

CHAPTER VIII.

In which Passe-partout talks a little more than he ought to have done.

It was not very long before Fix rejoined Passe-partout on the quay. The latter was looking about him, as he did not feel he was debarred from seeing all he could.

"Well, my friend," said Fix, as he came up to him, "has your passport been viséd all right?"

"Ah! it is you," replied the valet. "I am much obliged to you. Yes, everything was in order."

"And now you are seeing something of the place, I suppose?"

"Yes, but we are going on so fast that it seems to me like a dream. And so we are in Suez, are we?"

"Yes, you are."

"In Egypt?"

"In Egypt, most decidedly."

"And in Africa?"

"Yes, in Africa."

"Well now," replied Passe-partout, "I could scarcely believe it. In Africa, actually in Africa. Just fancy. I had not the slightest idea that we should go beyond Paris, and all I saw of that beautiful city was from 7.20 a.m. to 8.40, between the terminus of the Northern Railway and the terminus of the Lyons line, and this through the windows of a fiacre as we drove through the rain. I am very sorry for it. I should like to have seen Père La Chaise and the Circus in the Champs Elysées again."

"You are in a very great hurry then?" said the detective.

"No, I am not in the least hurry," replied Passe-partout. "It is my master. By-the-way, I must buy some shirts and a pair of shoes. We came away without any luggage except a small carpet-bag."

"I will take you to a bazaar where you will find everything you want."

"Really, sir," replied Passe-partout, "you are extremely good-natured."

So they started off together, Passe-partout talking all the time.

"I must take very good care I do not lose the steamer," said he.

"Oh, you have plenty of time," replied Fix; "it is only twelve o'clock."

Passe-partout drew out his great watch. "Twelve o'clock," said he.

"Nonsense. It is fifty-two minutes past nine."

"Your watch is slow," replied Fix.

"Slow, my watch slow; why this watch has come to me from my grandfather. It is an heirloom, and does not vary five minutes in a year. It is a regular chronometer."

"I see how it is," replied Fix; "you have got London time, which is about two hours slower than Suez time. You must take care to set your watch at twelve o'clock in every country you visit."

"Not a bit of it," said Passe-partout, "I am not going to touch my watch."

"Well, then, it won't agree with the sun."

"I can't help that. So much the worse for the sun; it will be wrong then." And the brave fellow put his watch back in his pocket with a

contemptuous gesture.

After a few minutes' pause, Fix remarked, "You must have left London very suddenly?"

"I believe you. Last Wednesday evening at eight o'clock, Mr. Fogg came home from his club, and in three-quarters of an hour afterwards we started."

"But where is your master going to?"

"Straight ahead--he is going round the world."

"Going round the world!" exclaimed Fix.

"Yes, in eighty days. He says it is for a wager, but between ourselves, I don't believe a word of it. It is not common-sense. There must be some other reason."

"This master of yours is quite an original, I should think."

"Rather," replied the valet.

"Is he very rich?"

"He must be; and he carries a large sum with him, all in new

bank-notes. He never spares expense. He promised a large reward to the engineer of the Mongolia if he reached Bombay well in advance of time."

"Have you known your master long?"

"Oh dear no," replied Passe-partout. "I only entered his service the very day we left."

The effect which all these replies had upon the suspicious nature of the detective may be imagined.

The hurried departure from London, so soon after the robbery, the large sum in bank-notes, the haste to reach India, under the pretext of an eccentric bet, all confirmed Fix, and not unnaturally, in his previously conceived ideas. He made up his mind to pump the Frenchman a little more, and make certain that the valet knew no more concerning his master than that he lived alone in London, was reported to be very rich, though no one knew from whence his fortune was derived, and that he was a very mysterious man, etc. But at the same time. Fix felt sure that Phileas Fogg would not land at Suez, and would really go on to Bombay.

"Is Bombay far off?" asked Passe-partout.

"Pretty well. It is ten days' steaming from here."

"And whereabouts is Bombay?"

"It is in India."

"In Asia?"

"Naturally."

"The devil! I was going to say that there is something on my mind, and that is my burner."

"What burner?"

"Why, my gas-burner, which I forgot to turn off when I left London, and which is still alight at my expense. Now I have calculated that I lose two shillings every four-and-twenty hours, which is just sixpence more than my wages. So you see that the longer our journey is--"

It is not very likely that Fix paid much attention to this question of the gas; he was thinking of something else. The pair soon reached the bazaar, and leaving his companion to make his purchases. Fix hastened back to the Consul's office, and now that his suspicions were confirmed he regained his usual coolness.

"I am quite certain now," he said to the Consul, "that this is our

man. He wishes to pass himself off as an eccentric person who wants to go round the world in eighty days."

"He is a very sharp fellow, and he probably counts on returning to London, after having thrown all the police off the scent."

"Well, we shall see," replied Fix.

"But are you sure you are right?" asked the Consul once more.

"I am sure I am not mistaken."

"Well then, how do you account for the fellow being so determined upon proving he had been here by having his passport viséd?"

"Why--Well, I can't say," replied the detective; "but listen a moment." And then in as few words as possible he communicated the heads of his conversation with Passe-partout.

"Well, I must confess that appearances are very much against him," replied the Consul. "Now what are you going to do?"

"I shall telegraph to London, with a pressing request that a warrant of arrest may be immediately transmitted to Bombay. I shall then embark in the Mongolia, and so keep my eye on my man till we reach Bombay, and then, on English ground, quietly arrest him."

As he coolly finished this explanation, the detective bowed to the Consul, walked to the telegraph-office, and there despatched the message we have already seen.

A quarter of an hour later, Mr. Fix, carrying his light baggage and well furnished with money, embarked on board the Mongolia. In a short time afterwards the vessel was ploughing her way at full speed down the Red Sea.