

## CHAPTER XXVII.

Showing how Passe-partout went through a Course of Mormon History, at the rate of Twenty Miles an Hour.

During the night of the 5-6th December, the train kept in a south-easterly direction for about fifty miles, and then went up in a north-east course towards Salt Lake.

About nine o'clock in the morning, Passe-partout went out upon the platform to get a breath of fresh air. The weather was cold and the sky was dull, but there was no snow falling then. The sun in the mist looked like an enormous disc of gold, and Passe-partout was calculating what it would be worth in English money, when he was disturbed by the appearance of a very curious personage.

This individual, who had got into the train at Elko, was tall and of dark complexion, had a black moustache, wore black stockings, and black hat and clothes, except his necktie, which was white, and his gloves, which were dog-skin. He looked like a minister. He went the whole length of the train, and fastened a small notice-bill on the door of every car. Passe-partout read one of these "posters," and learnt that the Honourable Elder William Hitch, Mormon Missionary, would take advantage of the occasion to deliver a lecture upon

Mormonism, in car No. 117, at eleven o'clock in the fore-noon till twelve noon, and invited all those who wished to learn something about the "Latter-day Saints" to attend the lecture.

"Faith, I'll go," muttered Passe-partout, who knew nothing about Mormonism, except the plurality of wives.

The news spread rapidly amongst the passengers, and about thirty out of the hundred travellers were attracted to car No. 117. Passe-partout took a front seat. Neither his master nor Fix troubled themselves about the matter.

At the hour named the elder William Hitch got up, and in a somewhat irritable manner, as if he had been already contradicted, cried out:

"I tell you that Joe Smith is a martyr, and his brother Hiram is another, and the way the Government is persecuting Brigham Young will make him a martyr also. Now who dares say anything to the contrary?"

No one ventured to contradict him, and his vehemence certainly contrasted strangely with his calm features. But no doubt his anger was kindled by the indignities to which the Mormons had been actually exposed. The United States Government had certainly had a great deal of trouble to bring these fanatics to reason. It was now master of Utah, after having imprisoned Brigham Young on the charges of rebellion and polygamy. Since that time the followers of the prophet

had redoubled their efforts, and, if not by deeds, by words resisted the authority of the United States Government. Elder W. Hitch, as we have seen, was endeavouring to gain converts in the railroad-cars.

Then he went on to recite passionately the history of Mormonism from patriarchal times. How in Israel a Mormon prophet of the tribe of Joseph published the annals of the new religion, and left them to his son Morom; and how, many centuries later, a translation of this wonderful book was made by Joseph Smith, junior, a Vermont farmer, who revealed himself as a prophet in 1823, when the angel appeared to him and gave him the sacred roll of the book.

About this time several of the audience left the car, but the lecturer continued to relate how Smith, junior, his father and brothers, and a few disciples founded the religion of the Latter-day Saints, which can count its converts not only in America, but in Scandinavia, England, and Germany. Also how a colony was established in Ohio, where a temple was erected at a cost of two hundred thousand dollars, and a town built at Kirkland. How Smith became an opulent banker, and received a papyrus scroll written by Abraham and several celebrated Egyptians.

The narrative being very tiresome, the greater part of the audience decamped, but the lecturer nevertheless continued his tale respecting Joe Smith, his bankruptcy, his tarring and feathering, his reappearance at Independence, Missouri, as the head of a flourishing community of about three thousand disciples, his pursuit, and

settlement in the Far West.

By this time Passe-partout and ten others were all that remained of the audience, who were informed that after much persecution Smith reappeared in Illinois and founded the beautiful city of Nauvoo, on the Mississippi, of which he became chief magistrate; how he became a candidate for the Presidency of the United States; how he was drawn into an ambushade at Carthage, imprisoned, and assassinated by a band of masked murderers.

Passe-partout was now absolutely the only listener, and the lecturer looking him steadily in the face recalled to his memory the actions of the pious Brigham Young, and showed him how the colony of Mormon had flourished.

"And this is why the jealousy of Congress is roused against us. Shall we yield to force? Never! Driven from State to State we shall yet find an independent soil on which to rest and erect our tents. And you," he continued to Passe-partout, "and you, my brother, will not you pitch your tent beneath the shadow of our flag?"

"No," replied Passe-partout firmly, as he walked away, leaving the Mormon elder by himself.

While the lecturer had been holding forth the train had been progressing rapidly, and had reached the north-west extremity of Salt

Lake. From that point the passengers could see this immense inland sea--the Dead Sea, as it is sometimes called, and into which an American Jordan flows. It is even now a splendid sheet of water, but time and the falling-in of the banks have in some degree reduced its ancient size.

Salt Lake is seventy miles long and thirty-five wide, and is more than three miles above the level of the sea. Though quite different from Lake Asphaltites, it contains salt in large quantities. The specific gravity of the water is one thousand one hundred and seventy; the same distilled is one thousand. No fish can live in it; and though brought down by the Jordan, Weber, and other rivers, soon perish; but it is not true that its density is so great that no men can swim in it.

The surrounding country is well cultivated, for the Mormons are great farmers, and various flowers, etc., would have been observed later. Just then the ground was sprinkled with snow.

The train got to Ogden at two o'clock, and did not start again until six; so Mr. Fogg and party had time to visit the City of the Saints by the branch-line to Ogden. They passed a couple of hours in that very American town, built, like all cities in the Union, with the "melancholy sadness of right angles," as Victor Hugo said. In America, where everything is supposed to be done on the square, though the people do not reach that level, cities, houses, and follies are all done "squarely."

At three o'clock our travellers were walking about the city. They remarked very few churches, but the public buildings were the house of the prophet, the court, the arsenal; houses of blue brick, with porches and verandahs surrounded by gardens, in which were palm-trees and acacias, etc. A stone wall ran round the city. In the principal street was the market-place and several hotels; amongst them Salt Lake House rose up.

There was no crowd in the streets, except near the temple. There was a superabundance of females, which was accounted for by the peculiar tenets of Mormons; but it is a mistake to suppose that all the Mormons are polygamists. They can do as they please; but it may be stated that the females are chiefly anxious to wed, as unmarried women are not admitted to the full privileges of membership. These poor creatures do not appear to be well off or happy. Some perhaps are rich and clothed in European style, but the majority were dressed à la Indienne.

Passe-partout beheld these women with some degree of awe, but above all he pitied the husbands of these wives. It seemed to him to be an awful thing to guide so many wives through all the mazes of life, and to conduct them to the Mormon paradise, with the prospect of meeting the glorious Joe Smith, who no doubt was there a shining light. He felt quite disgusted, and he fancied--perhaps he was mistaken--that some of the young ladies gazed at him alarmingly, and in a manner to compromise his liberty.

Fortunately his sojourn in the City of the Saints was not of long duration. At four o'clock the travellers took their places in the return train. The whistle sounded, but just as the train began to move a cry was heard, "Stop, stop!"

But the train did not stop. The gentleman who uttered these cries was a Mormon too late for the train. He ran till he was out of breath. Fortunately the railroad was quite open, there were no barriers nor gates to pass. He rushed along the line, jumped upon the footboard of the last carriage, and then threw himself panting into the nearest seat. Passe-partout, who had been watching him intently, learnt that he had run away after some domestic quarrel, and when the Mormon had recovered his breath Passe-partout plucked up courage to inquire how many wives the fugitive had left, as, judging from his anxiety to get away, he must have had twenty at least.

"One, sir," replied the Mormon, raising his arms to heaven. "One, sir; and, by thunder, that one was quite enough!"