



95¢

CLASSICS SERIES CL142

JULES VERNE

FROM THE EARTH TO THE MOON



.1352
531-7

Introduction by Robert A. W. Lowndes **COMPLETE AND UNABRIDGED**

FROM THE EARTH TO THE MOON

JULES VERNE

**AIRMONT PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC.
22 EAST 60TH STREET • NEW YORK 10022**

An Airmont Classic
specially selected for the Airmont Library
from the immortal literature of the world

THE SPECIAL CONTENTS OF THIS EDITION

© Copyright, 1967, by
Airmont Publishing Company, Inc.

ISBN: 0-8049-0142-2 FROM THE EARTH TO THE MOON

FROM THE EARTH TO THE MOON



JULES VERNE

Introduction

Many people believe that a special Providence guides the person with outstanding talent and capabilities into the particular areas where these talents will be expressed to their highest possible effect; and this Providence often operates by closing all other avenues of expression, sometimes abruptly slamming doors in the subject's face. The career of Jules Verne, born at Nantes on February 8, 1828, certainly substantiates such belief.

Some authors have virtually lived and breathed writing, some composers lived and breathed music, from the cradle, but such was not the case with young Jules. His first great desire was to travel; he and his younger brother, Paul, haunted the docks by day and read travel books by candlelight when they should have been sleeping. And when they were unable to read, they would invent stories of travels to tell each other.

Paul became a traveler at the age of eighteen, when he joined the Navy, but there was no such fulfillment in sight for Jules. He had tried to stow away on a schooner bound for the West Indies, but thanks to scientific invention, to which he would become so devoted later on, he was discovered and brought back. Young Jules returned unwillingly to school, not yet dreaming that the talent he had shown in telling travel tales to Paul meant anything beyond momentary amusement and escape from frustration.

The first sign of a vocation came to Jules when he discovered

the romantic poets who wrote for the theater; in those days, most plays were still written in poetry, and this discovery turned Jules's imagination away from travel to distant lands. Now he decided he wanted to live in Paris and write plays for the theater; he started at once to work on plays and poems in his spare time.

Needless to say, this was not the career that M. Pierre Verne envisioned for his elder son. It was assumed that the first son of a successful lawyer would follow in his father's footsteps, so when Paul went off to the Navy, Jules was sent to the Sorbonne in Paris to study law.

The Sorbonne was not like colleges and universities in America, or England, where the student was checked carefully on the matter of class attendance, parents notified if this seemed to be deficient, and the student expelled if he cut too many classes. Tuition fees were paid, and eventually the student was expected to present himself for examinations, to determine whether he received a degree or not. What happened in between was entirely up to the young man.

Once in Paris, Jules lost no time in taking advantage of the great opportunities open to him, as he saw them. He submitted a verse drama he had written in Nantes to one of the theaters, hobnobbed with acquaintances from the studios in the Latin Quarter, and learned painfully that one had to have connections in order to make an entrance into this world. In the months that passed, he learned how easy it is for a young man living on an allowance from home to go into debt. One can picture the feelings of Pierre Verne when he paid an unexpected visit to his son after a number of months and found that Jules had not attended a single class at the Sorbonne. The boy asserted his independence and his plea was granted: he could pursue his chimerical career as he chose—and since he was independent, there would be no further subsidy from home!

A chance encounter with Alexandre Dumas resulted in the great man's friendship, a little assistance, and some excellent advice. If you want to become a writer, Dumas told young Verne, then you must write, write, write every day at a given time. Don't sit around and wait for inspiration; take your pen in hand and write what comes to you then and there. If you have talent, this will result in inspiration coming to you.

There were some very minor successes, by way of collaborations on operetta librettos, and the day came when Verne laid down his pen in momentary despair at the realization that he really wasn't interested in writing the sort of material that would sell to the theaters. It was during this period of discouragement

that the next door was shown to him—a seemingly strange door, the door of the public libraries.

