

## Chapter 1 Mr Phileas Fogg and Passepartout

In the year 1872 Mr Phileas Fogg lived at Number 7 Savile Row, London. Mr Fogg was a member of the Reform Club,\* but as he never spoke about himself, nobody knew much else about him. He was certainly English, a fine-looking English gentleman. He was never seen at the bank or any other financial institution in the city. He was unknown to the world of shipowners and shipping. He was not a businessman. He was not a farmer. He was not a scientist. He was not a writer. He seemed to have no business or trade.

Mr Fogg was a member of the Reform Club, and that was all.

As he seemed to be without friends, it may be wondered how he had come to be a member of the Reform Club. It was quite simple. The head of the bank at which he kept his accounts had put his name on the list of those who wished to become members, and he was accepted.

Was Phileas Fogg rich? Yes, certainly. But how he had made his fortune nobody knew, and Mr Fogg was not the sort of man to tell anybody. He did not spend much money, although he did not seem to be one of those people who were particularly interested in saving it.

He talked very little; in fact nobody could have talked less. There was no secret about his habits and his daily life, but as he always did exactly the same things in exactly the same way every day, people wondered more and more about him and his past life.

Had he travelled? Probably, since nobody seemed as familiar with the world as he did. He appeared to have the most exact

\* Reform Club: one of a number of London clubs in which gentlemen who were voted in as members could spend time for a yearly charge.

knowledge of every country and town in the world. Sometimes when the members of the club talked about travellers who had disappeared or become lost in some distant or unknown place, Mr Fogg, in a few clear words, would explain what had probably happened to them. His explanations often proved to be quite correct. He was a man who must have travelled everywhere – at least in his mind and imagination.

What was quite certain was that for many years Phileas Fogg had not left London. Those who knew him a little better than others said that nobody had ever seen him anywhere except in London. Even in London the only place where he was seen out of doors was between his house and club. His only activities were reading the newspapers and playing cards. It was clear that Mr Fogg played not for money, but for the love of the game. For him a game of cards was a struggle, but a pleasant one.

Phileas Fogg, it appeared, had neither a wife nor children – which may happen to the most honest people. Nobody had ever heard of his father or mother, or whether he had brothers and sisters. He lived alone in his house in Savile Row, which nobody ever visited. Nothing was known about the inside of his house. One servant was enough to do the work. He had his meals at the club at exactly the same times every day, when he sat in the same room, at the same table, always alone. He only went home to sleep, always exactly at midnight.

His home in Savile Row was a simple one, but very comfortable. Since his habits were so regular, and he spent all day at his club, his servant's duties were light. But Phileas Fogg expected from his servant a very high degree of exactness and regularity.



It was October 2nd. Mr Fogg had just dismissed his servant, John Foster. John Foster had been guilty of a very serious irregularity:

the hot water that he had brought to his master's room was only eighty-four degrees instead of eighty-six – an inexcusable mistake. The servant had to go. Mr Fogg was now waiting for his new servant, who was expected between eleven o'clock and half past eleven.

Phileas Fogg was sitting in his armchair, his two feet together, his hands on his knees, his body straight and his head high. He was looking at the clock – a beautiful clock showing the seconds, the minutes, the hours, the days and the years. When half past eleven struck, Mr Fogg, according to his usual habit, would leave the house and go to his club.

At that moment there was a knock at the door. John Foster appeared.

'The new servant,' he announced.

A young man of about thirty years of age came in and greeted Fogg respectfully.

'You are a Frenchman and your name is John?' asked Mr Fogg.

'*Jean*, if you don't mind,' answered the young man. 'Jean Passepartout.\* My name suits me very well because I can do all sorts of things. I believe I am a good and honest person but I have had many trades in my time. I have sung in the streets, I have been an acrobat and a dancer on a tightrope, and I have taught these subjects. In Paris I was an officer in the fire service, so I can tell you stories of some of the most famous fires in that city. I left France five years ago. Wishing to know something of life in English homes, I came to England as a servant. Finding myself now without a situation, I have come to you. I have heard that you, sir, lead the quietest and most regular life of any man in England. This will suit me very well for I, too, wish to lead a quiet life in the future, and even to forget my name of Passepartout.'

\* Passepartout: a French word meaning 'go anywhere' or 'fit anything'. It is used to describe a key that will fit any lock.