling my way-I don't know how much one's meant to endure-nor how much one can endure-and I haven't wanted to ask—Perhaps I can talk it out to you—because I don't

know you." "Tell me everything or nothing," Virginia said. "Perhaps just to know

"No—I want you to hear it." His voice sounded curiously drained of emotion. "It all happened out there, in Neither was aware of the pause that followed. Virginia just stood and waited. Finally:

"I guess you're right," he assented, three months—just three months of

"I haven't had any one any of my life worth living. She came into my life own people, here. There hasn't been and taught me love and what life any individual—" A tenseness gathered in his voice. "It has been hore looked down on humanity and pitied

confusion. She wanted to blink her mind's eye and clear its vision to see the picture that had been there

asked impulsively, and was thankful that the question sounded decently tactful.

"Oh, no-she was-older-ever much older-I don't know-it didn't matter— What are ten years or fif-teen—when you think alike, and everyber of ideas that-meet-and you know that the two of you are-per- | grace of humor. feet harmony."
"Yes, dear," Virginia murmured.

almost apologetically.

"She stooped so far to me—and I needed her so-she would have made something of me, Virginia—But—but she said I'd given her back her life and joy—I—I did that much for

He paused, leaving the girl's imagination again hanging in the air. So she'd already lived a life—this woman-?

"You mean-what, David?" quite away, you see— Strange—I of their unsuspected bond. loved her first when she thought she Two years of unremit was done with men forever- But-I loved her so much-To break another pause, Virginia

"It was like a beautiful, healing-

balm or something." That line didn't come out quite as well as the first one, but she said it gently, for his sake. She didn't like this woman he raved about, somehow! Instinctively she was-repelled rather

"Tell me what she looked like,

"She looked like a Spanish woman -with eyes that were a dark gray-blue- She loved to dress in black and she carried big, gay fans. Oh, she looked like—herself, Virginia. She was complete—no blurred lines—but always more to be known—more to be desired—"

"David, what a picture! You've done her wonderfully." Virginia forced her praise to cover still further doubts. "But she wasn't foreign, was she? Where did she get this—exotic—personality? And what was

her name?"
"She wasn't exotic—she was just unique; with the finest, clearest American mind in the world. Her name was Mary Lathrop before her mar-

closed his eyes and lines of pain were on his forehead. "Don't any one jostle me," he added, with a kind of dying humor, "or I shall begin to cry!"

Virignia rose swiftly and stood over him, her hands clenched nervously. "Oh, why did you come?" she cried, with tender exasperation. "You ought to be in bed! Why did you come?" her honestly, though with his diewith tender exasperation. "You ought to be in bed! Why did you come?" She laughed as she looked him over. David Lane opened his eyes, and stared up at her. The whole expression of him went rigid.

"That," he said, "I shan't tell you." Their eyes clung together. Virginia looked down into depths.

"You've a fine eye for color," he applauded. "Come in." "I'm feeling surprised welcome and met her at the door. "Good morning, and how dare you?"

"Well!" she exclaimed from the threshold. "Good morning, and how are you?"

"Oh, I'm—" he began bravely, and then honestly, though with his diethen honestly, and there are you?"

"It was all to the credit of Virgina's healthy nerves that their leap was inte engaged mother, who had spoiled the life of Jack Starr by deserting him; spoiled the life—undoubtedly since she was unhappy—of Richard Hollingsworth, by living with him, and was now spoiling the life of young paried to see the life of young barried to see the life of young large. David Lane by-as Virginia scornful-

ly put it—dying on him!

After a space of blank shock, her first definite reaction had been a sickening sense of revolt, and that had been followed by a surge of pity, a savage protecting impulse, for the man that was primitive and utterly charasteristic.

id," cried her heart. "She can't have been what you thought her. Why, to prove it—she never told you of father and her scandalous divorce! Oh, David, she wasn't good—Her life was just one long, selfish havoc!"

How she managed to sustain their tete-a-tete that morning was never clear in her memory. She seemed to be clutching her mind, to hold it steady, with actual physical hands. But when it was over she knew that she had aroused in him no suspicions and that

the crisis was passed.

In the blackness of another sleepless night Virginia's charming fan-tasy mocked at her. Angrily and con-temptuously she now denied all pos-sibility of having been in commun-ion with the spirit of the dead. Her ironic Fate it was who had chosen that she should once more be the under-study of Mary Hollingsworth, but thing you learn just adds to the number of ideas that—meet—and you sane mind could admit it with the

To-night she prayed to God alone that it be given to her to make good her mother's final wantonness.

With something like a poison, Mary Hollingsworth had infected the lives of the men whom she had victimized Jack Starr had never again been himself; David Lane, too, appeared be-witched. Virginia set her whole will against the spell in his sick mind. She made him her mission; she worked with no thought of reward.

Perhaps the most satirical feature of the treatment was that it brought "You mean—what, David?"
"Oh—yes— She was a widow, you see—He'd only been dead a year or so, but she had been awfully unhappy with him. They'd lived in southern California always, and she came to Honolulu afterward—alone—to get to the content of the treatment was that it brought him for long periods under the roof of Jack Starr. But Virginia had told her father only that there had been a tragedy, and the unconfidential friendship that developed between the two men never once endangered the secret

Two years of unremitting care brought David Lane back to normal, and he realized devoutly to whom it was due. Under an October sky, and the maples that drooped heavy gold-en branches, he told Virignia, as they walked their horses, that he was well again, and that he loved her.

"It isn't the love you deserve, dear." he said. "It's been through the war, you know—but it's all yours—it couldn't be any one else's— And at least, dearest, I can take care of you, always.

Virginia laughed with a little catch of emotion. "Oh, women don't need to be taken care of, David," she said. "You do the loving and I'll do the care-taking—which amounts to the same thing,"

she ended obscurely.

To Jack Starr she said, that night: "Father, I feel pretty special for

David Lane. And Jack, with his hands on her shoulders, answered:
"He's got the very best, Jinny, my

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ing in the devil's own luck when he lost that other woman—whoever she was."-By Leigh Morton.

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