

CHAPTER III.

In which a Conversation arises which is likely to cost Phileas Fogg dear.

Phileas Fogg left home at half-past eleven, and having placed his right foot before his left exactly five hundred and seventy-five times, and his left foot before his right five hundred and seventy-six times, he arrived at the Reform Club in Pall Mall, and immediately went up to the dining-room and took his place at his usual table, where his breakfast awaited him. The meal was composed of one "side-dish," a delicious little bit of boiled fish, a slice of underdone roast beef with mushrooms, a rhubarb and gooseberry tart, and some Cheshire cheese; the whole washed down with several cups of excellent tea, for which the Reform Club is celebrated.

At forty-seven minutes after twelve he rose from table and went into the drawing-room; there the servant handed him an uncut copy of The Times, which Phileas Fogg folded and cut with a dexterity which denoted a practised hand. The perusal of this journal occupied him till a quarter to four, and then The Standard sufficed till dinner-time. This repast was eaten under the same conditions as his breakfast, and at twenty minutes to six he returned to the saloon and

read The Morning Chronicle.

About half an hour later, several of Mr. Fogg's friends entered the room and collected round the fireplace. These gentlemen were his usual partners at whist, and, like him, were all inveterate players.

They comprised Andrew Stuart, an engineer; the bankers, John Sullivan and Samuel Fallentin; Thomas Flanagan, the brewer; and Gauthier Ralph, one of the directors of the Bank of England;--all rich, and men of consequence, even in that club which comprised so many men of mark.

"Well, Ralph," asked Thomas Flanagan, "what about this robbery?"

"The bank must lose the money," replied Stuart.

"On the contrary," replied Ralph, "I am in hopes that we shall be able to put our hand upon the thief. We have detectives in America and Europe, at all the principal ports, and it will be no easy matter for him to escape the clutches of the law."

"Then you have the robber's description, of course," said Andrew Stuart.

"In the first place he is not a thief at all," replied Ralph seriously.

"What do you mean? Is not a man a thief who takes away fifty-five thousand pounds in bank-notes?"

"No," replied Ralph.

"He is then a man of business, I suppose?" said Sullivan.

"The Morning Chronicle assures me he is a gentleman."

This last observation was uttered by Phileas Fogg, whose head rose up from the sea of papers surrounding him, and then Phileas got up and exchanged greetings with his acquaintances.

The subject of conversation was a robbery, which was in everyone's mouth, and had been committed three days previously--viz. on the 29th of September. A pile of bank-notes, amounting to the enormous sum of fifty-five thousand pounds, had been stolen from the counter at the Bank of England.

The astonishing part of the matter was that the robbery had been so easily accomplished, and as Ralph, who was one of the deputy-governors, explained, that when the fifty-five thousand pounds were stolen, the cashier was occupied in carefully registering the receipt of three shillings and sixpence, and of course could not have his eyes in every direction at once.

It may not be out of place here to remark, which in some measure may account for the robbery, that the Bank of England trusts greatly in the honesty of the public. There are no guards, or commissionaires, or gratings; gold, silver, and notes are all exposed freely, and, so to speak, at the mercy of the first-comer. No one's honesty is suspected. Take the following instance, related by one of the closest observers of English customs. This gentleman was one day in one of the parlours of the Bank, and had the curiosity to take up and closely examine a nugget of gold weighing seven or eight pounds, which was lying on the table. Having examined the ingot, he passed it to his neighbour, he to the next man; and so the gold went from hand to hand quite down to the dark entry, and was not returned for quite half an hour, and all the time the bank official had not raised his head.

But on the 29th of September things did not work so nicely; the pile of bank-notes was not returned; and when the hands of the magnificent clock in the drawing-office pointed to the hour of five, at which time the bank is closed, the sum of fifty-five thousand pounds was written off to "profit and loss."

When it was certain that a robbery had been committed, the most skilful detectives were sent down to Liverpool and Glasgow and other principal ports, also to Suez, Brindisi, New York, &c., with promises of a reward of two thousand pounds, and five per cent on the amount recovered. In the meantime, inspectors were appointed to observe scrupulously all travellers arriving at and departing from the several

seaports.

Now there was some reason to suppose, as *The Morning Chronicle* put it, that the thief did not belong to a gang, for during the 29th of September a well-dressed gentlemanly man had been observed in the bank, near where the robbery had been perpetrated. An exact description of this person was fortunately obtained, and supplied to all the detectives; and so some sanguine persons, of whom Ralph was one, believed the thief could not escape.

As may be imagined, nothing else was talked about just then. The probabilities of success and failure were warmly discussed in the newspapers, so it was not surprising that the members of the Reform Club should talk about it, particularly as one of the deputy-governors of the bank was present.

Ralph did not doubt that the search would be successful because of the amount of the reward, which would probably stimulate the zeal of the detectives. But Andrew Stuart was of a different opinion, and the discussion was continued between these gentlemen during their game of whist. Stuart was Flanagan's partner, and Fallentin was Fogg's. While they played they did not talk; but between the rubbers the subject cropped up again.

"Well," said Stuart, "I maintain that the chances are in favour of the thief, who must be a sharp one."

"But," replied Ralph, "there is no place a fellow can go to."

"Oh, come!"

"Well, where can he go to?"

