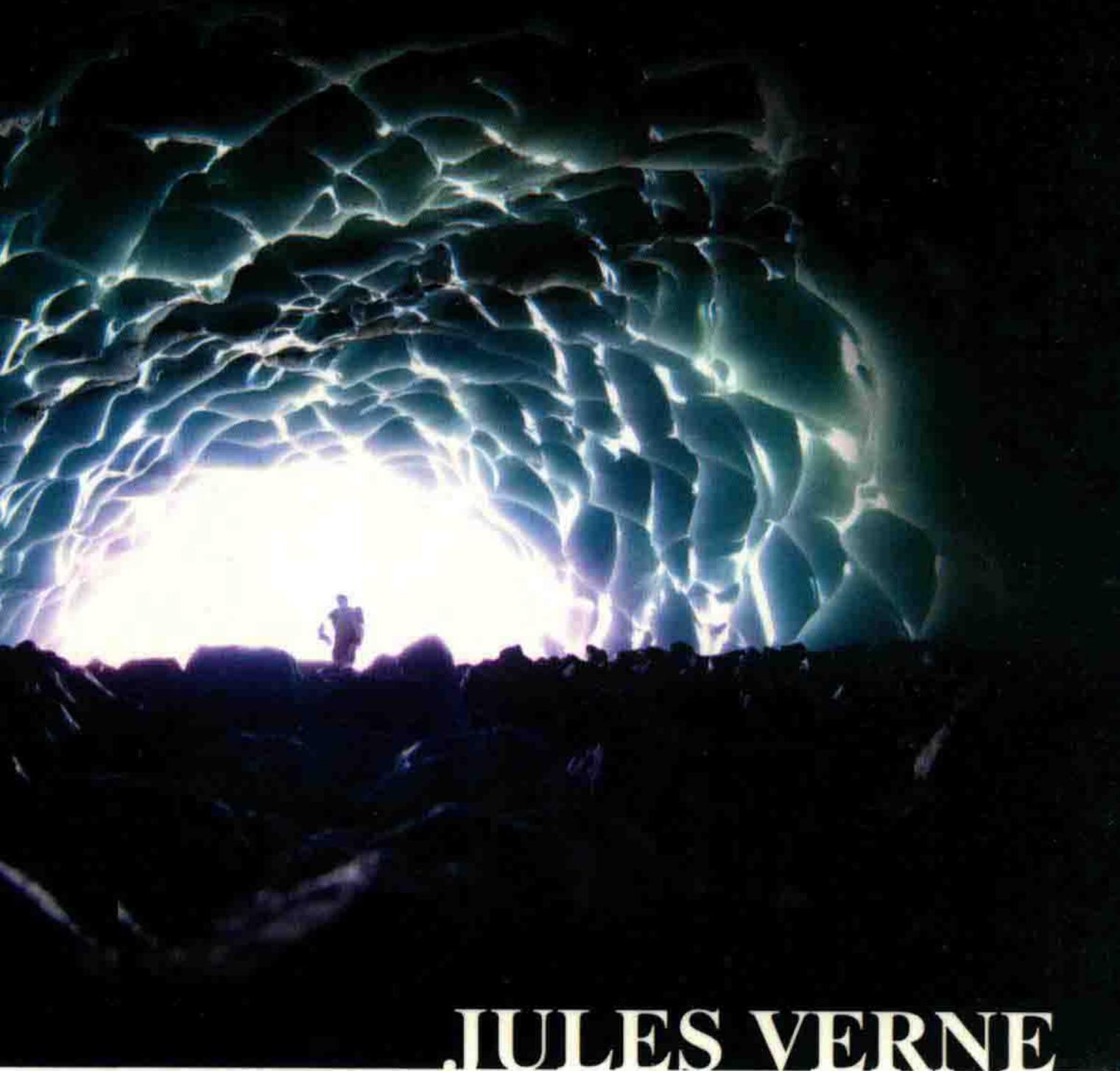


COLLINS
CLASSICS



JULES VERNE
**Journey to the
Centre of the Earth**

JOURNEY TO THE CENTRE OF THE EARTH

Jules Verne

COLLINS
CLASSICS

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History of Collins

In 1819, millworker William Collins from Glasgow, Scotland, set up a company for printing and publishing pamphlets, sermons, hymn books and prayer books. That company was Collins and was to mark the birth of HarperCollins Publishers as we know it today. The long tradition of Collins dictionary publishing can be traced back to the first dictionary William published in 1824, *Greek and English Lexicon*. Indeed, from 1840 onwards, he began to produce illustrated dictionaries and even obtained a licence to print and publish the Bible.

