

THE FAIR

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JUNE OPENING,

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I have already said in more than one place that Hewitt's personal relations with the members of the London police force were of a cordial character. In the course of his work it has frequently been Hewitt's hap to learn of matters on which the police were glad for information, and that information was always passed on at once; and so long as no infringement of regulations or damage to public service was involved Hewitt could always rely on a return in kind.

It was with a message of a useful sort that Hewitt one day dropped into Vine Street Police station and asked



The Man Looked Up with a Dull Expression.

for a particular inspector, who was not in. Hewitt sat and wrote a note, and by way of making conversation said to the inspector on duty: "Anything very startling this way today?" "Nothing very startling, perhaps, as yet," the inspector replied, "but one of our chaps picked up rather an odd customer a little while ago. Lunatic of some sort, I should think—in fact, I've sent for the doctor to see him. He's a foreigner—a Frenchman, I believe. He seemed horribly weak and faint, but the oddest thing occurred when one of the men, thinking he might be hungry, brought in some bread. He went into fits of terror at the sight of it, and wouldn't be pacified till they took it away again." "That was strange." "Odd, wasn't it? And he was hungry, too. They brought him some a little while after, and he didn't touch it a bit. Pitched into it, in fact, like any other man, and ate it all with some cold

French, and he says he denies it—speaking in French." "He's been saying that very often, sir," one of the men answered, "as well as other things we can't make anything of." Hewitt placed his hand kindly on the man's shoulder, and asked his name. The reply was for a little while an inarticulate gurgle, presently merging into a meaningless medley of words and syllables: "Qu'est ce qu'il m'a, Leystar Squar—sacre nom—not spik it—quel chemin—sank you ver' mosh—je la nie, je la nie!" He paused, stared, and then, as though realizing his helplessness, he burst into tears.

"He's been a-cryin' two or three times," said the man who had spoken before. "He was a-cryin' when we found him."

Several more attempts Hewitt made to communicate with the man, but though he seemed to comprehend what was meant, he replied with nothing but



And Immediately Turned It Bottom Side Up on the Table.

meaningless gibber, and finally gave up the attempt, and, leaning against the side of the fireplace, buried his head in the bend of his arm.

Then the doctor arrived and made his examination. While it was in progress Hewitt took aside the policeman who had been speaking before and questioned him further. He had himself found the Frenchman in a dull back street by Golden Square, where the man was standing helpless and trembling, apparently quite bewildered and very weak. He had brought him in, without having been able to learn anything about him. One or two shopkeepers in the street where he was found were asked, but knew nothing of him—indeed, had never seen him before. "But the curious thing," the policeman proceeded, "was in this 'ere room when I brought in a loaf to give him a bit of a snack, seen' he looked so weak an' hungry. You'd a thought we was a-goin' to poison 'im. He fairly screamed at the very sight o' the bread, an' he scrouged himself up in that corner an' put his hands in front of his face. I couldn't make out what was up at first—didn't tumble to it's bein' the bread he was frightened of. But the nearer I came with it the more he yelled, so I took it away an' left it outside, an' then he calmed down. An' help me, when I cut some bits off that 'ere very loaf and brought 'em in with a bit o' beef, he just went for 'em like 1 o'clock. He

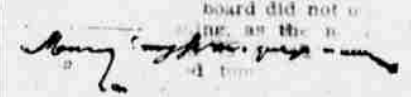
wasn't frightened o' no bread then, you bet. Rum thing how the fancies takes 'em when they're a bit touched, ain't it? All one way one minute; all the other the next."

"Yes, it is. By the way, have you another loaf in the place?" "Yes, sir; half a dozen if you like." "One will be enough. I am going over to speak to the doctor. Wait awhile, until he seems very quiet and fairly comfortable. Then bring a loaf in quietly and put it on the table not far below his elbow. Don't attract his attention to what you are doing."

The doctor stood looking thoughtfully down on the Frenchman, who, for his part, stared gloomily but tranquilly at the fireplace. Hewitt stepped quietly over to the doctor, and, without disturbing the man by the fire, said interrogatively, "Aphasia?"

The doctor tightened his lips, frowned and nodded significantly. "Motor," he murmured just loudly enough for Hewitt to hear, "and there's a general nervous breakdown as well, I should say. By the way, perhaps there's no aphasia. Have you tried him with a pen and paper?" Pen and paper were brought and set before the man. He was told, slowly and distinctly, that he was among friends, whose only object was to restore him to his proper health. Would he write his name and address and any other information he might care to give about himself on the paper before him?

The Frenchman took the pen and stared at the paper. Then slowly and with much hesitation he traced these marks:



The man paused after the last of these futile characters, and his pen stabbed into the paper with a blot as he dazedly regarded his work. Then, with a groan, he dropped it, and his face sank again into the bend of his arm.

The doctor took the paper and handed it to Hewitt. "Complete aphasia, you see," he said, "he can't write a word. He begins to write 'Monsieur' from sheer habit in beginning letters thus; but the word tails off into a scrawl. Then his attempts become mere scribbles, with just a trace of some familiar word here and there, but quite meaningless, all." Although he had never before

chanced to come across a case of aphasia (happily a rare disease), Hewitt was acquainted with its general nature. He knew that it might arise either from some physical injury to the brain, or from a broken connection on some terrible nervous strain. He knew that in the case of motor aphasia the sufferer, though fully conscious of all that goes on about him, and though quite understanding what is said to him, is entirely powerless to put his own thoughts into spoken words—has lost, in fact, the connection between words and their spoken symbols. Also that in most bad cases aphasia—the loss of ability to write words with any reference to their meaning—is commonly an accompaniment.

"You will have him taken to the infirmary, I suppose?" Hewitt asked.

"Yes," the doctor replied, "I shall go and see about it at once."

The man looked up again as they spoke. The policeman had, in accordance with Hewitt's request, placed a loaf of bread on the table, near him, and now as he looked up he caught sight of it. He started visibly, and, pale, but gave no such signs of abject terror as the policeman had previously observed. He appeared nervous and uneasy, however, and presently reached stealthily toward the loaf. Hewitt continued to talk to the doctor while closely watching the Frenchman's behavior from the corner of his eye. The loaf is what is called a "plain cottage" of solid and regular shape; the man reached it, and immediately turned it bottom up on the table. Then he sank back in his chair, with a more contented expression, though his gaze was still directed toward the loaf. The policeman grinned silently at this curious manoeuvre.

The doctor left, and Hewitt accompanied him to the door of the room. "He will not be moved just yet, I take it?" Hewitt asked as they parted.

"It may take an hour or two," the doctor replied, "Are you anxious to keep him here?" "Not for long, but I think there's a curious inside to the case, and I may perhaps learn something of it by a little watching. But I can't spare very long."

(To Be Continued.)

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