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Written by

Jules Verne

Published by

Oxford University Press

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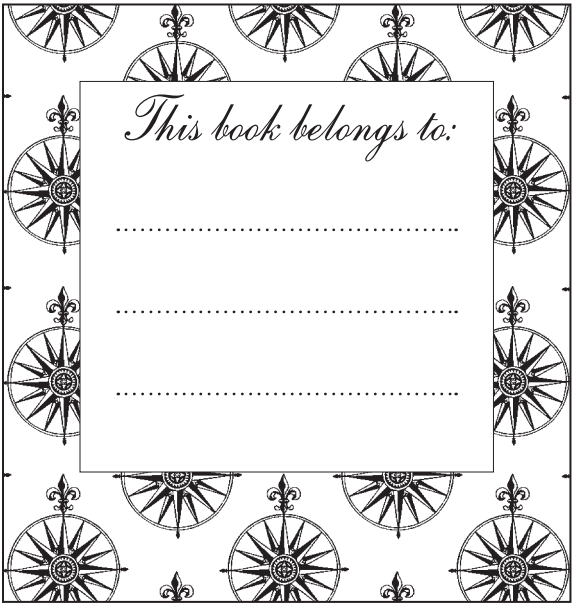
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Around *the* World *in* Eighty Days

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Great Clarendon Street, Oxford OX2 6DP

Oxford University Press is a department of the University of Oxford.
It furthers the University's objective of excellence in research, scholarship,
and education by publishing worldwide in

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First published 1873
First published in Oxford Children's Classics 2012

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

Data available

ISBN: 978-0-19-275820-0

1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

Printed in China

Paper used in the production of this book is a natural,
recyclable product made from wood grown in sustainable forests.
The manufacturing process conforms to the environmental
regulations of the country of origin.

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CHAPTER ONE

In Which Phileas Fogg and Passepartout Accept Each Other, the One as Master and the Other as Servant

In the year 1872, No. 7 Savile Row, Burlington Gardens—the house where Sheridan died in 1814—was occupied by Phileas Fogg, Esq. This gentleman was one of the most remarkable, and indeed most remarked upon, members of the Reform Club, although he seemed to go out of his way to do nothing that might attract any attention.

One of the greatest public speakers to honour his country had thus been replaced by the aforesaid Phileas Fogg. The latter was an enigmatic figure about whom nothing was known, except that he was a thorough gentleman and one of the most handsome figures in the whole of high society.

He was said to look like Byron: his head at least, for his feet were beyond reproach—but a mustachioed and bewhiskered Byron, an impassive Byron, one who might have lived for a thousand years without ever growing old.

Although clearly British, Mr Fogg might not have been a Londoner. He had never been spotted in the Stock Exchange,

the Bank, or the City. The basins and docks of London had never berthed a ship for an owner called Phileas Fogg. This gentleman was not on any board of directors. His name had never rung out in a barristers' chambers, whether at the Temple, Lincoln's Inn, or Gray's Inn. He had never pleaded in the Courts of Chancery, Queen's Bench, or Exchequer, nor in an Ecclesiastical Court. He was not engaged in industry, business, commerce, or agriculture. He did not belong to the Royal Institution of Great Britain, the London Institution, the Artizan Society, the Russell Institution, the Western Literary Institution, the Law Society, nor even that Society for the Combined Arts and Sciences which enjoys the direct patronage of Her Gracious Majesty. In sum, he was not a member of any of the associations that breed so prolifically in the capital of the United Kingdom, from the Harmonic Union to the Entomological Society, founded chiefly with the aim of exterminating harmful insects.

Phileas Fogg belonged to the Reform Club—and that was all.

Should anyone express surprise that such a mysterious gentleman be numbered amongst the members of that distinguished society, it can be pointed out here that he was accepted on the recommendation of Messrs Baring Brothers, with whom he had an unlimited overdraft facility. Hence a certain 'profile', for his cheques were always paid on sight and his account remained invariably in the black.

Was this Phileas Fogg well off? Without any doubt. But how he had made his fortune, even the best informed could not say. And Mr Fogg was the last person one would have approached to find out. In any case, while in no way extravagant, he was not tight-fisted either. Whenever support was needed for

some noble, useful, or generous cause, he would provide it, noiselessly and even anonymously.

In short, the least communicative of men. He spoke as little as possible, and so seemed all the more difficult to fathom. His life was transparent, but what he did was always so mathematically the same, that one's imagination, disturbed, tried to look beyond.

Had he travelled? Probably, because no one possessed the map of the world as he did. Nowhere was so remote that he didn't seem to have some inside knowledge of it. Sometimes he would rectify, briefly and clearly, the thousand ideas about temporarily or permanently lost travellers that spread through the clubs. He would demonstrate the most likely outcome; and he had seemed gifted with second sight, so often had the facts in the end borne out what he had said. He was a man who must have been everywhere—in his imagination at the very least.