Here he found the awakening of his earlier dreams of travel as he pored over books, finding in the course of inveterate reading that he had a marvelously retentive memory. And here he found an even greater source of wonder and inspiration than travelogues in the natural sciences. The public libraries became Jules Verne's alma mater, and he would graduate from this school *summa cum laude*.

Somewhere in this period, he came upon the tales of Edgar Allan Poe, translated by the greatest poet of the times, Charles Baudelaire. It has been truly said that the author can choose his own parents, and Verne chose Poe for his literary father. It was the logic, the precision, the scrupulous attention to detail in Poe's stories, as well as the breadth of imagination, that fascinated the young Frenchman. Other elements in the great American author were less attractive to him: Poe, the author of weird and "supernatural" fiction, was a materialist; not only that, Poe went so far as to distort and invent science in order to lock out any suggestion of religious truth. This did not set well with Verne, who was a religious man all his life; yet, oddly enough, there is no trace of his Catholic viewpoint in his best-known fiction.

Eventually, he had to admit what seemed at the time as defeat to his writing ambitions. Dreamer though he was, there was a hard core of practicality in Verne; he would pursue a vision just so far; he could not continue to live in vague hopes and poverty.

The solution would seem to us in the present world a wildly romantic one—he would marry a rich woman. But in Paris at the time, this was far from an impractical goal. Yet, the romantic element had its inning; Verne actually fell in love with a twenty-six-year-old widow whom he met at a friend's marriage feast, wooed her in a whirlwind campaign which resulted in an engagement within a week—and then learned that his Honorine had 50,000 francs to bring to the oncoming marriage! Pierre Verne added a substantial sum of money to his heartfelt blessings, but that good lawyer knew better than to withhold a string. Jules would now become respectable; he would take a position in a stockbroker's office, in which his father would buy him an interest.

Jules Verne now had a loving wife, a respectable position, and financial security. No more hobnobbing with Bohemians, no more days in the public library, no more connections with the theater—now he had become a man and must put away childish things.

Then came the meeting with Felix Tourachon (Nadar), and

his scheme for making an airborne voyage over Europe in a greatly improved balloon. Life suddenly became interesting and wonderful again for Jules as he entered wholeheartedly into Nadar's scheme, drew upon his imagination and scientific background to help design the improvements needed, and secretly made plans to accompany Nadar in the flight.

But when the time came for the flight, a crisis at the Stock Exchange demanded that Verne stick to his post. There was only one escape from this intolerable disappointment; he sat down and began to write about an imaginary journey in a balloon, inventing on paper innumerable improvements that had not appeared in the actual *Gigant*. (Nadar's balloon voyage was a failure, after all.) This imaginary journey did not take place over Europe, but over Africa. Verne's retentive memory gave him the ability to describe such a voyage as well, perhaps better, than any explorer who had been to Africa. He called the novel *Five Weeks in a Balloon*, and he sent it to the publisher, Jules Hetzel.

If there is a special roll of honor in heaven for those editors who guided promising authors, Hetzel's name stands high upon it. He gave the manuscript of Verne's first novel back to him, told him exactly what the story needed, and urged him to leave the Stock Exchange and come to write for him. He offered 20,000 gold francs for two novels a year, a series of "extraordinary journeys," and went over the expansion and revision of *Five Weeks in a Balloon* until both he and the still-incredulous author were completely satisfied.

The first edition of the book went on sale January 1, 1863; by the end of the week, it was sold out. Now, said Hetzel, what will you write for me next?

The answer astounded him. His new author had already decided that the next story would be about a journey to the moon! Unlike the numerous fanciful tales of such voyages which had appeared in the past, this story would be written in accordance with the latest scientific discoveries.

This was 1863; the Civil War was still raging in the United States and it was as yet by no means certain that the Confederate States could not gain their independence from the Federal Union. Verne places his story in a United States where the war is over and the Union has been preserved; but we can note from his descriptions of the South (the great moon-shot is made in Florida) that the terrible devastation of Sherman's march to the sea, and the bitterness it caused, has not yet taken place.