Soon after, William published the first Collins novel, *Ready Reckoner*, however it was the time of the Long Depression, where harvests were poor, prices were high, potato crops had failed and violence was erupting in Europe. As a result, many factories across the country were forced to close down and William chose to retire in 1846, partly due to the hardships he was facing.

Aged 30, William's son, William II took over the business. A keen humanitarian with a warm heart and a generous spirit, William II was truly 'Victorian' in his outlook. He introduced new, up-to-date steam presses and published affordable editions of Shakespeare's works and *Pilgrim's Progress*, making them available to the masses for the first time. A new demand for educational books meant that success came with the publication of travel books, scientific books, encyclopaedias and dictionaries. This demand to be educated led to the later publication of atlases and Collins also held the monopoly on scripture writing at the time.

In the 1860s Collins began to expand and diversify and the idea of 'books for the millions' was developed. Affordable editions of classical literature were published and in 1903 Collins introduced 10 titles in their Collins Handy Illustrated Pocket Novels. These proved so popular that a few years later this had increased to an output of 50 volumes, selling nearly half a million

in their year of publication. In the same year, The Everyman's Library was also instituted, with the idea of publishing an affordable library of the most important classical works, biographies, religious and philosophical treatments, plays, poems, travel and adventure. This series eclipsed all competition at the time and the introduction of paperback books in the 1950s helped to open that market and marked a high point in the industry.

HarperCollins is and has always been a champion of the classics and the current Collins Classics series follows in this tradition – publishing classical literature that is affordable and available to all. Beautifully packaged, highly collectible and intended to be reread and enjoyed at every opportunity.

Life & Times

About the Author

Jules Verne was an unusual author as he was a French writer whose work was accepted and absorbed by the machine of English literature. Verne had invented the genres of science fiction, or 'sci-fi' as it is often abbreviated and there was no other English author writing on this subject at the time. Curiously Verne was thought of as an *auteur pour les enfants* in France. His fascination with futuristic science and fantastic situations was seen as rather puerile and fatuous alongside the serious and heavyweight novelists of his time, such as Honoré de Balzac.

In Britain it was another story. Scientific and technological progress had shaped the success of the British Empire and people were consequently far more open to Verne's flights of fancy. He anticipated phenomena that seemed quite likely to occur from the British point of view, because they as a nation had been responsible for the lion's share of advancements in science and technology that the world then enjoyed.

The translations of Verne's work, however, often left something to be desired. They were heavily edited so that any perceived anti-British sentiment was erased, thus making the works unfaithful to Verne's original manuscripts for the sake of political correctness. In addition to this political censoring, the translators had problems with transliterating measurements and calculations from metric to imperial standards. Verne had been fastidious in his scientific accuracy, thereby lending his work a weight of scientific realism and authenticity, while the translators in contrast had been rather lackadaisical in their efforts so that the precision was lost, literally, in translation. Educated and learned English readers, thinking the translations to be true, thought of Verne as a little facile, coming up with sound basic ideas but failing in his attention to detail. Even in the mid-19th century people understood the importance of research in making a novel credible.

Despite these setbacks, Verne became the 'Father of sci-fi' by pioneering the genre. His canon includes *Voyage au Centre de la Terre* (*Journey to the Centre of the Earth*) and *Vingt Mille Lieues Sous les Mers* (*Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*). He even anticipated space flight with *De la Terre à la Lune* (*From the Earth to the Moon*) and *Autour de la Lune* (*Around the Moon*). His *modus operandi* was to have a group of people embark on a journey of adventure and he wrote an incredible 54 novels using this theme, which have become known collectively as *Les Voyages Extraordinaire* (*The Extraordinary Voyages*).

These days literary types tend to look down their noses at science fiction, as if the genre is inferior to others. This is partly because of the over abundance of poorly conceived science fiction novels, but it is also due to the relative lack of characterization and exploration of human themes. While literary works tend to rely on investigating the nature of relationships and behaviour, science fiction stories pay scant attention to such topics and focus instead on the events and situations in which the characters find themselves. The same is true of thrillers, adventures and fantasies, which are often frequently accorded similar disregard.