What seemed certain, all the same, was that Mr Fogg had not been away from London for some years. Those who had the honour of knowing him a little better than most attested that, apart from the shortest route he took each day from his house to the Club, nobody could claim ever to have seen him anywhere else. His only pastimes were reading the newspapers and playing whist. It fitted his nature entirely that he often won at this silent game. His winnings, however, never stayed in his wallet, but formed instead a major part of his contributions to charity. In any case it should be pointed out that Mr Fogg clearly played for playing's sake, not so as to win. Whist was for him a challenge, a struggle against a difficulty, but one that required no action, no travel, and no fatigue—and so perfectly suited his character.

As far as anyone knew, Phileas Fogg had neither wife nor children—which can happen to the most respectable—nor friends nor relatives—admittedly much rarer. Phileas Fogg lived alone in his house on Savile Row, and no one visited. Nobody ever knew what went on inside. A single servant attended to all his needs. He took lunch and dinner at the Club at chronometrically set times, always at the same place in the same room, never inviting his colleagues, never sharing his table with anyone else.

He never used those comfortable rooms that the Reform Club likes to place at the disposal of its members, but always went home and retired straight to bed on the stroke of midnight. He spent ten out of every twenty-four hours at home, whether sleeping or dressing and preparing to going out. If he went for a walk, it was invariably at a regular pace around the entrance-hall with its carefully laid-out parquet, or else along the circular gallery which is lit by its round cupola with blue glass and supported by twenty Ionic columns of red porphyry. If he lunched or dined, the succulent dishes on his table were supplied by the kitchens, pantry, larder, fish store, or dairy of the Club. It was the servants of the self-same Club, serious figures in dress-coats and shoes soled with thick felt, who served him using special china on an admirable Saxony table-cloth. It was the Club crystal, from long-lost moulds, that accommodated his sherry, port, or claret, spiced with maidenhair, cinnamon sticks, and ground cassia bark. And it was Club ice, brought over at huge expense from the Great Lakes, that maintained his wine at a satisfactorily cool temperature.

If to live in such conditions is to be an eccentric, then it has to be admitted that eccentricity has its good points!

Although not palatial, the house on Savile Row was remarkable for its level of comfort. Because of the regular habits of its occupant, the service was far from onerous. Nevertheless, Phileas Fogg demanded an extraordinary punctuality and reliability from his one servant. That very day, 2 October, he had given notice to James Forster: the fellow had made the mistake of bringing in his shaving-water at a temperature of 84°F, rather than the statutory 86. Mr Fogg was even now expecting his successor, due to report between eleven and half past.

Phileas Fogg sat squarely in his armchair, both feet together like a soldier on parade, hands firmly on knees, body erect, and head held high. He was watching the hand moving on the clock: a complicated apparatus that showed the hours, minutes, seconds, days, dates, and years. In keeping with his daily habit, Mr Fogg was due to go to the Reform Club on the stroke of 11.30.

A knock came on the door of the morning-room where Phileas Fogg was waiting. James Forster, the sacked servant, appeared.

'The new valet,' he announced.

A man of about thirty came in and bowed.

'You are French and called John?'

'Jean, if sir pleases—Jean Passepartout, a nickname that has stuck with me and was first applied due to my natural ability to get out of scrapes. I consider myself an honest fellow, sir, but if truth be told I have had several occupations. I used to be a wandering singer and a circus rider; I was a trapeze artist like Léotard and a tightrope walker like Blondin; then I became a gymnastics instructor in order to make greater use of my skills;

and lastly I was a sergeant in the Paris Fire Brigade. I have some remarkable fires in my c.v. But I left France five years ago: wishing to try family life, I became a personal manservant in England. Then, finding myself without a job, I heard that Mr Phileas Fogg was the most particular and stay-at-home man in the whole of the United Kingdom. I presented myself at sir's house in the hope of being able to live in peace and quiet and forget the very name of Passepartout . . . '

'Passepartout suits me very well. You have been recommended to me—I have excellent references on your account.

Are you aware of my terms?'

'Yes, sir.'

'Very well, then. What time do you make it?'

'Eleven twenty-two,' replied Passepartout, pulling an enormous silver watch from the depths of his waistcoat pocket.

'Your watch is slow.'

'Pardon me, sir, but that's impossible.'

'You're four minutes slow. It is of no consequence. What matters is to note the difference. So, starting from this moment, 11.29 a.m. on Wednesday, 2 October 1872, you are in my employ.'

Whereupon Phileas Fogg got up, took his hat in his left hand, placed it on his head with the action of an automaton, and vanished without uttering another word.

Passepartout heard the front door shut once: that was his new master going out; then a second time: his predecessor James Forster leaving in turn.

He stood alone in the house on Savile Row.