

**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 death.

"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 at her.

"Really? Are you sure?" he asked, politely. "It's awfully good of you. 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 peaceful 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 I 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 feel!"

His spirit appealed to her.

"You are a game one!" she nodded, smiling. "Marion told me you were."

"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 flippancy.

"Solid comfort!" he cried, grimacing his dissatisfaction to the girl, who apparently watched him with only sympathetic amusement. "If you weren't here, I'd think I was in hell taking my punishment!" He 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!"

Virginia 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?"

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 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 know?"

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 shoulder, the slight weight she leaned upon him, meant nothing. He removed her gently but quite mechanically, and she 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 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, "because—"

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 alone."

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 attitude and of what she had done. But as she moved to withdraw, he caught at her hand and held it there. Presently 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."

Neither was aware of the pause that followed. Virginia just stood and waited. Finally:

"I guess you're right," he assented,

life worth living. She came into my life and taught me love and what life might be—lifted me up to where I looked down on humanity and pitied it—showed me the perfect peace and glory of having found the one—the one, other—I lost myself—in—her—greatness—"

Virginia listened with a growing confusion. She wanted to blink her mind's eye and clear its vision to see the picture that had been there for a day. For this was no lovely girl on the threshold of life, that he was painting.

"Was she—your age, David?" she asked impulsively, and was thankful that the question sounded decently tactful.

"Oh, no—she was—older—ever so much older—I don't know—it didn't matter—What one ten years or fifteen—when you think alike, and everything you learn just adds to the number of ideas that meet—and you know that the two of you are—perfect 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 she said I'd given her back her life and joy—I-I did that much for her—"

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?"

"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 quite away, you see—Strange—I loved her first when she thought she was done with me forever—But—I loved her so much—"

To break another pause, Virginia said:

"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, David?"

"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 marriage. To me, her name was Mary Hollingsworth."

It was all to the credit of Virginia's healthy nerves that their leap was internal. For the rest of her life she wondered, as event succeeded event, what would have happened to her future, if instead, a start and a cry had betrayed her at mention of that name—Mary Hollingsworth—her reengaged 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 David Lane by—as Virginia scornfully 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 characteristic.

"Oh, she's made a fool of you, David," 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 fantasy mocked at her. Angrily and contemptuously she now denied all possibility of having been in communion 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 some time elapsed before even her sane mind could admit it with the grace of humor.

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 bewitched. 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 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 of their unsuspected bond.

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 golden branches, he told Virginia, 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

girl—I hope he knows he was playing in the devil's own luck when he lost that other woman—whichever she was."—By Leigh Morton.

**Sanitary Survey of Centre County.**

"Protect your own health and that of your neighbors," writes J. L. Tressel, county health officer.

A sanitary survey will be conducted in the same manner as last year. The purpose of a sanitary survey is to furnish advice to the house-holder concerning the proper and sanitary methods of water supply, sewage disposal, prevention of nuisances and menaces to the public health.

It is hoped that by means of the sanitary survey we can secure the cooperation of the people living in this county and to a large extent, succeed in removing most of the menaces to health.

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