

## Chapter 15   An Attack by Indians

But before the signal could be given, wild cries and shots were heard. The shots certainly did not come from the carriage in which the two gentlemen had just been shut. Bang! Bang! Bang! The shots came from the outside – all along the train. Cries of terror were heard from one end of the train to the other.

Mr Proctor and Mr Fogg, with their revolvers in their hands, rushed out towards the front of the train, where shouts and shots were growing louder at every moment. They were under attack by Sioux Indians.

This was not the first time that these Indians had attacked a train, and more than once before they had been successful. In their usual way, a hundred of them had jumped on the steps of the moving train and had climbed up onto the roof of the carriages.

From these positions on and around the train, they fired their guns. The passengers answered with their revolvers. Some of the Indians had jumped on the engine and had injured the engine driver. One of them tried to stop the train but, not knowing how to do so, had opened the steam pipe instead of shutting it. The result was that the train was flying along at full speed.

Soon the Sioux forced their way into the carriages and were fighting with the passengers. The cries and shots continued without stopping.

But the passengers defended themselves bravely. Among these

was Aouda. With a revolver in her hand, she fired through the broken windows at any Indian that came in sight. Twenty or more of the Indians fell dead or wounded on the railway line, and the wheels crushed any who fell between the carriages. Several of the passengers were also badly wounded, and were lying on the seats.

The end must come before long. Fighting had been going on for ten minutes, and the Sioux would win unless the train were able to stop. Fort Kearney Station was only two miles away, and there were soldiers there; but if the train passed this point, the Sioux would certainly become masters of the train.

The guard was fighting at Mr Fogg's side when a shot struck him and he fell. He cried out: 'We are all lost if the train does not stop in five minutes.'

'The train will stop,' said Phileas Fogg, preparing to rush out of the carriage.

'Stay where you are, sir,' cried Passepartout. 'This is my job.'

Phileas Fogg had no time to stop the brave man who, opening one of the outer doors without being seen by the Indians, managed to climb down under one of the carriages.

While the fight went on, and with shots flying in the air over his head, Passepartout made his way forward under the carriages, holding on here and there, and crossing from one place to another until he got to the front part of the train. There, hanging on by one hand, he managed to undo the heavy iron hooks that joined the carriages to the engine. The train, now separated from the engine, began to run more and more slowly, while the engine flew forwards with still greater speed.

The train carried on for a few minutes but soon came to a stop less than 300 feet from the station. Hearing the shots, soldiers hurried up to the train. The Indians did not wait for them; they all ran off.

When the passengers were counted, it was found that three did not answer to their names, and among them was the Frenchman

whose bravery had saved the train. What had happened to them? Had they been killed in the fight? Were they prisoners of the Indians? Nobody knew. One of the wounded passengers was Mr Proctor, who had fought bravely. He was taken with the others to the station, where they received every care.

Aouda was safe. Phileas Fogg was safe, too, although he had been fighting all the time. Fix was slightly wounded in the arm. But Passepartout was not to be found; and tears ran down the face of the young lady who owed her life to him now for the second time.

Mr Fogg stood there without speaking. He had to make a serious decision. If his servant had been taken prisoner, it was his duty to try to get him back.

‘I shall find him, dead or alive,’ he said simply to Aouda.

‘Oh, Mr Fogg,’ cried Aouda, taking his hands in hers and covering them with tears.

‘I shall find him alive,’ added Mr Fogg, ‘if we waste no time.’

This decision meant that Phileas Fogg would lose everything. If he were only one day late he would fail to catch the boat at New York. His bet was lost. But it was his duty, and he had made up his mind.

A hundred soldiers and their captain were at the station in order to defend it against any attack by Indians.

‘Sir,’ said Mr Fogg to the captain, ‘three people have disappeared.’

‘Dead?’ asked the captain.

‘Dead or prisoners,’ answered Phileas Fogg. ‘That is what we must find out. Do you intend to follow the Indians?’

‘That is a serious matter, sir,’ answered the captain. ‘These Indians may continue to run for two or three hundred miles. I cannot leave this station while it is under my protection.’

‘Sir,’ said Phileas Fogg, ‘it is a question of the lives of three men.’



‘Quite true, but can I put the lives of fifty men in danger to save three?’

‘I don’t know whether you can, but that is what you ought to do.’

‘Sir,’ answered the captain. ‘I will not allow anybody here to teach me my duty.’

‘Very well, then,’ said Phileas Fogg coldly. ‘I will go alone.’

‘You!’ cried Fix, who had come up to the two men. ‘You intend to go after these Indians alone?’

‘Do you think that I am going to leave that brave man who saved the lives of everybody here to die? I shall go.’

‘Well, sir,’ cried the captain. ‘You will not go alone. No, you have a brave heart. Now! Who offers to join this gentleman? Thirty men are wanted!’ he said, turning to his soldiers.

The whole company stepped forward. The captain only had to choose among them. Thirty were named, and an officer was put at their head.

‘Thank you, Captain!’ said Mr Fogg.

‘You will allow me to come with you?’ asked Fix.

‘You may do as you like,’ Fogg answered. ‘But if you wish to be of real service to me, you will stay by the side of this lady and take care of her.’

The detective’s face turned white. What! Separate himself from the man he was following so patiently? Let him go off alone into the wild country? Fix looked at Mr Fogg for a moment and then he looked away from Fogg’s calm, serious face.

