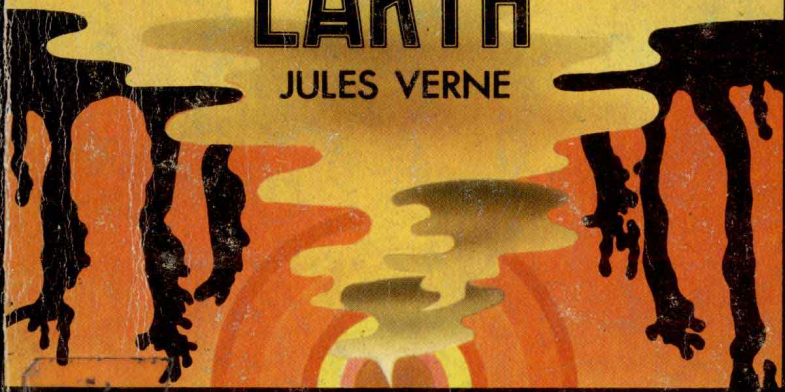


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# A JOURNEY TO THE CENTRE OF THE EARTH

JULES VERNE



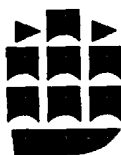
# A JOURNEY TO THE CENTRE OF THE EARTH

*by*

JULES VERNE

ADAPTED AND REWRITTEN BY  
H. E. PALMER, D. LITT.

*Illustrated by Harry Green*



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<sup>1</sup> The 2,000 root words of the *General Service List of English Words* of the *Interim Report on Vocabulary Selection*.

## INTRODUCTION

SCIENTIFIC possibilities, travel and exciting adventures make a mixture which is popular with many readers. *Jules Verne* was one of the first to find this mixture. There have been many writers of science-adventure stories since, but Jules Verne's books are still read with pleasure all over the world. They have been translated from the French in which he wrote them nearly a hundred years ago into many languages and have been the subject of many plays and films.

Jules Verne was born at Nantes, in France, in 1828. He studied law, but some travel stories which he wrote for a Paris newspaper caught public interest. Then he began to write the stories which made him famous.

Some readers may have seen the film of his *Round the World in Eighty Days*, written in 1873 before the motor-car was invented. In *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* (1870) his characters sailed under the North Pole in the imaginary ship *Nautilus*. This voyage was actually made for the first time in 1958 in a real *Nautilus*.

*A Journey to the Centre of the Earth* was written in 1864. Is there really a world below the surface of the Earth? Can men go there and come back alive?

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# I

## THE DISCOVERY

ON Sunday, the 24th of May, 1863, my uncle, Professor Lidenbrock, came hurrying back to his little house in the old part of Hamburg, No. 10 Königstrasse.

Martha, our cook, thought at once that she must be very late with the dinner. I thought: "Now, there will be trouble if my uncle is hungry, for he is one of the most impatient men that ever lived."

"Mr Lidenbrock back already!" cried the poor woman in a frightened voice.

"Yes, Martha; but of course dinner can't be ready yet; it is only half-past one."

"Why has Mr Lidenbrock come home so early, then?" asked Martha.

"He will tell us that himself," I said.

"Here he comes. I must go back to the kitchen, you may ask him why he has come back so early, and tell him why he can't have his dinner just yet."

I was alone, but I did not feel ready to explain things to the impatient professor. I was just going to escape to my own little room upstairs, when the master of the house came running through the dining-room and went straight to his study.<sup>2</sup> As he passed me, he threw his stick into a corner and his hat on the table, and shouted to me:

"Axel, follow me!"

And before I had time to move, he called out again, in the most impatient voice imaginable:

"What! Not here yet?"

So I jumped up and followed my terrible master into his study.

<sup>1</sup> *Professor*: the head of a department at a university.

<sup>2</sup> *Study*: a room in which one person reads, writes and studies.

Otto Lidenbrock was not a bad man. But he was certainly a bad-tempered man, and very difficult to please.

He was professor at the university, and gave the lessons on geology,<sup>1</sup> during which he regularly lost his temper. It is not that he was worried as to whether his students worked well or badly, or whether they paid attention to what he said, or whether they succeeded or failed in their examinations. Such things as these did not worry him at all. He taught in his own way, and to please himself only. What others thought of his teaching; what others learnt from his teaching was of no importance to him.

There are many professors of this sort in Germany.

My uncle, unfortunately, found some difficulty in speaking, or at least, when he spoke in public. This is an unfortunate thing for those who speak in public. In his lessons at the university he would often stop suddenly, when some long scientific word refused to escape from his mouth. At such times the word that did come out would be some wicked and violent word. Then, of course, he would lose his temper.

