

## Chapter 20 A Mistake in the Day

On the Saturday evening the five gentlemen had met at the Reform Club at eight o'clock.

When the clock showed twenty-five minutes past eight, Andrew Stuart got up and said: 'Gentlemen, in twenty minutes' time Mr Fogg must be here or he will lose his bet.'

'At what time did the last train from Liverpool reach London?' asked Thomas Flanagan.

'At twenty-three minutes past seven. The next train gets to London at ten minutes past midnight.'

'Well, gentlemen,' said Andrew Stuart, 'if Phileas Fogg had come by the 7.23 he would already be here. We may safely say that we have won the bet.'

‘We must wait,’ said one of the others. ‘You know that Mr Fogg is a man of very exact habits. He never gets anywhere too late or too early. If he came into this room at the last moment I would not be surprised.’

‘As for me,’ said Andrew Stuart, ‘even if I saw him I wouldn’t believe it. He has certainly lost. The *China*, the only steamer by which he could have come from America in time, reached Liverpool yesterday. Here is the list of people who were on it, and the name of Phileas Fogg is not among them. I imagine that he has hardly reached America. He will be at least twenty days late.’

‘That is certain,’ said another. ‘Tomorrow we shall only have to go to the bank and collect the money.’

The clock showed twenty minutes to nine.

‘Five minutes more,’ said Andrew Stuart.

The five friends looked at each other. Their hearts were perhaps beating a little faster than usual; even among those who were used to betting, this bet was for a very large sum of money.

‘I would not give up my four thousand pounds,’ said Andrew Stuart, ‘if I were offered three thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine pounds for it!’

At that moment the clock showed sixteen minutes to nine. Only one minute more and the bet would be won. They began to count the seconds.

At the fortieth second, nothing happened. At the fiftieth second, nothing happened.

At the fifty-fifth second, a noise like thunder was heard outside the room – a noise of shouting.

At the fifty-seventh second, the door of the room opened and, before the hand of the clock reached the sixtieth second, Phileas Fogg appeared followed by a large crowd of people who had forced their way into the building. He said, in his usual calm voice: ‘Here I am, gentlemen.’

Yes! Phileas Fogg himself.

It will be remembered that at five minutes past eight – just over twenty-three hours after the travellers had arrived in London – Passepartout had been sent by his master to the Reverend Samuel Wilson to make arrangements for a certain marriage to take place the next day. He had left the house full of joy and happiness. The Reverend Samuel Wilson was not at home, so of course Passepartout waited. He waited at least twenty minutes.

It was twenty-five minutes to nine when he left the minister's house. But in what a state! His hair in disorder and without a hat, running and running as nobody had ever run before, knocking people over as he ran. In three minutes he was back at the house in Savile Row, and he fell breathlessly into Mr Fogg's room. He could not speak.

'What's the matter?' asked Mr Fogg.

'Master . . . marriage . . . impossible.'

'Impossible?'

'Impossible . . . for tomorrow.'

'Why?'

'Because tomorrow . . . is Sunday!'

'Monday,' answered Mr Fogg.

'No . . . today . . . Saturday.'

'Saturday? Impossible!'

'Yes, yes, yes!' cried Passepartout. 'You have made a mistake of one day. We reached London twenty-four hours early. But we have only ten minutes!'

Passepartout took his master and pulled him out of the room. Phileas Fogg, carried off without having time to think, left the house, jumped into a carriage, promised a hundred pounds to the driver, and having run over two dogs and knocked against five other carriages, reached the Reform Club.

The clock pointed to a quarter to nine when he came into the room where the members were waiting.



Phileas Fogg had completed his journey round the world in eighty days. Phileas Fogg had won the bet of twenty thousand pounds.

But how could such a careful man have made such a mistake? How was it that he had believed it to be Saturday evening, 21st December, when it was only Friday, 20th December, seventy-nine days since he had left?

The reason for the mistake is very simple.

Phileas Fogg had made his journey by going east. As he travelled towards the sun, the days got shorter by four minutes every time he crossed one of the 360 degrees by which the earth is measured. In other words, while he saw the sun pass over him eighty times, the members of the Reform Club saw it pass only seventy-nine times.

That is why on that day, which was Saturday and not Sunday, the members were waiting for him. If he had travelled towards the west, he would have lost a day on the way and would have reached London one day late.

Phileas Fogg had won the twenty thousand pounds. But as he had spent about nineteen thousand on the way, he had made little profit. And of the thousand pounds that was left, he gave half to Passepartout and the other half to the unfortunate Fix, whom he now forgave.

That same evening Mr Fogg, as calmly and coldly as usual, said to Aouda: 'Do you still want to marry me?'

'Mr Fogg,' she answered, 'it is I who ought to ask you that question. You were poor; now you are rich.'

'Excuse me,' he said, 'but my fortune belongs to you. If you had not suggested this marriage, my servant would not have gone to the Reverend Samuel Wilson; I would not have known about the mistake in the day, and ...'

'Dear Mr Fogg,' said the lady.

'Dear Aouda,' answered Phileas Fogg.



The marriage took place forty-eight hours later and Passepartout, in a state of joy, had the place of honour by the lady's side at the church.

And what had Phileas Fogg gained by this journey?

'Nothing,' you may say.

Very well, nothing! Except a beautiful and loving wife who – strange as it may seem – made him the happiest of men.

And was that not worth a journey round the world?