

CHAPTER X.

In which Passe-partout thinks himself lucky in escaping with only the Loss of his Shoes.

Everybody is aware that the peninsula of Hindostan has a superficial area of one million four hundred thousand square miles, in which the unequally-distributed population numbers one hundred and eighty millions. The British Government rules absolutely over the greater portion of this immense tract of country. The Governor-General resides at Calcutta, and there are also governors of presidencies at Madras and Bombay, and a deputy-governor at Agra, as well as a governor for Bengal.

British India proper only includes an area of seven hundred thousand square miles, and a population of one hundred to one hundred and ten millions; so there is still a large portion of India independent, and, in fact, there are rajahs in the interior who wield absolute authority.

From the year 1756 to the great Sepoy Mutiny, the East India Company was the supreme authority in British India; but now the country is under the rule of the English Crown. The manners and customs of India are in a continual state of change. Till lately, travelling was only

by antiquated modes of conveyance, but now steamers cover the Ganges, and the railways have opened up the country, and one can go from Bombay to Calcutta in three days. But the railroad does not cut the peninsula in a direct line. As the crow flies, the distance from Calcutta to Bombay is only about eleven hundred miles, and the trains would not occupy three days in accomplishing that distance; but the journey is lengthened at least one-third of that distance by the loop the line describes up to Allahabad.

The Great Indian Peninsula Railway line is as follows: leaving Bombay Island, it crosses Salsette, reaches the mainland at Tannah, crosses the Western Ghats, thence runs north-east to Burhampoor, skirts the independent territory of Bundelcund, ascends to Allahabad, and then, turning eastward, meets the Ganges at Benares; then, quitting it again, the line descends in a south-easterly direction, by Burdivan and Chandernagore, to the terminal station at Calcutta.

It was half-past four p.m. when the Bombay passengers landed from the Mongolia, and the train for Calcutta was timed to start at eight o'clock.

Mr. Fogg took leave of his colleagues of the whist-table, and going ashore, gave his servant orders concerning a few necessary purchases, enjoining him to be at the railroad station before eight o'clock, and then, at his own regular pace, he started for the Consul's office.

He saw nothing of the sights of Bombay--the town-hall, the magnificent library, the forts, the docks, the cotton market, the bazaars, mosques, &c., were all disregarded. Elephanta was ignored, and the grottos of Salsette unexplored by Phileas Fogg.

After leaving the consulate, he walked calmly to the railroad station and dined. The proprietor of the hotel particularly recommended "a native rabbit." Phileas accepted the dish as put before him, but found it horrible.

He rang the bell. The landlord was sent for.

"Is that a rabbit?" inquired Mr. Fogg.

"Yes, my lord, a jungle rabbit."

"Has that rabbit never mewed, do you think?"

"Oh, my lord, a jungle-rabbit mew! I swear--"

"Don't swear," said Fogg calmly, "and remember that formerly cats were sacred animals in India. Those were happy days."

"For the cats, my lord?"

"And perhaps for travellers too," said Fogg, as he proceeded with his

dinner.

Soon afterwards Mr. Fix landed, and his first act was to go to the police-office. He said who and what he was, and stated his business and how matters stood regarding the robbery. Had any warrant been forwarded? No, nothing of the kind had been received, and of course it could not have reached Bombay, as it was despatched after Fogg's departure.

Fix was disappointed. He wanted the Commissioner to grant him a warrant on the spot, but the request was refused. The business was the Home Government's affair, not his, and he could not issue the warrant. This red-tapeism is quite British style. Fix of course did not insist, and made up his mind to await the arrival of the warrant. But he resolved not to lose sight of the robber meanwhile. He had no doubt whatever that Fogg would remain some time in Bombay--we know that was also Passe-partout's notion--and the warrant would probably arrive before the criminal left the town.

But it was now evident to Passe-partout that his master intended to push on from Bombay as rapidly as he had left Paris and Suez; that the journey was not to end at Bombay, it was to be continued to Calcutta at any rate, and perhaps even farther still. Passe-partout then began to think that perhaps the bet was really the object, and that fate had indeed condemned him, with all his wish for rest, to journey around the world in eighty days.

However, having purchased some necessary articles, he walked about the streets of Bombay. There were a great number of people about--Europeans of all nationalities; Persians, wearing pointed caps; Buntryas, with round turbans; Scindees, with square caps; Armenians, in their flowing robes; Parsees, with black mitres. It was a Parsee festival that day.

These Parsees are followers of Zoroaster, and are the most industrious, most intelligent, and most civilised of the native races, and to which the majority of the Bombay merchants belong. On that occasion a sort of religious carnival was being held; there were processions, and numbers of dancing-girls clad in gauzy rose-coloured garments, who danced modestly and gracefully to the sound of the tom-tom and viols.

Passe-partout, as may be imagined, drank in all these sights and sounds with delight; and his expression at the unusual spectacle was that of the greatest astonishment.

Unfortunately, his curiosity very nearly compromised the object of his master's journey. He wandered on, after watching the carnival, on his way to the station; but seeing the splendid pagoda on Malabar Hill, he thought he would like to go in. He was quite unaware of two things: first, that certain pagodas are closed to all Christians, and even the believers can only obtain admittance by leaving their shoes or slippers at the doors of the temple. The British Government, respecting the native creed, severely punishes anyone attempting to

violate the sanctity of the native mosques or temples.

But Passe-partout, innocent of harm, tourist-like, went in, and was admiring the pagoda and the lavish ornamentation of the interior, when he suddenly found himself sprawling on his back on the pavement. Over him stood three angry men, who rushed upon him, tore off his shoes, and began to pommel him soundly, uttering savage cries as they did so.

The agile Frenchman was quickly upon his feet again, and with a couple of well-directed blows of his fists upset two of his adversaries, who were much encumbered in their long robes; then, rushing out of the temple, he quickly distanced the remaining Hindoo and evaded him in the crowd.

At five minutes to eight he presented himself at the railroad station, without his hat and shoes and minus the parcel in which all his purchases were wrapped. Fix was there on the platform. Having tracked Fogg, he perceived that that worthy was about to leave Bombay at once. Fix made up his mind to go with him as far as Calcutta, and even beyond if necessary. Passe-partout did not notice the detective, who kept in the shade; but the policeman heard the recital of the valet's adventures, which Passe-partout told to his master in a few sentences.

"I trust this will not happen again," replied Fogg, quietly, as he took his seat in the carriage.

The poor lad, quite upset and minus his hat and shoes, took his place also without replying.

Fix was getting into another compartment, when suddenly a thought struck him, and he muttered:

"No, I will remain. An offence has been committed upon Indian ground. I've got my man!"

At that moment the engine uttered a piercing whistle, and the train moved out into the night.