Now, in geology, there are many difficult names—half Greek, half Latin; terrible names, long names; names that hurt the mouth of the speaker and the ear of the hearer.

The young men knew, of course, that my uncle had this difficulty in speaking; they were used to hearing examples of it. They liked waiting to hear examples of it, knowing what was going to happen; and when the burst of anger came, they laughed. That is probably why so many students came to listen to my uncle; they liked laughing at my uncle's bursts of bad temper better than learning all those things that he was so able to teach. Anyhow, this I can say: my uncle was a true man of science.

If you gave him any stone to examine, he would look at it and feel it, or give it a knock and listen to the sound it made, or smell it—and in every case he would tell you what it was, what it was made of, and perhaps where it came from. About six hundred sorts of stone are known today,

<sup>1</sup> *Geology*: the study and science of the earth's rocks—the professor is a *geologist*; adj. *geological*.



and my uncle could tell you at once which of the six hundred it was.

The greatest men of science would pay him visits. They would ask his advice on difficult questions that troubled them. He had made several discoveries of the greatest scientific importance.

This, then, was the man who called me so impatiently.

He was a tall man, thin, with a body like iron, looking more like a man of forty than of fifty. He had large eyes, and these rolled about behind his large pair of glasses; his long, thin nose made you think of the edge of a knife. Some people said that his nose was a sort of magnet,<sup>1</sup> and that small bits of steel would stick to it—but I can tell you that this was not true. He walked at the rate of three feet to every step; and ran at the rate of four feet to every step.

He lived in his little house in Königstrasse, in the middle of the oldest part of Hamburg. Although he was only a professor, he was fairly rich. The house was his own, and all the things that belonged to it; among these were my cousin Gräuben, a seventeen-year-old girl, his servant Martha, and myself. As my father and mother were dead and he was my uncle I lived with him and helped him in his work.

I must tell you that I am a lover of geology. I am never lonely or tired in the company of stones and rocks.

On the whole, it was possible to live very happily in this little house in Königstrasse, in spite of the impatience of the owner, for although he had a rough way of showing his love, he did love me. The fact was, he was a man who could not wait, and was in a greater hurry than nature.

When he had planted flowers in April, he used to go every morning regularly and pull their leaves so as to make them grow more quickly.

So when my uncle called me, there was only one thing to do, and that was to obey. I rushed to his study at once.

The study was quite a storehouse; every sort of stone was to be found there, perfectly arranged and named. How well

<sup>1</sup> *Magnet*: a piece of iron specially treated so that it attracts other pieces of iron: *to magnetize* = to make into a magnet.

I knew these stones! How often, instead of playing with boys of my own age, I amused myself by keeping them clean.

But when I went into the study now, I hardly thought of these wonderful stones. All my attention was given to my uncle. He was sitting in a big chair, and held a book in his hands, looking at it with the greatest admiration.

"What a book! What a book!" he cried.

I must now tell you that Professor Lidenbrock was at the same time a book lover; he was mad on the subject of books; but an old book had no value for him unless it was a book that could not be found anywhere else, or a book that nobody could read.

"What! Don't you see, then?" he went on. "It is a treasure! I discovered it this morning in an old bookshop."

"Wonderful!" I answered. But I could see no reason for being so excited about an old book with the back and sides covered with dirty yellowish leather.

"Look!" he said, asking himself questions and answering them at the same time. "Is it beautiful enough? Yes, of course it is. Is it in good condition? Yes, it's in perfect condition. Does it open easily? Yes, it lies open at any page. It opens and shuts perfectly. And yet it is six hundred years old!"

All the time he was speaking, my uncle kept opening and shutting the old book. I felt that I must say something about it, although I did not feel the least interest in it.

"And what is the name of this wonderful book?" I asked.

"It's name?" he answered, with more excitement than before. "It's name is *Heims Kringla*, by Snorre Turleson, the famous Icelandic writer who lived six hundred years ago. It is the story of the Norwegian princes who governed Iceland."

"Indeed!" I said, doing my best to appear excited. "And it is written in German, of course?"

"In German!" cried the professor. "No, of course not. It is the book as it was first written, in Icelandic—that grand old language."

"Oh, I see," I answered. "And is it well printed?"

"Printed? Who is talking of printing? So you suppose this was printed, you fool! It was written by hand, and in Runic letters, too."

"Runic?"

"Yes. Don't you know what that means? Do you want me to explain that word?"

"No, of course not," I answered.

But my uncle went on with his explanations, telling me all about things that I did not want to know.