In Victorian times, such distinctions between novel genres had yet to germinate and grow, because things were still in a state of flux. As Verne had invented the concept of science fiction story telling, most of the work immediately influenced by him, such as that by H.G. Wells, was also of a high quality. It was really the age of pulp fiction – so called because of the throwaway nature of paperback books – that standards began to fall.

Rampant consumerism meant that substandard writers had their material go to print and so it became ever more difficult to see the wood for the trees in terms of writing quality. It became necessary to invent the term 'literary novel' as a badge of distinction to mark a book out as having supposedly been written by someone with a little more creative integrity than the rest.

Verne's Prophecy

With the benefit of hindsight, we can look back at the novels of Jules Verne to analyse the extent to which his predictions came true. Verne wasn't a dystopian science fiction writer, so he didn't portend future catastrophes. He was more utopian in his imaginings, although curiously his stories are not set in the future as such. Instead, they are presented in a parallel world, where new sciences and technologies enable 19th-century adventurers to go about their business. They are therefore 'science fiction', but not strictly futuristic. The first book to take a character forwards in time was *The Time Machine* by H.G. Wells. Of course, the central character also travels backwards in time, to prehistory.

Verne's agenda was really about asking the question 'what if?'. What if people could dig to the centre of the earth, travel beneath the waves, journey to the moon or fly around the world? As a consequence, he quite logically invented the vehicles and equipment he imagined they would need. He was being pragmatic and he implemented his contemporaneous understanding of science in both designing paraphernalia and deciding what problems different environments might throw up.

As scientists did not understand earth dynamics until the latter half of the 20th century, it was conceivable at the time that one could dig to the centre of the planet, just as his characters do in *Journey to the Centre of the Earth*. Similarly, in *From the Earth to the Moon* he has his characters employing a canon to fire them to the moon. This wouldn't work on two levels. Nevertheless, Verne did anticipate space flight, the submarine, mechanical flying machines, tunnelling machines and so on. Some of these were already in the embryonic stages of their development into operational and practical devices of course, although it is not entirely clear whether Verne knew about any of them or was genuinely basing his ideas on original thought.

No matter, for Verne was a novelist, not an inventor and his

application of science and technology was all about creating the necessary illusion to make the reader believe in the adventure. By the time anyone knew any better he and his readership were consigned to history.

JOURNEY TO THE CENTRE OF THE EARTH

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CHAPTER 1

The Professor and His Family

On the 24th of May, 1863, my uncle, Professor Liedenbrock, rushed into his little house, No. 19 Königstrasse, one of the oldest streets in the oldest portion of the city of Hamburg.

Martha must have concluded that she was very much behind-hand, for the dinner had only just been put into the oven.

"Well, now," said I to myself, "if that most impatient of men is hungry, what a disturbance he will make!"

"M. Liedenbrock so soon!" cried poor Martha in great alarm, half opening the dining-room door.

"Yes, Martha; but very likely the dinner is not half cooked, for it is not two yet. Saint Michael's clock has only just struck half-past one."

"Then why has the master come home so soon?"

"Perhaps he will tell us that himself."

"Here he is, Monsieur Axel; I will run and hide myself while you argue with him."

And Martha retreated in safety into her own dominions.

I was left alone. But how was it possible for a man of my undecided turn of mind to argue successfully with so irascible a person as the Professor? With this persuasion I was hurrying away to my own little retreat upstairs, when the street door creaked upon its hinges; heavy feet made the whole flight of stairs shake; and the

master of the house, passing rapidly through the dining-room, threw himself in haste into his own sanctum.

But on his rapid way he had found time to fling his hazel stick into a corner, his rough broadbrim upon the table, and these few emphatic words at his nephew:

“Axel, follow me!”

I had scarcely had time to move when the Professor was again shouting after me:

“What! not come yet?”

And I rushed into my redoubtable master’s study.

Otto Liedenbrock had no mischief in him, I willingly allow that; but unless he very considerably changes as he grows older, at the end he will be a most original character.

He was professor at the *Johannæum*, and was delivering a series of lectures on mineralogy, in the course of every one of which he broke into a passion once or twice at least. Not at all that he was over-anxious about the improvement of his class, or about the degree of attention with which they listened to him, or the success which might eventually crown his labours. Such little matters of detail never troubled him much. His teaching was, as the German philosophy calls it, “subjective”; it was to benefit himself, not others. He was a learned egotist. He was a well of science, and the pulleys worked uneasily when you wanted to draw anything out of it. In a word, he was a learned miser.

