

## CHAPTER XVII.

What happened on the Voyage between Singapore and Hong Kong.

After that, Passe-partout and the detective met frequently, but the latter was very reserved and did not attempt to pump his companion respecting Mr. Fogg. He only encountered that gentleman once or twice, for he kept very much in the cabin, attending on Mrs. Aouda, or engaged in a game of whist.

As for Passe-partout, he began to meditate very seriously upon the curious chance which had brought Mr. Fix once again on his master's track, and it certainly was somewhat astonishing. How was it that this amiable, good-natured gentleman, whom they had met first at Suez, and on board the Mongolia, who had landed at Bombay, where he said he was going to remain, was now on board the Rangoon bound for Hong Kong, and, in a word, following Mr. Fogg step by step--that was the question? It certainly was a most extraordinary coincidence, and what did Fix want? Passe-partout was ready to wager his Indian shoes, which all this time he had carefully preserved, that this man Fix would leave Hong Kong with them, and probably on board the same steamer.

If Passe-partout had worried his head for a hundred years, he never would have hit upon the real object of the detective. It would never

have occurred to him that Phileas Fogg was being tracked round the globe for a robbery. But as it is only human nature to find some explanation for everything, this is how Passe-partout interpreted Fix's unremitting attention, and after all it was not an unreasonable conclusion to arrive at. In fact, he made up his mind that Fix was an agent sent after Mr. Fogg by the members of the Reform Club, to see that the conditions of the wager were properly carried out.

"That's it," repeated Passe-partout to himself, very proud of his shrewdness. "He is a spy these gentlemen have sent out. It is scarcely a gentlemanly thing to do, Mr. Fogg is so honourable and straightforward. Fancy sending a spy after us! Ah, gentlemen of the Reform Club, this shall cost you dearly."

Passe-partout, quite delighted with the discovery, determined to say nothing to his master on the subject, lest he should be very justly offended at his opponents' distrust, but he determined to chaff Fix at every opportunity without betraying himself.

On Wednesday, the 30th of October, the Rangoon entered the Straits of Malacca, which separate that peninsula from Sumatra, and at four o'clock the next morning the Rangoon, having gained half a day in advance of time, anchored at Singapore to coal.

Phileas Fogg having noted the gain in his book, went ashore accompanied by Mrs. Aouda, who expressed a wish to land for a few

hours.

Fix, who was very suspicious of Fogg's movements, followed without being noticed; and Passe-partout, who was secretly amused at the detective's manoeuvres, went about his usual business.

The island of Singapore, though not grand or imposing, still has its peculiar beauties. It is a park traversed by pleasant roads. A well-appointed carriage took Phileas Fogg and Aouda through palm-groves and clove-plantations, various tropical plants perfumed the air, while troops of monkeys gambolled in the trees; the woods, also, were not innocent of tigers, and to those travellers who were astonished to learn why these terrible animals were not destroyed in such a small island, the reply would be that they swam across from the mainland.

After a couple of hours' drive, Mr. Fogg and Aouda returned to the town and went on board ship again, all the time followed by the detective. Passe-partout was awaiting them on deck; the brave fellow had purchased some beautiful mangoes, and was enabled to offer them to Mrs. Aouda, who received them gracefully.

At eleven o'clock the Rangoon resumed her voyage and a few hours later Malacca had sunk below the horizon. They had about thirteen hundred miles to traverse to reach Hong Kong, and Phileas Fogg hoped to get there in six days, so as to be able to catch the steamer for

Yokohama on the 6th of November.

The weather, which had hitherto been very fine, changed with the last quarter of the moon. There was a high wind, fortunately favourable, and a very heavy sea.

The captain set the sails at every opportunity, and the Rangoon, under these circumstances, made rapid progress. But in very rough weather extra precautions were necessary, and steam had to be reduced. This delay did not appear to affect Phileas Fogg in the least, but it worried Passe-partout tremendously. He swore at the captain, the engineers, and the company, and consigned all concerned to a warmer climate than Hong Kong. Perhaps the thought of the gas that was still burning in his room in London may have had something to do with his impatience.

"You seem in a great hurry to reach Hong Kong," said Fix to him one day.

"I am," replied Passe-partout. "You think Mr. Fogg is anxious to catch the steamer for Yokohama?"

"Very anxious indeed."

"You believe in this journey round the world, then?"

"Most decidedly; don't you?"

"Not a bit of it."

"You are a sly one," replied Passe-partout with a wink.

This remark rather disturbed Fix, without his knowing why. Could the Frenchman have discovered who he was? He did not know what to do. But how could Passe-partout have found out his real object? And yet in speaking as he did, Passe-partout must certainly have had some ulterior motive.

On a subsequent occasion the valet went still further, and said, half maliciously:

"Well, Mr. Fix, shall we be so unfortunate as to lose the pleasure of your society at Hong Kong?"

"Well," replied Fix, somewhat embarrassed, "I am not quite sure. You see--"

"Ah," said Passe-partout, "if you would only come with us I should be so delighted. An agent of the company cannot stop halfway, you know. You were only going to Bombay, and here you are almost in China. America is not far off, and from America to Europe is but a step."

Fix looked very hard at his companion, whose face was perfectly innocent, and laughed too. But Passe-partout was in the humour for quizzing, and asked him if he made much by his present business.

"Yes and no," replied Fix, without flinching. "We have our good and bad times, but of course I do not travel at my own expense."

"Of that I am quite sure," said Passe-partout, laughing.

Fix then returned to his cabin, where he remained deep in thought. Somehow or another the Frenchman had found him out, but had he told his master? Was he his accomplice or not? And must the whole thing be given up? The detective passed many hours considering the matter in all its bearings, and was as undecided at the end as he had been at the beginning.

But he retained his presence of mind, and resolved at length to deal frankly with Passe-partout, if he could not arrest Fogg at Hong Kong. Either the servant was an accomplice, knowing everything, and he would fail; or the servant knew nothing, and then his interest would be to quit the service of the criminal.

Such was the state of affairs, and meantime Phileas Fogg appeared perfectly indifferent to everything. But nevertheless there was a disturbing cause not far off, which might be able to produce an influence on his heart; but no, Mrs. Aouda's charms had no effect, to

the great surprise of Passe-partout.

Yes, it certainly was a matter of astonishment to that worthy man, who every day read the lady's gratitude to his master in Mrs. Aouda's eyes. Phileas Fogg must certainly be heartless; brave he was no doubt, but sympathetic, no. There was no proof that the incidents of the journey had wakened any feelings in his breast, while Passe-partout was continually indulging in reverie.

One day he was contemplating the working of the machinery, when a pitch of the vessel threw the screw out of the water. The steam roared through the valves, and Passe-partout exclaimed, indignantly: "The escape valves are not sufficiently charged! We make no way! That is English all over. Ah! if this were only an American ship--we might blow up, perhaps, but at any rate we should go quicker meantime."