"The Runic letters were once used in Iceland, and it is said that they were invented by the gods. Look at them! Admire them! Look at these letters invented by gods!"

At that moment a dirty old parchment<sup>1</sup> slipped out of the old book and fell to the ground.

My uncle jumped at it, as you may easily suppose. A parchment of great age, shut up in an old book, perhaps for many hundreds of years, must seem to him to be of great value.

"What is this?" he cried, carefully putting on the table a piece of parchment five inches long and three inches wide, on which the following strange letters were written:

Ж.ААІІУ	ЖААІІІ	УАІІІІ
УІІІІІ	ІІІІІІ	ІІІІІІ
ІІІІІІ	ІІІІІІ	ІІІІІІ
ІІІІІІ	ІІІІІІ	ІІІІІІ
ІІІІІІ	ІІІІІІ	ІІІІІІ
ІІІІІІ	ІІІІІІ	ІІІІІІ
ІІІІІІ	ІІІІІІ	ІІІІІІ
ІІІІІІ	ІІІІІІ	ІІІІІІ

The professor looked at these letters for some minutes and then said:

"It is Runic! These marks are exactly like those in the book. But what can they mean?"

As Runic seemed to me to be an invention of clever men to worry people who already have too many worries, I was not sorry to see that my uncle could not understand it.

<sup>1</sup> *Parchment*: fine sheep's skin prepared for writing.

"Yes, it is Old Icelandic! " he said to himself.

Of course Professor Lidenbrock knew that it was Old Icelandic, for he was known to be a wonderful master of languages. Not that he could speak the two thousand languages used in the world, but he knew a good deal about most of them.

A difficulty like this, then, was sure to wake up all the impatience in his nature, and I was just expecting another burst of bad language, when two o'clock struck, and Martha opened the study door and said:

"The dinner is on the table."

My uncle's answer was a violent burst of bad language.

Martha ran off, and I ran after her, and soon found myself at my usual seat in the dining-room.

I waited a few minutes. The professor did not come.

This was the first time that I had ever known him to be late for the important business of dinner. And what a dinner, too! A wonderful dinner. And this my uncle was going to lose for the sake of an old parchment. So I did my best to eat my uncle's dinner as well as my own.

"I never saw anything like this before!" cried our good Martha. "Mr Lidenbrock not to come to dinner! I can't believe it! I'm afraid something terrible is going to happen."

My idea was that the only terrible thing that might happen would be the burst of temper from my uncle when he found that his dinner had been eaten by somebody else.

I was just finishing my meal when a voice like thunder called me away from the table. I flew into the study.

"It is, of course, Runic," said the professor, "but there is a secret in it, and I will discover the secret, or else——"

He finished what he was saying with violent words and movements.

"Sit down there," he added, pointing to the table, "and write."

I was ready in a moment.

"Now, then, I am going to read out to you each modern letter which stands in the place of one of these Icelandic

letters. We shall see what that will give us. But take care you don't make any mistake! "

My uncle began to read out the letters. I did my best. Every letter was called out one after another, and in the end I had before me the following strange groups of words:

mm.rnlls	esreuel	seecJde
sgtssmf	unteief	niedrke
kt,samn	âtrateS	Saodrrn
emtnaeI	nuaect	rrilSa
Atvaar	.nscrc	ieaabs
ccdrmi	eeutul	frantu
dt,iac	oseibo	KediiY

When I had finished it, my uncle roughly took the paper from me and looked at it carefully for a long time.

"What can it mean?" he asked again.

I could not tell him. Besides, he did not ask me; he was speaking to himself.

"It is what we call a cryptogram,<sup>1</sup> where the meaning is hidden by mixing up the letters. So to make sense they must be put into their proper order. Perhaps here we have the explanation of some great discovery! "

My idea was that there was no sense in it at all, but I was wise enough not to say so.

The professor took up the book and the parchment again and compared them.

"The two were not written by the same person," he said. "The cryptogram was written a long time after the book. Here is something that proves it. The first letter stands for *mm*, which you will not find in Turlson's book, for it was not used until long after the time when Turlson lived. So there are at least two hundred years between the book and the parchment."

This seemed to be quite reasonable.

"So I suppose that these strange letters were written by somebody to whom the book belonged. But who was it?

<sup>1</sup> *Cryptogram*: secret writing in which the letters are mixed up in a certain way so as to hide the meaning.

Could he have put his name, I wonder, in any part of the book?"

