

Literature.org:  
[Authors](#)  
[Contact](#)

[The Illustrious Prince](#)

[E. Phillips Oppenheim](#)

This Book:

[Contents](#)  
[Previous Chapter](#)  
[Next Chapter](#)

## Chapter 2 - The End Of The Journey

---

Southward, with low funnel belching forth fire and smoke into the blackness of the night, the huge engine, with its solitary saloon carriage and guard's brake, thundered its way through the night towards the great metropolis. Across the desolate plain, stripped bare of all vegetation, and made hideous forever by the growth of a mighty industry, where the furnace fires reddened the sky, and only the unbroken line of ceaseless lights showed where town dwindled into village and suburbs led back again into town. An ugly, thickly populated neighborhood, whose area of twinkling lights seemed to reach almost to the murky skies; hideous, indeed by day, not altogether devoid now of a certain weird attractiveness by reason of low-hung stars. On, through many tunnels into the black country itself, where the furnace fires burned oftener, but the signs of habitation were fewer. Down the great iron way the huge locomotive rushed onward, leaping and bounding across the maze of metals, tearing past the dazzling signal lights, through crowded stations where its passing was like the roar of some earth-shaking monster. The station-master at Crewe unhooked his telephone receiver and rang up Liverpool.

"What about this special?" he demanded.

"Passenger brought off from the Lusitania in a private tug. Orders are to let her through all the way to London."

"I know all about that," the station-master grumbled. "I have three locals on my hands already,--been held up for half an hour. Old Glynn, the director's, in one of them too. Might be General Manager to hear him swear."

"Is she signalled yet?" Liverpool asked.

"Just gone through at sixty miles an hour," was the reply. "She made our old wooden sheds shake, I can tell you. Who's driving her?"

"Jim Poynton," Liverpool answered. "The guvnor took him off the mail specially."

"What's the fellow's name on board, anyhow?" Crewe asked. "Is it a millionaire from the other side, trying to make records, or a member of our bloated aristocracy?"

"The name's Fynes, or something like it," was the reply. "He didn't look much like a millionaire. Came into the office carrying a small handbag and asked for a special to London. Guvnor told him it would take two hours and cost a hundred and eighty pounds. Told him he'd better wait for the mail. He produced a note from some one or other, and you should have seen the old man bustle round. We started him off in twenty minutes."

The station-master at Crewe was interested. He knew very well that it is not the easiest thing in the world to bring influence to bear upon a great railway company.

"Seems as though he was some one out of the common, anyway," he remarked. "The guvnor didn't let on who the note was from, I suppose?"

"Not he," Liverpool answered. "The first thing he did when he came back into the office was to tear it into small pieces and throw them on the fire. Young Jenkins did ask him a question, and he shut him up pretty quick."

"Well, I suppose we shall read all about it in the papers tomorrow," Crewe remarked. "There isn't much that these reporters don't get hold of. He must be some one out of the common--some one with a pull, I mean,--or the captain of the Lusitania would never have let him off before the other passengers. When are the rest of them coming through?"

"Three specials leave here at nine o'clock tomorrow morning," was the reply. "Good night."

The station-master at Crewe hung up his receiver and went about his duties. Twenty miles southward by now, the special was still tearing its way into the darkness. Its solitary passenger had suddenly developed a fit of restlessness. He left his seat and walked once or twice up and down the saloon. Then he opened the rear door, crossed the little open space between, and looked into the guard's brake. The guard was sitting upon a stool, reading a newspaper. He was quite alone, and so absorbed that he did not notice the intruder. Mr. Hamilton Fynes quietly retreated, closing the door behind him. He made his way once more through the saloon, passed the attendant, who was fast asleep in his pantry, and was met by a locked door. He let down the window and looked out. He was within a few feet of the engine, which was obviously attached direct to the saloon. Mr. Hamilton Fynes resumed his seat, having disturbed nobody. He produced some papers from his breast pocket, and spread them out on the table before him. One, a sealed envelope, he immediately returned, slipping it down into a carefully prepared place between the lining and the material of his coat. Of the others he commenced to make a close and minute investigation. It was a curious fact, however, that notwithstanding his recent searching examination, he looked once more nervously around the saloon before he settled down to his task. For some reason or other, there was not the slightest doubt that for the present, at any rate, Mr. Hamilton Fynes was exceedingly anxious to keep his own company. As he drew nearer to his journey's end, indeed, his manner seemed to lose something of that composure of which, during the earlier part of the evening, he had certainly been possessed. Scarcely a minute passed that he did not lean sideways from his seat and look up and down the saloon. He sat like a man who is perpetually on the qui vive. A furtive light shone in his eyes, he was manifestly uncomfortable. Yet how could a man be safer from espionage than he!

Rugby telephoned to Liverpool, and received very much the same answer as Crewe. Euston followed suit.

"Who's this you're sending up tonight?" the station-master asked. "Special's at Willington now, come through without a stop. Is some one trying to make a record round the world?"

Liverpool was a little tired of answering questions, and more than a little tired of this mysterious client. The station-master at Euston, however, was a person to be treated with respect.

"His name is Mr. Hamilton Fynes, sir," was the reply. "That is all we know about him. They have been ringing us up all down the line, ever since the special left."

"Hamilton Fynes," Euston repeated. "Don't know the name. Where did he come from?"

"Off the Lusitania, sir."

"But we had a message three hours ago that the Lusitania was not landing her passengers until tomorrow morning," Euston protested.

"They let our man off in a tug, sir," was the reply.

"It went down the river to fetch him. The guvnor didn't want to give him a special at this time of night, but he just handed him a note, and we made things hum up here. He was on his way in half an hour. We have had to upset the whole of the night traffic to let him through without a stop."

Such a client was, at any rate, worth meeting. The station-master brushed his coat, put on his silk hat, and stepped out on to the platform.