

## CHAPTER IX.

In which the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean favour the Projects of Phileas Fogg.

The distance between Suez and Aden is exactly three hundred and ten miles, and the steamers are allowed one hundred and thirty-eight hours to do it in. The Mongolia, however, was going at a speed which seemed likely to bring her to her destination considerably before time.

The majority of the passengers from Brindisi were bound for India, some for Calcutta, some for Bombay; and since the railway crosses the peninsula it is not necessary to go round by Ceylon.

Amongst the passengers were many military officers and civil servants of every degree. The former included officers of the regular as well as the Indian army, holding lucrative appointments, for the sub-lieutenants get two hundred and eighty; brigadiers, two thousand four hundred; and generals, four thousand pounds a year.

Society, therefore, on board the Mongolia was very pleasant. The purser feasted them sumptuously every day. They had early breakfast, then tiffin at two o'clock, dinner at half-past five, and supper at

eight; and the tables groaned beneath the variety of dishes. The ladies on board changed their toilettes twice a day, and there was music and dancing when the weather was sufficiently favourable to admit of those amusements.

But the Red Sea is very capricious; it is frequently very rough, like all long and narrow gulfs. When the wind blew broadside on, the Mongolia rolled fearfully. At these times the ladies went below, the pianos were silent, singing and dancing ceased. But notwithstanding the wind and the sea, the vessel, urged by her powerful screw, dashed onward to the straits of Bab-el-Mandeb.

And what was Phileas Fogg doing all this time? Perhaps it may be supposed that he was anxious and restless, thinking of the contrary winds and the speed of the ship, which was likely to be retarded by the storm, and so compromise the success of his undertaking. At any rate, whether he did or did not concern himself with these things, he never betrayed the least anxiety on the subject. He was as taciturn and impassible as ever; a man whom no eventuality could surprise. He did not appear to be any more interested than one of the ship's chronometers. He was rarely seen on deck. He troubled himself very little about the Red Sea, so full of interest, the scene of some of the greatest incidents in the history of mankind. He never cared to look at the towns standing out in relief against the sky. He had no fear of the dangers of the Arabian Gulf, of which ancient writers, Strabo, Arian, Artemidorus, etc., have always written with horror, and

upon which sailors of those days never dared to venture without first making a propitiatory sacrifice.

How then did this eccentric gentleman occupy his time, cooped up in his cabin? In the first place he regularly ate his four meals a day, for neither pitching nor rolling had the least effect upon his appetite. And he played whist, for he had made the acquaintance of some lovers of the game as enthusiastic as himself, a collector of revenue en route to Goa, a clergyman, the Rev. Decimus Smith, returning to Bombay, and an English general officer bound for Benares. These three were as madly devoted to whist as Mr. Fogg himself, and they spent whole days silently enjoying it.

As for Passe-partout, he had also escaped sea-sickness, and ate his meals with pleasing regularity and in a conscientious manner, worthy of imitation. The voyage after all did not displease him; he had made up his mind; he gazed at the scenery as he went along, enjoyed his meals, and was fully persuaded that all this absurd business would come to an end at Bombay.

The day after their departure from Suez, viz. the 10th of October, Passe-partout was by no means ill-pleased to meet upon deck the person who had been so civil to him in Egypt.

"I'm sure I cannot be mistaken," he said. "Have I not the pleasure of meeting the gentleman who was so polite to me at Suez?"

"Ah yes, I remember you now. You are the servant of that eccentric Englishman."

"Exactly. Mr.--"

"Fix," replied the detective.

"Mr. Fix," continued Passe-partout, "I am delighted to find you on board. Whither are you bound?"

"Like yourself, to Bombay."

"All the better. Have you ever made this voyage before?"

"Frequently. I am an agent of the P. and O. Company."

"Oh, then you know India very well, no doubt?"

"Well, yes," replied Fix, who did not wish to commit himself.

"It is a curious part of the world, isn't it?"

"Very much so. There are mosques, minarets, temples, fakirs, pagodas, tigers, serpents, and dancing-girls. It is to be hoped that you will have time to see the country."