Germany has not a few professors of this sort.

To his misfortune, my uncle was not gifted with a sufficiently rapid utterance; not, to be sure, when he was talking at home, but certainly in his public delivery; this is a want much to be deplored in a speaker. The fact is, that during the course of his lectures at the *Johannæum*, the Professor often came to a complete standstill; he fought with wilful words that refused to pass his struggling lips, such words as resist and distend the cheeks, and at last break out into the unasked-for shape of a round and most unscientific oath: then his fury would gradually abate.

Now in mineralogy there are many half-Greek and half-Latin

terms, very hard to articulate, and which would be most trying to a poet's measures. I don't wish to say a word against so respectable a science, far be that from me. True, in the august presence of rhombohedral crystals, retinasphaltic resins, gehlenites, Fassaites, molybdenites, tungstates of manganese, and titanite of zirconium, why, the most facile of tongues may make a slip now and then.

It therefore happened that this venial fault of my uncle's came to be pretty well understood in time, and an unfair advantage was taken of it; the students laid wait for him in dangerous places, and when he began to stumble, loud was the laughter, which is not in good taste, not even in Germans. And if there was always a full audience to honour the Liedenbrock courses, I should be sorry to conjecture how many came to make merry at my uncle's expense.

Nevertheless my good uncle was a man of deep learning—a fact I am most anxious to assert and reassert. Sometimes he might irretrievably injure a specimen by his too great ardour in handling it; but still he united the genius of a true geologist with the keen eye of the mineralogist. Armed with his hammer, his steel pointer, his magnetic needles, his blowpipe, and his bottle of nitric acid, he was a powerful man of science. He would refer any mineral to its proper place among the six hundred* elementary substances now enumerated, by its fracture, its appearance, its hardness, its fusibility, its sonorousness, its smell, and its taste.

The name of Liedenbrock was honourably mentioned in colleges and learned societies. Humphry Davy,[†] Humboldt, Captain Sir John Franklin, General Sabine, never failed to call upon him on their way through Hamburg. Becquerel, Ebelman, Brewster, Dumas, Milne-Edwards, Saint-Claire-Deville frequently consulted him upon the most difficult problems in chemistry, a science which was indebted to him for considerable discoveries, for in 1853 there had

*Sixty-three. (Tr.)

[†]As Sir Humphry Davy died in 1829, the translator must be pardoned for pointing out here an anachronism, unless we are to assume that the learned Professor's celebrity dawned in his earliest fears. (Tr.)

appeared at Leipzig an imposing folio by Otto Liedenbrock, entitled, "A Treatise upon Transcendental Chemistry," with plates; a work, however, which failed to cover its expenses.

To all these titles to honour let me add that my uncle was the curator of the museum of mineralogy formed by M. Struve, the Russian ambassador; a most valuable collection, the fame of which is European.

Such was the gentleman who addressed me in that impetuous manner. Fancy a tall, spare man, of an iron constitution, and with a fair complexion which took off a good ten years from the fifty he must own to. His restless eyes were in incessant motion behind his full-sized spectacles. His long, thin nose was like a knife blade. Boys have been heard to remark that that organ was magnetised and attracted iron filings. But this was merely a mischievous report; it had no attraction except for snuff, which it seemed to draw to itself in great quantities.

When I have added, to complete my portrait, that my uncle walked by mathematical strides of a yard and a half, and that in walking he kept his fists firmly closed, a sure sign of an irritable temperament, I think I shall have said enough to disenchant any one who should by mistake have coveted much of his company.

He lived in his own little house in Königstrasse, a structure half brick and half wood, with a gable cut into steps; it looked upon one of those winding canals which intersect each other in the middle of the ancient quarter of Hamburg, and which the great fire of 1842 had fortunately spared.

It is true that the old house stood slightly off the perpendicular, and bulged out a little towards the street; its roof sloped a little to one side, like the cap over the left ear of a Tugendbund student; its lines wanted accuracy; but after all, it stood firm, thanks to an old elm which buttressed it in front, and which often in spring sent its young sprays through the window panes.

My uncle was tolerably well off for a German professor. The house was his own, and everything in it. The living contents were his god-daughter Gräuben, a young Virlandaise of seventeen, Martha,