During the war, a unique society is formed in Baltimore—the Gun Club—the sole requirement for membership being that the applicant must have invented a cannon, or at least improved

upon a cannon, or invented or improved upon some other firearm. The membership spreads all over the country, and as the war continues, enthusiasm grows.

Then the war comes to an end—a black day for the members of the Gun Club. What future is there for its unique services to the military arts? The club's President, Impy Barbicane, calls a special meeting, assuring members that there will be an announcement of the greatest importance. He lays before them a proposal which takes their collective breath away: the Gun Club will sponsor a monster cannon which will fire a projectile to the moon! Barbicane cites a battery of facts and figures about Earth's satellite and about cannons, projectiles, and ballistics, to convince them that this stupendous feat is actually possible.

The whole world watches, and the nations contribute to the funds, while Barbicane, J. T. Maston, and others proceed with their tremendous project. But even Barbicane and Maston find themselves breathless when they receive a telegram from the great French explorer, Michel Ardan: "Substitute for your spherical shell a cylindro-projectile. I shall go inside it. . . ."

From the Earth to the Moon was the first story of a moon-flight using the rocket principle. It was a tremendous success, and the public waited breathlessly for the sequel, *Round the Moon*, wherein the space journey is described in detail.

We know today, of course, that a projectile fired from a cannon is not a feasible spaceship, but were there grounds for considering the story impossible in 1863? * Actually, there were, and Verne was aware of them. He presents the facts in such a manner as to tip off the reader who might otherwise have been misled, but not in such a way as to spoil the illusion. Captain Nicholl presents the scientific objections correctly in the story; but for the sake of the story, these are argued down, and things come out as the members of the Gun Club believe they will.

These first two novels were immediate successes, and now the path was clear; it was as if the many diverse threads in Verne's career had been gathered together—the desire to travel, the ambition to write, the fascination in reading of strange lands and natural science, the attraction of the theater—into a single pattern. Jules Verne had been guided to the right places and to the right people at the right times. His willingness to work hard,

* Heretofore, I have seen the date for *From the Earth to the Moon* listed as 1865, following rather than preceding *A Journey to the Center of the Earth*. Franz Born contends that the moon story was written in 1863 in his *Jules Verne: The Man Who Invented the Future*, and the internal evidence cited above makes this believable.
RAWL

his excellent memory, and his never-still imagination were his own contribution.

Now the days of frustration in his ambitions were over, and the series of imaginary voyages grew like an avalanche. *A Journey to the Center of the Earth* (Airmont 1963) is unique in that it is the only well-known story of Verne's where the author has deliberately turned his back upon scientific plausibility and written without reservations, as we find in *From the Earth to the Moon*, of the impossible. Perhaps he was fascinated by the "hollow Earth" hypotheses that were current at the time; in any event, he saw the notion as an inspiration for a wonderful adventure, and once given the fundamental impossibility, Verne proceeds in the best manner of the accomplished science-fiction author, working out each detail logically. *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* (1869—Airmont, 1963) ranks highest among the well-known novels for its wealth of projected improvements to the submarine; and in some respects, the original *Nautilus* is still in advance of today's atomic-powered namesake.

A trip to the United States gave Verne a firsthand background for many of the details in *Robur, the Conqueror*, which he wrote in 1886. Verne foresaw the contest to come between the heavier-than-air and the lighter-than-air flying machine; he examined the advantages and disadvantages of each in detail and predicted that the heavier-than-air machine would prove to be superior. And *Robur's Albatross* employs both the helicopter and the forward propeller; there would be years of experiment, and seeming superiority of the dirigible, before the world was convinced that Jules Verne had given the right answer nearly twenty years before the first heavier-than-air flight.

