

CHAPTER XXV.

A Glimpse of San Francisco. A Political Meeting.

At seven o'clock in the morning, Mr. Fogg and his companions landed in America, or rather upon the floating pier at which the steamers load and unload. There they mingled with ships and steamers of all nationalities, and steam ferry-boats with two or three decks which performed the service on the Sacramento and its affluents.

Passe-partout was so delighted to reach America, that he thought it necessary to execute one of his most active leaps. But when he landed upon the quay, he found the planks worm-eaten, and he went through them. His cry of alarm frightened all the birds which perched upon these floating quays.

Mr. Fogg's first care was to ascertain when the next train left for New York. It started at six o'clock, so they had a whole day before them. Then hiring a carriage, they drove to the International Hotel. From his position on the box of the vehicle, Passe-partout observed with great curiosity the wide streets, the rows of lofty houses, the churches and other places of worship built in the Anglo-Saxon gothic style, immense docks, palatial warehouses, innumerable cabs, omnibuses, and tramway-cars; while Americans, Europeans, Chinese, and

Indians occupied the pathways. San Francisco surprised Passe-partout. It was no longer the habitation of bandits, incendiaries, and assassins, who gambled for gold-dust, a revolver in one hand and a knife in the other. This "good time" had passed. The city was now the hive of commerce. The tower of the city-hall overlooked the labyrinth of streets and avenues, which crossed each other at right angles, amongst which verdant squares extended; and the Chinese quarter looked like an importation from the Celestial Empire in a toy-puzzle. Sombreros, red shirts, and Indian head-dresses had given way to silk hats and black coats, and some of the principal streets were lined with splendid shops, offering the products of the whole world for sale.

When Passe-partout reached the International Hotel, he could scarcely recognise that he was not in England. The ground-floor of this immense building was occupied by a bar, at which free lunch of cold meat, oyster soup, biscuits and cheese, was always to be had; wine or beer had to be paid for. The restaurant was comfortable. Mr. Fogg and Mrs. Aouda sat down to a table, and were waited on by the blackest of negroes.

After breakfast, Phileas Fogg, accompanied by Mrs. Aouda, went to the English Consul to have his passport viséd. On the pavement he met his servant, who wanted to know whether he should not purchase some revolvers and rifles. Passe-partout had heard of Sioux and Pawnees, who are in the habit of stopping the trains. His master replied that

the precaution was needless, but permitted him to do what he pleased in the matter, and pursued his way to the Consulate.

He had not gone very far when, of course by the merest chance, he met Fix. The detective appeared very much astonished. Was it possible that he and Mr. Fogg had crossed in the same steamer, and never met? Fix professed himself honoured at meeting the gentleman to whom he owed so much. Business called him to Europe, and he would be proud to travel in such agreeable company.

Mr. Fogg replied that the honour would be his, and thereupon Fix, who had made up his mind not to lose sight of the other, requested permission to accompany Mr. Fogg in his walks about the city, which was granted.

So the three travellers soon found themselves in Montgomery Street, and on the outskirts of a great crowd. People were everywhere looking on and shouting, going about carrying large printed bills; flags, and streamers were waving, and everyone was calling out "Hurrah for Camerfield!" or "Hurrah for Maudiboy!"

It was a political meeting, at least Fix thought so; and said to Mr. Fogg that it might perhaps be better not to mingle with the crowd for fear of accidents.

Mr. Fogg agreed, and added "that blows, even though inflicted in a

political sense, were nevertheless blows."

Fix smiled, and then in order to be able to see without being hustled, the three travellers mounted a flight of steps at the upper end of the street. Opposite was a large platform towards which the crowd appeared to be moving.

Mr. Fogg could not form any opinion as to what the meeting was about. Perhaps it was the nomination of a governor of a State, or of a member of Congress, which was not unlikely. Just then the excitement of the crowd became greater, fists were raised as if to register a vote by a show of hands. The crowd swayed backwards and forwards, flags were displayed and immediately torn to pieces, hats were smashed, and the greater part of the crowd seemed to have grown suddenly shorter.

"It is evidently a political meeting," said Fix; "perhaps it is about the Alabama Claims, although they are settled by this time."

"Perhaps it is," replied Mr. Fogg.

"At any rate," continued Fix, "here are the candidates. The Honourable Mr. Camerfield and the Honourable Mr. Maudiboy have met."

Aouda, leaning upon Mr. Fogg's arm, was regarding the tumult with curiosity, and Fix was about to ask the reason of the disturbance when the uproar increased to a terrific extent. The crowd became more

excited, blows were exchanged, boots and shoes were sent whirling through the air, and the spectators thought they could hear the crack of revolvers mingling with the cries of men. The combatants approached the steps on which the party had taken refuge. One of the candidates had evidently been repulsed, but whether Camerfield or Maudiboy had got the best of it, mere spectators could not tell.

"I think we had better retire," said Fix; "if there is any discussion about England, and we were recognised, we might receive some injury."

"An Englishman--" began Mr. Fogg.

But he never finished the sentence, for a tremendous uproar arose on the terrace just behind them, and there were loud shouts for Maudiboy, a party of whose adherents were taking their opponents in the flank.

Our travellers were now between two fires; it was too late to escape; the torrent of men armed with life-preservers and sticks could not be withstood. Phileas Fogg and Fix did all they could to protect their fair companions with the weapons nature had provided, but unsuccessfully. A great ruffian, with a red beard, who appeared to be the chief of the band, was about to strike Mr. Fogg, and would probably have done him serious injury if Fix had not stepped in and received the blow in his stead, thereby getting his hat completely smashed.

"You low Yankee!" exclaimed Mr. Fogg contemptuously.

"You English beast!" replied the other.

"We shall meet again."

"Whenever you please."

"What is your name?"

"Phileas Fogg; and yours?"

"Colonel Stamp Proctor."

And the tide of humanity swept past, overturning Fix, who, however, speedily regained his feet, and though much dishevelled was not seriously hurt. His overcoat was torn in two, and his trousers were more like those worn by the Indians; but fortunately Aouda had escaped, and Fix only showed any traces of the encounter.

"Thank you," said Mr. Fogg to the detective when they were out of the crowd.

"Don't mention it," replied Fix; "let us go on."

"Where to?"

"To a tailor's."

In fact this course had become necessary, for the clothes of both men were torn as badly as if they had taken an active part in the contest, but in an hour they were newly clad and safely back at the hotel again.

There they found Passe-partout waiting and armed with a dozen six-barrelled central-fire revolvers. When he perceived Fix with Mr. Fogg he frowned, but when Mrs. Aouda had told him all that had passed his brow cleared. Fix evidently was no longer an enemy; he was an ally, and was adhering to his agreement.

After dinner they took a carriage and drove to the railway-station. As Mr. Fogg was getting into the cab he said to Fix, "Have you seen that Colonel Proctor since?"

"No," replied Fix.

"I will make a point of coming back to America to find him out," replied Fogg coolly. "It would never do for an Englishman to allow himself to be treated as he treated us."

The detective smiled, but made no reply. It was evident, however, that Mr. Fogg was of that race of Britons who, though they do not permit

duelling at home, fight in foreign countries when their honour is in any way attacked.

At a quarter to six the travellers reached the railway-station, and found the train ready. Mr. Fogg called a porter and asked him the reason of the excitement that afternoon.

"It was a meeting, sir," replied the porter.

"I thought there was some great commotion in the streets."

"It was merely an election meeting."

"For a commander-in-chief, no doubt?" suggested Mr. Fogg.

"Oh dear no," replied the man. "It was for a justice of the peace."

On this reply Phileas Fogg entered the train, which started almost immediately.