And then my uncle began to examine carefully the first pages of the book. On the back of the first page he discovered something that looked like a dirty mark. But on examining it more closely, some letters were to be seen. My uncle saw at once that this was the chief point of interest. He looked at it again and again under his glass, until at last he was able to see that these marks were Runic letters, and these he copied out clearly.

1111 4111111111

"Arne Saknussem!" he cried. "Why, that is a name, and an Icelandic name, too; the name of a famous man of science who lived three hundred years ago."

I looked at my uncle with a feeling of admiration.

"These learned men," he went on, "were the only true men of science of their times. They made discoveries which may well surprise us. Why should not this Saknussem have hidden in this cryptogram the secret of some surprising discovery? It must be so! It is so!"

"No doubt," I answered; "but what reason could this man have for hiding a wonderful discovery?"

"Why? Why? Ah, I don't know. Besides, we shall soon see. I will get the secret of this parchment, I will neither eat nor sleep until I find it out."

"Oh!" thought I.

"Nor you either, Axel!"

"Dear me!" I said to myself. "It is a good thing I have had a dinner for two today."

"The first thing to be done," said my uncle, "is to find the language of this cryptogram."

I listened. My uncle went on.

"Nothing is easier. In this paper there are 132 letters, in which there are 79 consonants<sup>1</sup> and 53 vowels. Now this

<sup>1</sup> Consonant. The vowels are *a, e, i, o, u*. All the other letters are consonants—*b, c, d, f*, etc.



is just about what we expect to find in the words of languages of the south of Europe, while the languages of the north have a larger number of consonants. For this reason I believe it is written in a southern language."

All this seemed very reasonable.

"But what language is it?"

It was this I waited for him to tell me, for I knew that he was very clever at this sort of reasoning.

"This Saknussem," he went on, "was a learned man, and if he did not write in Icelandic, he would be certain to write in a language that was in common use among all men of learning at that time; I mean Latin.<sup>1</sup> If I am mistaken, I can try other languages. But I think that this is Latin."

I was surprised, for this group of strange and ugly words

<sup>1</sup> *Latin*: language of Rome spoken and written by all learned men in Europe at one time.

seemed so different from the soft and smooth language of Rome.

"Yes, Latin," said my uncle. "But Latin all mixed up."

"Very well," I thought, "and if you can unmix it, my dear uncle, you'll be clever."

"Let us examine it from beginning to end," he said, taking up the piece of paper on which I had been writing. "Here are 132 letters all in the wrong order. In some words there are nothing but consonants, as in the first, *mmrnlls*; others which are full of vowels—the fifth, for example, *unteief*, or the last but one, *oseibo*. Now it is clear to me that this arrangement is an accidental one. It seems to me certain that the message was first written regularly, and then turned upside down according to some rule that I must find out. Anyone who has the key of the cryptogram could read it easily. But where is the key?"

I did not answer, and for a good reason. I was looking at a picture hanging on the wall opposite me, the picture of Gräuben,<sup>1</sup> who was just now at Altona on a visit. Her being away made me very unhappy, for—I may as well confess it now—Gräuben and I loved each other with true German patience and calmness. We had agreed to marry each other, but my uncle knew nothing about the arrangement, for he was too much of a geologist to understand such things as love.

## 2

### THE SECRET MESSAGE

GRÄUBEN was a pretty girl. She was fair, with blue eyes, and rather serious in her ways. The picture of this girl whom I loved so deeply took my mind away from thoughts of old books and parchments, and put in their place sweet memories.

<sup>1</sup> Pronounced *Groiben*.



I could see my dear companion as we worked and passed our time together. Every day she helped me to put my uncle's stones in order. Indeed Miss Gräuben was quite a geologist. She loved to examine the deepest questions of science. What pleasant hours we had spent in studying together!

And when our work was over, we used to go out for a walk beside the river as far as the end of the lake, talking all the way and holding each other's hands! I used to tell her amusing stories to make her laugh.

I was thinking of these things when I heard my uncle give a sudden blow on the table, and once more I paid attention to him.

"Look here!" he said, "it seems to me that if a man wished to mix up the letters in any message, the first thing he would think of would be to write the words up and down, instead of from left to right, in groups of five or six."

"Indeed!" thought I.

"We must see what that will do. Write some sentence on this piece of paper, but instead of putting the letters one after another, put them one under another in groups of five or six."

I understood what he meant, and at once wrote from top to bottom:

I y d i G e  
l o e t r n  
o u a t ä !  
v m r l u  
e y l e b

"Very good!" said the professor, without reading what I had written. "Now arrange these words in lines."

I did so, and this was the result:

*IydiGe loetrn ouatä! vmrlu eyleb*

"Just so," said my uncle, taking the paper. "This has