Verne's greatest success, in fact, one of the most successful novels of the entire nineteenth century, was a story which could be called science fiction only by stretching the term—and the term did not exist in those days. *Cooks Tours* offered a trip around the world in ninety days. Jules Verne examined the resources available for rapid travel in the 1870's and came to the conclusion that ten days could be lopped off that figure. He put his argument into the mouth of the imperturbable Phileas Fogg, and the famous wager was made. (That such a story's being outdated does not harm it was proved some years ago when Michael Todd's splendid film version was released—the most faithful presentation of a Verne story to go before the cameras.)

Like his younger contemporary, H. G. Wells, Jules Verne wrote with the nineteenth century's faith in science as a liberator and the key to a sane and happy world where ignorance, vice, poverty, disease, and the stupendous folly of war would become things

of a forgotten past. And like Wells, Jules Verne came to realize that this faith was a chimera; although he died nearly a decade before the Great War shattered Wells's visions, Verne had realized that science alone is no answer to the human condition.

His later novels show his increasing bitterness; and one of the best examples of this is the contrast between the character of Robur, who, in *Robur the Conqueror*, is eager to offer his discoveries to the world for mankind's benefit, but who, in *The Master of the World* (Airmont 1965), is no longer willing to share his secrets. He will rule by means of his discoveries, and force peace and decency upon a world all too eager to follow destructive leaders. But where H. G. Wells, turning to the same solution of benevolent tyranny on the part of scientists with tremendously advanced technologies, has such self-appointed saviors succeed, Verne has Robur suffer defeat. Verne had learned the bitter lesson thoroughly, where Wells had not.

Verne died on March 24, 1905, loved and honored the world over.

ROBERT A. W. LOWNDES

CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
1 <i>The Gun Club</i>	11
2 <i>President Barbicane's Communication</i>	17
3 <i>Effect of the President's Communication</i>	23
4 <i>Reply from the Observatory of Cambridge</i>	26
5 <i>Ignorance and Belief in the United States</i>	31
6 <i>The Saga of the Cannon-Ball</i>	35
7 <i>History of the Cannon</i>	41
8 <i>The Question of Explosives</i>	45
9 <i>One Enemy v. 25,000,000 Friends</i>	50
10 <i>Florida and Texas</i>	55
11 <i>Urbi et Orbi</i>	59
12 <i>Stones Hill</i>	62
13 <i>Pickaxe and Trowel</i>	66
14 <i>The Fête of the Casting</i>	70
15 <i>The Columbiad</i>	74
16 <i>A Telegram</i>	78
17 <i>The Passenger of the "Atlanta"</i>	79
18 <i>A Monster Meeting</i>	84
19 <i>Attack and Riposte</i>	90
20 <i>How a Frenchman Manages an Affair</i>	98
21 <i>The New Citizen of the United States</i>	106
22 <i>The Projectile</i>	110
23 <i>The Telescope of the Rocky Mountains</i>	113
24 <i>Final Details</i>	116
25 <i>Fire!</i>	121
26 <i>Foul Weather</i>	125
27 <i>A New Star</i>	127

CHAPTER I

THE GUN CLUB

During the Federal War in the United States, a new and influential club was founded in the city of Baltimore, Maryland. It is common knowledge how rapidly the taste for military matters grew amongst that nation of ship-owners, shopkeepers, and mechanics. Mere tradesmen jumped their counters to become extemporized captains, colonels, and generals, without having ever passed the School of Instruction at West Point: nevertheless, they quickly rivalled their compeers of the old continent, and, like them, carried off victories by dint of lavish expenditure in ammunition, money, and men.

But the point in which the Americans singularly outdistanced the Europeans was in the science of *gunnery*. Not, indeed, that their weapons were better than theirs, but that they exhibited unheard-of dimensions, and consequently attained hitherto unheard-of ranges. In point of grazing, plunging, oblique, or enfilading, or point-blank firing, the English, French, and Prussians have nothing to learn; but their cannon, howitzers, and mortars are mere pocket-pistols compared with the formidable engines of the American artillery.