"I can't tell," replied Stuart; "but the world is big enough, at any rate."

"It used to be," said Phileas Fogg, in an undertone. "Cut, if you please," he added, handing the cards to Flanagan.

Conversation was then suspended, but after the rubber Stuart took it up again, saying:

"What do you mean by 'used to be?' Has the world grown smaller, then?"

"Of course it has," replied Ralph. "I am of Mr. Fogg's opinion; the world has grown smaller, inasmuch as one can go round it ten times quicker than you could a hundred years ago. That is the reason why, in the present case, search will be more rapid, and render the escape of the thief easier."

"Your lead, Mr. Stuart," said Fogg.

But the incredulous Stuart was not convinced, and he again returned to the subject.

"I must say, Mr. Ralph," he continued, "that you have found an easy way that the world has grown smaller, because one now go round it in three months."

"In eighty days only," said Phileas Fogg.

"That is a fact, gentlemen," added John Sullivan. "You can make the tour of the world in eighty days, now that the section of the Great Indian Peninsular Railway is opened between Rothal and Allahabad, and here is the estimate made by The Morning Chronicle:

London to Suez, by Mont Cenis and Brindisi, Rail and Steamer . . . 7 days.

Suez to Bombay, by Steamer . . . 13 "

Bombay to Calcutta, by Rail . . . 3 "

Calcutta to Hong Kong, by Steamer . . . 13 "

Hong Kong to Yokohama, by Steamer . . . 6 "

Yokohama to San Francisco, by Steamer . . . 22 "

San Francisco to New York, by Rail . . . 7 "

New York to London, Steam and Rail . . . 9 "

Total . . . 80 days."

"Yes, eighty days!" exclaimed Stuart, who, being absorbed in his calculations, made a mis-deal; "but that estimate does not take inter consideration bad weather, head-winds, shipwreck, railway accidents, &c."

"They are all included," remarked Fogg, as he continued to play, for this time the conversation did not cease with the deal.

"Even if the Hindoos or Indians take up the rails? Suppose they stop the trains, pillage the baggage-waggon, and scalp the travellers?"

"All included," replied Fogg quietly. "Two trumps," he added, as he won the tricks.

Stuart, who was "pony," collected the cards, and said: "No doubt you

are right in theory, Mr. Fogg, but in practice--"

"In practice too, Mr. Stuart."

"I should like to see you do it."

"It only rests with you. Let us go together."

"Heaven forbid," cried Stuart; "but I will bet you a cool four thousand that such a journey, under such conditions, is impossible."

"On the contrary, it is quite possible," replied Mr. Fogg.

"Well, then, why don't you do it?"

"Go round the world in eighty days, do you mean?"

"Yes."

"I will."

"When?"

"At once; only I give you warning I shall do it at your expense."

"Oh, this is all nonsense," replied Stuart, who began to feel a little

vexed at Fogg's persistence; "let us continue the game."

"You had better deal, then; that was a mis-deal."

Andrew Stuart took up the cards, and suddenly put them down again.

"Look here, Mr. Fogg," he said; "if you like, I will bet you four thousand."

"My dear Stuart," said Fallentin, "don't be ridiculous; it is only a joke."

"When I say I will bet," said Stuart, "I mean it."

"All right," said Mr. Fogg; then, turning towards the others, he said: "I have twenty thousand pounds deposited at Baring's. I will willingly risk that sum."

"Twenty thousand pounds!" exclaimed Sullivan; "why, the slightest accident might cause you to lose the whole of it. Anything unforeseen--"

"The unforeseen does not exist," replied Fogg simply.

"But, Mr. Fogg, this estimate of eighty days is the very least time in which the journey can be accomplished."

"A minimum well employed is quite sufficient."

"But to succeed you must pass from railways to steamers, from steamers to railways, with mathematical accuracy."

"I will be mathematically accurate."

"Oh, this is a joke!"

"A true Englishman never jokes when he has a stake depending on the matter. I bet twenty thousand against any of you that I will make the tour of the world in eighty days or less; that is to say, in nineteen hundred and twenty hours, or a hundred and fifteen thousand two hundred minutes. Will you take me?"

"We do," replied the others, after consultation together.

"Very well, then," said Fogg, "the Dover mail starts at 8.45; I will go by it."

"This evening?" said Stuart.

"Yes, this evening," replied Fogg. Then, referring to a pocket almanack, he added: "This is Wednesday, the 2nd of October; I shall be due in London, in this room, on Saturday, the 21st of December, at a

quarter to nine in the evening, or, in default, the twenty thousand at Baring's, to my credit, will be yours, gentlemen. Here is my cheque for that sum."

A memorandum of the conditions of the bet was made and signed by all parties concerned. Phileas Fogg was as cool as ever. He had certainly not bet to win the money, and he had only bet twenty thousand pounds, half of his fortune, because he foresaw that he would probably have to spend the other half to enable him to carry out this difficult if not actually impossible feat. His opponents appeared quite agitated, not on account of the value of their stake, but because they had some misgivings and scruples about betting under such conditions.

Seven o'clock struck, and it was suggested that the game should stop, while Mr. Fogg made his preparations for the journey.

"I am always ready," replied this impassible gentleman, as he dealt the cards. "Diamonds are trumps," he added; "your lead, Mr. Stuart."