‘I will stay,’ he said.

A few minutes later Mr Fogg gave the young woman his bag, telling her to take great care of it; he shook hands with her, and went off with the officer and his little company of men.

Before leaving, he said to the soldiers, ‘There’s a thousand pounds for you if we save the prisoners.’

It was then a few minutes after midday.

Aouda had gone into the waiting room of the station, and there, alone, she thought of Phileas Fogg, this kind and brave man. He had given up his fortune and was now putting his life in danger. In her eyes he was a great and honourable man.

The detective Fix did not think that way at all, and could not hide his feelings. He walked up and down outside the station, feeling foolish for having let Fogg leave.

'I was a fool!' he thought. 'Fogg knows who I am! He has gone, and will not come back. Where shall I find him again? How could I have thought of letting him go; I, who have in my pocket the warrant for his arrest?'

Those were the thoughts of Fix while the hours slowly passed. He did not know what to do. Sometimes he felt like telling Aouda everything. Sometimes he felt like going off across the snow to catch this Mr Fogg. It would not be impossible to find him again. He could still follow the footprints of the soldiers, but before long the falling snow would cover them again.

Then Fix felt like giving everything up for lost and going straight back to England. If he decided to do that, there was nothing to prevent him, because at two o'clock, while the snow was falling heavily, the noise of an engine was heard coming from the east. But no train was expected from the east yet; the help for which they had asked could not come so quickly, and the train from Omaha to San Francisco would not arrive before the next day.

It was the engine of their train. It had rushed on for many miles, and then the fire had died for want of coal. There was no more steam, and an hour later the engine, running more and more slowly, had come to a stop twenty miles on the other side of Kearney Station.

The engine driver had not been killed; and after some time had passed, he had come to his senses. When he found that he was alone and that the engine was no longer pulling the train, he

guessed what had happened. What he did not know was how the engine had become separated from the train.

He could go on to Omaha; that was the wisest thing to do. He could go back towards the train; that was dangerous, since the Indians might still be on the train. The driver soon made up his mind. He had to go back. Coal and wood were put on the fire; the water soon became hot again, and before long there was enough steam to make the engine run back to Kearney Station.

The passengers were pleased to see the engine once more at the head of the train. They could now continue their journey. Aouda, though, went up to the guard.

'You are leaving?' she asked.

'Immediately.'

'But the prisoners, our unfortunate travelling companions?'

'I am sorry we cannot wait for them. We are already three hours late.'

'And when does the next train come from San Francisco?'

'Tomorrow evening.'

'Tomorrow evening? But that will be too late. You must wait.'

'That is impossible,' answered the guard. 'If you want to come with us, you must get on the train now.'

'I shall not come,' answered the lady.

Fix had heard this talk. A few moments before, when there was no way of leaving, he had wanted to get away. Now that the train was there, and he had only to take his place in the carriage, he no longer wanted to leave. The struggle in his mind began all over again. He felt a terrible sense of failure.

The passengers had taken their places on the train. Among them was the wounded Mr Proctor, whose condition was serious. The noise of steam was heard. The bell rang, the train moved out of the station and was soon lost to view in the snow.

The detective had stayed behind.

Some hours passed. The weather was bad and it was very cold.



Fix was sitting on a seat in the station; he might have been asleep. Aouda, in spite of the snowstorm, kept going out of the room. She walked to the end of the platform, looked out and listened. But she saw and heard nothing.

Evening came. The little company of soldiers did not come back. Where were they? Had they been able to catch up with the Indians? Had there been a fight? The captain was very anxious, but tried not to show that he was worried.

Night came. The snow was no longer falling so heavily, but it got colder and colder. No sound could be heard.

All night Aouda, with a heavy heart and fearing the worst, walked about outside. In her imagination she could see a thousand dangers. Fix did not move, but he, too, was awake. At one point a man came up to him and said something. But Fix simply answered, 'No.'

In this way the night passed. The sun rose in a grey sky. Phileas Fogg and the soldiers had gone towards the south, but nothing was to be seen to the south except the snow.

The captain did not know what to do. Should he send a second company to help the first? At last he called one of his officers, and gave him orders to send out a few men towards the south – and at that moment shots were heard. Was it a signal? The soldiers rushed out and saw, half a mile away, the others coming back.

Mr Fogg was at the head of the company, and by his side were Passepartout and the two other travellers, saved from the Sioux.

There had been a battle ten miles to the south of Kearney. Shortly before the soldiers had reached them, Passepartout and his two companions had started fighting against those who had taken them prisoners. The Frenchman had already knocked three of them down when his master and the soldiers rushed up to help him.

At the station they were all welcomed with shouts of joy, and Phileas Fogg gave the soldiers the reward that he had promised

them. Passepartout said more than once: 'I have certainly cost my master a lot of money!'

Fix looked at Mr Fogg without saying a word. It would be difficult to say what thoughts were passing through his mind. Aouda went up to Phileas Fogg, took his hands and pressed them between her own, unable to speak.

As soon as he reached the station, Passepartout looked round for the train. He was expecting to see it there ready to leave for Omaha, and hoped that they would be able to make up for the time that they had lost.

'Where's the train?' he cried.

'Gone,' answered Fix.

'And the next train?' asked Phileas Fogg.

'Will not come before this evening.'

'Ah!' was all that the gentleman answered.