This fact need surprise no one. The Yankees, the first mechanics in the world, are engineers—just as the Italians are musicians and the Germans metaphysicians—by right of birth. Nothing is more natural, therefore, than for them to apply their audacious ingenuity to the science of gunnery.

Now when an American has an idea, he at once seeks a second American to share it. If there be three, they elect a president and two secretaries. Given *four*, they name a keeper of records, and the office is ready for work; *five*, they convene a general meeting, and the club is fully constituted. So things were managed in Baltimore. The inventor

of a new cannon associated himself with its caster and its borer. Thus was formed the nucleus of the "Gun Club." In a single month after its formation it numbered 1,833 effective and 30,565 corresponding members.

One condition was imposed upon every candidate for admission to have designed or (more or less) perfected a cannon; or, in default of a cannon, at least a fire-arm of some description. It may, however, be mentioned that mere inventions of revolvers, five-shooting carbines, and similar small arms, met with but little consideration. Artillerists always commanded favour.

The estimation in which these gentlemen were held, according to one of the most scientific exponents of the Gun Club, was "proportional to the masses of their guns, and in the direct ratio of the square of the distances attained by their projectiles."

The Gun Club once founded, it is easy to imagine the result of the inventive genius of the Americans. Their military weapons attained colossal proportions, and their projectiles, exceeding the prescribed limits, unfortunately occasionally cut in two some unoffending bystanders. These inventions, in fact, left far in the rear the timid instruments of European artillery.

It is but fair to add that these Yankees, brave as they have ever proved themselves to be, did not confine themselves to theories and formulæ, but that they paid heavily, *in propria persona*, for their inventions. Amongst them were officers of all ranks, from lieutenants to generals; military men of every age, from those who were just making their *début* in the profession of arms up to those who had grown old on the gun-carriage. Many had found their rest on the field of battle whose names figured in the "Book of Honour" of the Gun Club; and of those who made good their return the greater proportion bore the marks of their indisputable valour. Crutches, wooden legs, artificial arms, steel hooks, caoutchouc jaws, silver craniums, platinum noses, were all to be found; and it was calculated by the great statistician Pitcairn that throughout the Gun Club there was not quite one arm between four persons, and exactly two legs between six.

Nevertheless, these valiant artillerists took no particular

account of these little facts, and felt justly proud when the despatches of a battle returned the number of victims at tenfold the quantity of the projectiles expended.

One day, however—sad and melancholy day!—peace was signed between the survivors of the war; the thunder of the guns gradually ceased, the mortars were silent, the howitzers were muzzled for an indefinite period, the cannon, with muzzles depressed, were returned into the arsenal, the shot were repiled, all bloody memories were effaced; the cotton-plants grew luxuriantly in the well-manured fields, all mourning garments were laid aside, together with grief; and the Gun Club was relegated to profound inactivity.

Some few of the more advanced and inveterate theorists set once more to work upon calculations regarding the laws of projectiles. They reverted invariably to gigantic shells and howitzers of unparalleled calibre. Still, in default of practical experience, what was the value of mere theories? Consequently, the club-rooms became deserted, the servants dozed in the ante-chambers, the newspapers grew mouldy on the tables, sounds of snoring came from dark corners, and the members of the Gun Club, erstwhile so noisy in their sessions, were reduced to silence by this disastrous peace and gave themselves up wholly to dreams of a Platonic kind of artillery.

"This is horrible!" said Tom Hunter one evening, while rapidly carbonizing his wooden legs in the fire-place of the smoking-room; "nothing to do! nothing to look forward to! what a loathsome existence! When shall the guns again wake us in the morning with their delightful reports?"

"Those days are gone by," said jolly Bilsby, trying to extend his missing arms. "It used to be delightful! One invented a gun, and hardly was it cast when one hastened to try it in the face of the enemy! Then one returned to camp with a word of encouragement from Sherman or a friendly shake of the hand from M'Clellan. But now the generals are gone back to their counters; and in place of projectiles, they despatch bales of cotton. By jove, the future of gunnery in America is lost!"