"I hope so too, Mr. Fix. You must be aware that a man can hardly be expected to pass his whole existence in jumping from the deck of a steamer into a train, and from the train to another steamer, under the pretence of going round the world in eighty days. No; all these gymnastics will end at Bombay, I trust."

"Is Mr. Fogg quite well?" asked Fix, politely.

"Quite well, thank you. So am I. I eat like an ogre. I suppose that is the effect of the sea-air."

"I never see your master on deck."

"No, he has no curiosity whatever."

"Do you know, Mr. Passe-partout, that I fancy this pretended journey round the world in eighty days is only a cover for a more important object, a diplomatic mission perhaps?"

"Upon my word, Mr. Fix, I know nothing about it, I declare; and what is more, I would not give half-a-crown to know!"

After this, Passe-partout and Fix frequently chatted together; the detective doing all in his power to draw the valet out, whenever possible. He would offer the Frenchman a glass of whisky or bitter

beer, which the latter accepted without ceremony, and pronounced Fix a perfect gentleman.

Meantime the steamer plunged and ploughed on her way rapidly. Mocha was sighted on the 13th, surrounded by its ruined walls, above which some date-palms reared their heads. Beyond extended immense coffee plantations. Passe-partout was delighted to gaze upon this celebrated town, and fancied that it and its ruined walls bore a great resemblance to a gigantic cup and saucer.

During the following night the Mongolia cleared the strait of Bab-el-Mandeb, which means the Gate of Tears, and the following day they came to Steamer Point, to the N.W. of Aden harbour, where the supply of coal was to be shipped.

It is no light task to provide the steamers with coal at such a distance from the mines, and the P. and O. Company expend annually no less a sum than eight hundred thousand pounds on this service. Depots have to be established at distant ports, and the coal costs more than three pounds a ton.

The Mongolia had still sixteen hundred and fifty miles to run before she could reach Bombay, and she was therefore obliged to remain four hours at Steamer Point to complete her coaling. But this delay was not at all detrimental to the plans of Phileas Fogg. It had been foreseen. Besides, the Mongolia, instead of reaching Aden on the 15th, had

made that port on the evening of the 14th, so there was a gain of about fifteen hours.

Mr. Fogg and his servant went ashore. The former wished to have his passport viséd. Fix followed him unnoticed. The formality of the visé having been accomplished, Phileas Fogg returned on board to his game of whist.

Passe-partout, as usual, lounged about amongst the mixed races which make up the inhabitants of Aden. He admired the fortifications of this eastern Gibraltar, and the splendid tanks at which the British engineers were still at work, two thousand years after Solomon's craftsmen.

"Very curious, very curious indeed," thought Passe-partout, as he returned on board. "It is worth travelling if one can see something new each time."

At six p.m. the Mongolia weighed anchor, and made her way across the Indian Ocean. She had now one hundred and sixty-eight hours in which to make the passage to Bombay. The weather was good, with a pleasant nor'-west wind; so the sails were hoisted to aid the screw.

The ship being thus steadied, the lady passengers took the opportunity to reappear in fresh toilettes, and dancing and singing were again indulged in. The voyage continued under most favourable conditions.

Passe-partout was delighted that he had such a pleasant companion as Fix.

On Sunday, the 20th of October, about mid-day, they sighted the coast of Hindostan. Two hours later the pilot came on board. A long range of hills cut the sky-line, and soon palm-trees began to show themselves. The mail steamer ran into the roadstead formed between the islands of Salsette, Colaba, Elephanta, and Butcher, and at half-past four o'clock the vessel came alongside the quay.

Phileas Fogg was just finishing his thirty-third rubber for that day. His partner and he had succeeded in scoring a "treble," and thus terminated the voyage with a stroke of luck.

The Mongolia was not due at Bombay until the 22nd of October; she had actually arrived on the 20th; so Mr. Fogg had really gained two days upon the estimated period, and he entered the "profit" accordingly in the column of his diary set apart for that purpose.