

CHAPTER SIXTH.

A Servant--match him!--He can see the Satellites of Jupiter.--Dick and Joe hard at it.--Doubt and Faith.--The Weighing Ceremony.--Joe and Wellington.--He gets a Half-crown.

Dr. Ferguson had a servant who answered with alacrity to the name of Joe. He was an excellent fellow, who testified the most absolute confidence in his master, and the most unlimited devotion to his interests, even anticipating his wishes and orders, which were always intelligently executed. In fine, he was a Caleb without the growling, and a perfect pattern of constant good-humor. Had he been made on purpose for the place, it could not have been better done. Ferguson put himself entirely in his hands, so far as the ordinary details of existence were concerned, and he did well. Incomparable, whole-souled Joe! a servant who orders your dinner; who likes what you like; who packs your trunk, without forgetting your socks or your linen; who has charge of your keys and your secrets, and takes no advantage of all this!

But then, what a man the doctor was in the eyes of this worthy Joe! With what respect and what confidence the latter received all his decisions! When Ferguson had spoken, he would be a fool who should attempt to question the matter. Every thing he thought was exactly right;

every thing he said, the perfection of wisdom; every thing he ordered to be done, quite feasible; all that he undertook, practicable; all that he accomplished, admirable.

You might have cut Joe to pieces--not an agreeable operation, to be sure--and yet he would not have altered his opinion of his master.

So, when the doctor conceived the project of crossing Africa through the air, for Joe the thing was already done; obstacles no longer existed; from the moment when the doctor had made up his mind to start, he had arrived --along with his faithful attendant, too, for the noble fellow knew, without a word uttered about it, that he would be one of the party.

Moreover, he was just the man to render the greatest service by his intelligence and his wonderful agility. Had the occasion arisen to name a professor of gymnastics for the monkeys in the Zoological Garden (who are smart enough, by-the-way!), Joe would certainly have received the appointment. Leaping, climbing, almost flying--these were all sport to him.

If Ferguson was the head and Kennedy the arm, Joe was to be the right hand of the expedition. He had, already, accompanied his master on several journeys, and had a smattering of science appropriate to his condition

and style of mind, but he was especially remarkable for a sort of mild philosophy, a charming turn of optimism. In his sight every thing was easy, logical, natural, and, consequently, he could see no use in complaining or grumbling.

Among other gifts, he possessed a strength and range of vision that were perfectly surprising. He enjoyed, in common with Moestlin, Kepler's professor, the rare faculty of distinguishing the satellites of Jupiter with the naked eye, and of counting fourteen of the stars in the group of Pleiades, the remotest of them being only of the ninth magnitude. He presumed none the more for that; on the contrary, he made his bow to you, at a distance, and when occasion arose he bravely knew how to use his eyes.

With such profound faith as Joe felt in the doctor, it is not to be wondered at that incessant discussions sprang up between him and Kennedy, without any lack of respect to the latter, however.

One doubted, the other believed; one had a prudent foresight, the other blind confidence. The doctor, however, vibrated between doubt and confidence; that is to say, he troubled his head with neither one nor the other.

"Well, Mr. Kennedy," Joe would say.

"Well, my boy?"

"The moment's at hand. It seems that we are to sail for the moon."

"You mean the Mountains of the Moon, which are not quite so far off. But, never mind, one trip is just as dangerous as the other!"

"Dangerous! What! with a man like Dr. Ferguson?"

"I don't want to spoil your illusions, my good Joe; but this undertaking of his is nothing more nor less than the act of a madman. He won't go, though!"

"He won't go, eh? Then you haven't seen his balloon at Mitchell's factory in the Borough?"

"I'll take precious good care to keep away from it!"

"Well, you'll lose a fine sight, sir. What a splendid thing it is! What a pretty shape! What a nice car! How snug we'll feel in it!"

"Then you really think of going with your master?"

"I?" answered Joe, with an accent of profound conviction.

"Why, I'd go with him wherever he pleases!

Who ever heard of such a thing? Leave him to go off alone, after we've been all over the world together! Who would help him, when he was tired? Who would give him a hand in climbing over the rocks? Who would attend him when he was sick? No, Mr. Kennedy, Joe will always stick to the doctor!"

"You're a fine fellow, Joe!"

"But, then, you're coming with us!"

"Oh! certainly," said Kennedy; "that is to say, I will go with you up to the last moment, to prevent Samuel even then from being guilty of such an act of folly! I will follow him as far as Zanzibar, so as to stop him there, if possible."

"You'll stop nothing at all, Mr. Kennedy, with all respect to you, sir. My master is no hare-brained person; he takes a long time to think over what he means to do, and then, when he once gets started, the Evil One himself couldn't make him give it up."

"Well, we'll see about that."

"Don't flatter yourself, sir--but then, the main thing

is, to have you with us. For a hunter like you, sir, Africa's a great country. So, either way, you won't be sorry for the trip."

"No, that's a fact, I shan't be sorry for it, if I can get this crazy man to give up his scheme."

"By-the-way," said Joe, "you know that the weighing comes off to-day."

"The weighing--what weighing?"

"Why, my master, and you, and I, are all to be weighed to-day!"

"What! like horse-jockeys?"

"Yes, like jockeys. Only, never fear, you won't be expected to make yourself lean, if you're found to be heavy. You'll go as you are."

"Well, I can tell you, I am not going to let myself be weighed," said Kennedy, firmly.

"But, sir, it seems that the doctor's machine requires it."

"Well, his machine will have to do without it."

"Humph! and suppose that it couldn't go up, then?"

"Egad! that's all I want!"

"Come! come, Mr. Kennedy! My master will be sending for us directly."

"I shan't go."

"Oh! now, you won't vex the doctor in that way!"

"Aye! that I will."

"Well!" said Joe with a laugh, "you say that because he's not here; but when he says to your face, 'Dick!' (with all respect to you, sir,) 'Dick, I want to know exactly how much you weigh, ' you'll go, I warrant it."

"No, I will NOT go!"

At this moment the doctor entered his study, where this discussion had been taking place; and, as he came in, cast a glance at Kennedy, who did not feel altogether at his ease.

"Dick," said the doctor, "come with Joe; I want to

know how much you both weigh."

"But--"

"You may keep your hat on. Come!" And Kennedy went.

They repaired in company to the workshop of the Messrs. Mitchell, where one of those so-called "Roman" scales was in readiness. It was necessary, by the way, for the doctor to know the weight of his companions, so as to fix the equilibrium of his balloon; so he made Dick get up on the platform of the scales. The latter, without making any resistance, said, in an undertone:

"Oh! well, that doesn't bind me to any thing."

"One hundred and fifty-three pounds," said the doctor, noting it down on his tablets.

"Am I too heavy?"

"Why, no, Mr. Kennedy!" said Joe; "and then, you know, I am light to make up for it."

So saying, Joe, with enthusiasm, took his place on the scales, and very nearly upset them in his ready haste. He struck the attitude of Wellington where he is made to

ape Achilles, at Hyde-Park entrance, and was superb in it, without the shield.

"One hundred and twenty pounds," wrote the doctor.

"Ah! ha!" said Joe, with a smile of satisfaction
And why did he smile? He never could tell himself.

"It's my turn now," said Ferguson--and he put down one hundred and thirty-five pounds to his own account.

"All three of us," said he, "do not weigh much more than four hundred pounds."

"But, sir," said Joe, "if it was necessary for your expedition, I could make myself thinner by twenty pounds, by not eating so much."

"Useless, my boy!" replied the doctor. "You may eat as much as you like, and here's half-a-crown to buy you the ballast."