"Ay! and no war in prospect!" continued the famous James T. Maston, scratching with his steel hook his gutta-percha cranium. "Not a cloud in the horizon! and that

too at such a critical period in the progress of the science of artillery! Yes, gentlemen! I who address you have myself this very morning perfected a model (plan, section, elevation, etc.) of a mortar destined to change all the conditions of warfare!"

"No! is it possible?" replied Tom Hunter, his thoughts reverting involuntarily to a former invention of the Hon. J. T. Maston, by which, at its first trial, he had succeeded in killing three hundred and thirty-seven people.

"Fact!" replied he. "Still, what is the use of so many studies worked out, so many difficulties vanquished? It's mere waste of time! The New World seems to have made up its mind to live in peace; and our bellicose *Tribune* predicts some approaching catastrophes arising out of this scandalous increase of population."

"Nevertheless," replied Colonel Blomsberry, "they are always struggling in Europe to maintain the principle of nationalities."

"Well?"

"Well, there might be some field for enterprise down there; and if they would accept our services——"

"What are you dreaming of?" screamed Bilby; "work at gunnery for the benefit of foreigners?"

"That would be better than doing nothing here," returned the colonel.

"Quite so," said J. T. Maston; "but still we need not dream of that expedient."

"And why not?" demanded the colonel.

"Because their ideas of progress in the Old World are contrary to our American habits of thought. Those fellows believe that one can't become a general without having served first as an ensign; which is as much as to say that one can't point a gun without having first cast it oneself!"

"Ridiculous!" replied Tom Hunter, whittling with his bowie-knife the arms of his easy chair; "but if that be so there, all that is left for us is to plant tobacco and distil whale-oil."

"What!" roared J. T. Maston, "shan't we spend the rest of our life in perfecting fire-arms? Won't there ever be another chance of trying the ranges of projectiles? Shall the

air never again be lighted with the glare of our guns? No international difficulty ever arise to let us declare war against some transatlantic power? Shall not the French sink one of our steamers, or the English, in defiance of the rights of nations, hang a few of our countrymen?"

"No such luck," replied Colonel Blomsberry; "nothing of the kind is likely to happen; and even if it did, we should not profit by it. American susceptibility is fast declining, and we are all going to the dogs."

"It is too true," replied J. T. Maston, with fresh violence; "there are a thousand grounds for fighting, and yet we don't fight. We save up our arms and legs for the benefit of nations who don't know what to do with them! But stop—without going out of one's way to find a cause for war—didn't North America once belong to the English?"

"Undoubtedly," replied Tom Hunter, stamping his crutch with fury.

"Well then," replied J. T. Maston, "why shouldn't England in turn belong to the Americans?"

"It would be but just and fair," returned Colonel Blomsberry.

"Go and propose it to the President of the United States," cried J. T. Maston, "and see how he will receive you."

"Bah!" growled Bilsby between the four teeth which the war had left him; "that will never do!"

"By jove!" cried J. T. Maston, "he mustn't count on my vote at the next election!"

"Nor on ours," all the bellicose invalids replied unanimously.

"Meanwhile," replied J. T. M., "allow me to say that, if I cannot get an opportunity to try my new mortars on a real field of battle, I shall say good-bye to the members of the Gun Club, and go and bury myself in the prairies of Arkansas!"

"And we will accompany you," cried the others.

Matters were in this unfortunate condition, and the club was threatened with approaching dissolution, when an unexpected circumstance occurred to prevent so deplorable a catastrophe.

On the morrow after this conversation every member of

the association received a sealed circular couched in the following terms:

"BALTIMORE, Oct. 3.

"The President of the Gun Club has the honour to inform his colleagues that, at the meeting of the 5th instant, he will bring before them a communication of an extremely interesting nature. He requests, therefore, that they will make it convenient to attend in accordance with the present invitation.—Very cordially,

"IMPEY BARBICANE, P.G.C."