

CHAPTER XXVI.

Showing how Mr. Fogg and Party journeyed in the Pacific Express.

"From ocean to ocean," as the Americans say, and this sentence is the usual expression to intimate the crossing of the continent by the Pacific Railway. That line is really divided into two, viz. the Central Pacific, between San Francisco and Ogden; and the Union Pacific, between Ogden and Omaha. There are five trunk-lines from Omaha to New York.

New York and San Francisco are thus united by a continuous iron road more than three thousand seven hundred and eighty-six miles in length; between the Pacific and Omaha the railroad traverses a country still inhabited by Indians and wild beasts, and a vast extent of territory which the Mormons began to colonise in 1845, when they were driven out from Illinois.

Formerly, under the most favourable circumstances, the journey from New York to San Francisco occupied six months, now it is accomplished in seven days.

It was in 1862 that, notwithstanding the opposition of Confederate members of Congress, who desired a more southerly route, the railroad

track was planned between the forty-first and the forty-second parallels of latitude. President Lincoln himself fixed the termination of the new line at Omaha, in Nebraska. The work was immediately begun and continued with characteristic American energy, which is neither red-tapeish nor bureaucratic. The rapidity of the work did not affect its completeness; they laid a mile and a half of line across the prairie every day; an engine, carrying the rails to be used next day, ran on the line only just laid, and advanced as quickly as they were fixed.

The Pacific railroad has several branches in the States of Iowa, Kansas, Colorado, and Oregon. When it leaves Omaha the line runs along the left bank of the river Platte, as far as the mouth of the northern branch, follows the south branch, crosses the Laramie territory and the Wahsatch Mountains to Salt Lake City (the Mormon capital), plunges into the Tuilla Valley across the desert, Mounts Cedar and Humboldt, the Humboldt river and the Sierra Nevada, and then descends by Sacramento to the Pacific; the gradient all the way, even over the Rocky Mountains, not exceeding a hundred and twelve feet to the mile.

Such was the line along which Phileas Fogg hoped to be carried to New York in seven days in time to reach the Steamer to Liverpool on the 11th.

The car in which our travellers were seated was a sort of long omnibus, with four wheels at each end, without compartments; rows of

seats were placed at each side, a passage running between them from end to end of this carriage, and practically of the train, for every carriage was closely connected with the next. There were drawing-room cars, smoking-cars, and restaurants. The only thing wanting was the theatre-car, but no doubt that will some day be supplied. Vendors of books and papers, eatables, drinkables, and tobacco, continually passed through the train.

The train started from Oakland Station at six p.m. It was already dark, and snow was threatening; the pace did not exceed twenty miles an hour, including stoppages. There was not much conversation amongst the passengers, and most of them soon went to sleep. Passe-partout was next to the detective, but did not address him, for after what had happened there could be no sympathy between them. Fix had not altered, but Passe-partout was extremely reserved, and on the least suspicion would have strangled his former friend.

In about an hour snow began to fall, but not sufficiently thick to hinder the progress of the train. Nothing could be seen from the windows but an immense white sheet, against which the steam of the engine looked gray.

At eight o'clock the steward entered and said that bed-time had come. The backs of the seats were thrown down, bedsteads were pulled out, and berths improvised in a few moments. By this ingenious system each passenger was provided with a bed, and protected by curtains from

prying eyes. The sheets were clean, the pillows soft. There was nothing to do but to go to bed and sleep, which everybody did as if they were on board ship, while the train rushed on across the State of California.

The territory between San Francisco and Sacramento is not very hilly, and the railroad runs in a north-easterly direction along the American river which falls into the Bay of San Pablo. The hundred and twenty miles' distance between these cities was accomplished in six hours, and as it was midnight when they passed through Sacramento, the travellers could see nothing of the city.

Leaving Sacramento and passing Junction, Rochin, Auburn, and Colfax, the railroad passes through the Sierra Nevada range, and the train reached Cisco at seven o'clock. An hour afterwards the sleeping-car was retransformed to an ordinary carriage, and the passengers were enabled to look out upon the magnificent scenery of this mountainous country. The track followed all the caprices of the mountains, at times suspended over a precipice, boldly rounding angles, penetrating narrow gorges which had apparently no outlet. The engine, with fire gleaming from the grate and black smoke issuing from its funnel, the warning-bell ringing, the "cow-catcher" extending like a spur, mingled its whistlings and snortings with the roar of torrents and waterfalls, and twining its black smoke around the stems of the pine-trees. There are few tunnels or bridges on this portion of the route, for the line winds round the sides of the mountains and does not penetrate them.

About nine o'clock the train entered the State of Nevada by the Carson Valley, still proceeding in a north-easterly direction. At midday the train quitted Reno, where it had stopped twenty minutes for luncheon.

After lunch the passengers took their places in the car again, and admired the scenery. Sometimes great troops of buffaloes were massed like an immense moveable dam on the horizon. These immense troops frequently oppose an impassable barrier to the trains, for they cross the track in close array in thousands and thousands, occupying several hours in their passage. On these occasions the train is brought to a standstill and obliged to wait till the track is clear.

In fact, an incident of this kind happened on this occasion. About three o'clock in the afternoon a troop of ten or twelve thousand beasts blocked the line. The engineer slackened speed and tried to proceed slowly, but he could not pass the mass of buffaloes.

The passengers could see the buffaloes defiling quietly across the track, and now and then bellowing loudly. They were larger than European bulls, the head and shoulders being covered with a long mane, beneath which rises a hump; the legs and tails are short. No one would ever think of attempting to turn them aside. When once they have taken a certain direction, they cannot be forced to swerve from it. They compose a torrent of living flesh which no dam can withstand.

The passengers gazed on this curious spectacle, but the man most interested of all in the speedy progress of the train, Phileas Fogg, remained calmly in his place to wait till the buffaloes had passed by. Passe-partout was furious at the delay which the animals caused, and wished to discharge his armoury of revolvers at them.

"What a country this is!" he exclaimed. "Fancy a whole train being stopped by a herd of cattle, which do not hurry themselves in the least, as if they were not hindering us; I should like to know whether Mr. Fogg anticipated this delay. And here we have an engine-driver who is afraid to run his train against a few cows."

The engine-driver certainly did not attempt to do so, and he was quite right. No doubt he might have killed two or three of the first buffaloes he came in contact with; but the engine would soon have been thrown off the line, and progress would have been hopeless.

The best thing to do, then, was to wait patiently, and trust to make up time when the buffaloes had passed; but the procession of animals lasted for fully three hours, and it was night before the track was clear. The head of the column had ere this disappeared below the southern horizon.

It was eight o'clock when the train had traversed the defiles of the Humboldt range, and half-past nine when it entered Utah, the region of the great Salt Lake and the curious Mormon territory.