A Journey to the Centre of the Earth

Jules Verne

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A JOURNEY TO THE CENTRE OF THE EARTH

By Jules Verne

[Redactor's Note: Journey to the Centre of the Earth is number V002 in the Taves and Michaluk numbering of the works of Jules Verne. First published in England by Griffith and Farran, 1871, this edition is not a translation at all but a complete re-write of the novel, with portions added and omitted, and names changed. The most reprinted version, it is entered into Project Gutenberg for reference purposes only. A better translation is _A Journey into the Interior of the Earth_ translated by Rev. F. A. Malleson, also available on Project Gutenberg.]

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1 MY UNCLE MAKES A GREAT DISCOVERY

CHAPTER 2 THE MYSTERIOUS PARCHMENT

CHAPTER 3 AN ASTOUNDING DISCOVERY

CHAPTER 4 WE START ON THE JOURNEY

CHAPTER 5 FIRST LESSONS IN CLIMBING

CHAPTER 6 OUR VOYAGE TO ICELAND

CHAPTER 7 CONVERSATION AND DISCOVERY

CHAPTER 8 THE EIDER-DOWN HUNTER--OFF AT LAST

CHAPTER 9 OUR START--WE MEET WITH ADVENTURES BY THE WAY

CHAPTER 10 TRAVELING IN ICELAND

CHAPTER 11 WE REACH MOUNT SNEFFELS--THE "REYKIR"

CHAPTER 12 THE ASCENT OF MOUNT SNEFFELS

CHAPTER 13 THE SHADOW OF SCARTARIS

CHAPTER 14 THE REAL JOURNEY COMMENCES

CHAPTER 15 WE CONTINUE OUR DESCENT

CHAPTER 16 THE EASTERN TUNNEL

CHAPTER 17 DEEPER AND DEEPER--THE COAL MINE

CHAPTER 18 THE WRONG ROAD!

CHAPTER 19 THE WESTERN GALLERY--A NEW ROUTE

CHAPTER 20 WATER, WHERE IS IT? A BITTER DISAPPOINTMENT

CHAPTER 21 UNDER THE OCEAN

CHAPTER 22 SUNDAY BELOW GROUND

CHAPTER 23 ALONE

CHAPTER 24 LOST!

CHAPTER 25 THE WHISPERING GALLERY

CHAPTER 26 A RAPID RECOVERY

CHAPTER 27 THE CENTRAL SEA

CHAPTER 28 LAUNCHING THE RAFT

CHAPTER 29 ON THE WATERS--A RAFT VOYAGE

CHAPTER 30 TERRIFIC SAURIAN COMBAT

CHAPTER 31 THE SEA MONSTER

CHAPTER 32 THE BATTLE OF THE ELEMENTS

CHAPTER 33 OUR ROUTE REVERSED

CHAPTER 34 A VOYAGE OF DISCOVERY

CHAPTER 35 DISCOVERY UPON DISCOVERY

CHAPTER 36 WHAT IS IT?

CHAPTER 37 THE MYSTERIOUS DAGGER

CHAPTER 38 NO OUTLET--BLASTING THE ROCK

CHAPTER 39 THE EXPLOSION AND ITS RESULTS

CHAPTER 40 THE APE GIGANS

CHAPTER 41 HUNGER

CHAPTER 42 THE VOLCANIC SHAFT

CHAPTER 43 DAYLIGHT AT LAST

CHAPTER 44 THE JOURNEY ENDED

CHAPTER 1

MY UNCLE MAKES A GREAT DISCOVERY

Looking back to all that has occurred to me since that eventful day, I

am scarcely able to believe in the reality of my adventures. They were truly so wonderful that even now I am bewildered when I think of them.

My uncle was a German, having married my mother's sister, an Englishwoman. Being very much attached to his fatherless nephew, he invited me to study under him in his home in the fatherland. This home was in a large town, and my uncle a professor of philosophy, chemistry, geology, mineralogy, and many other ologies.

One day, after passing some hours in the laboratory--my uncle being absent at the time--I suddenly felt the necessity of renovating the tissues--i.e., I was hungry, and was about to rouse up our old French cook, when my uncle, Professor Von Hardwigg, suddenly opened the street door, and came rushing upstairs.

Now Professor Hardwigg, my worthy uncle, is by no means a bad sort of man; he is, however, choleric and original. To bear with him means to obey; and scarcely had his heavy feet resounded within our joint domicile than he shouted for me to attend upon him.

"Harry--Harry--Harry--"

I hastened to obey, but before I could reach his room, jumping three steps at a time, he was stamping his right foot upon the landing.

"Harry!" he cried, in a frantic tone, "are you coming up?"

Now to tell the truth, at that moment I was far more interested in the question as to what was to constitute our dinner than in any problem of science; to me soup was more interesting than soda, an omelette more tempting than arithmetic, and an artichoke of ten times more value than any amount of asbestos.

But my uncle was not a man to be kept waiting; so adjourning therefore all minor questions, I presented myself before him.

He was a very learned man. Now most persons in this category supply themselves with information, as peddlers do with goods, for the benefit of others, and lay up stores in order to diffuse them abroad for the benefit of society in general. Not so my excellent uncle, Professor Hardwigg; he studied, he consumed the midnight oil, he pored over heavy tomes, and digested huge quartos and folios in order to keep the knowledge acquired to himself.

There was a reason, and it may be regarded as a good one, why my uncle objected to display his learning more than was absolutely necessary: he stammered; and when intent upon explaining the phenomena of the heavens, was apt to find himself at fault, and allude in such a vague way to sun, moon, and stars that few were able to comprehend his meaning. To tell the honest truth, when the right word would not come, it was generally replaced by a very powerful adjective.

In connection with the sciences there are many almost unpronounceable names--names very much resembling those of Welsh villages; and my uncle being very fond of using them, his habit of stammering was not thereby improved. In fact, there were periods in his discourse when he would finally give up and swallow his discomfiture--in a glass of water.

As I said, my uncle, Professor Hardwigg, was a very learned man; and I now add a most kind relative. I was bound to him by the double ties of affection and interest. I took deep interest in all his doings, and hoped some day to be almost as learned myself. It was a rare thing for

me to be absent from his lectures. Like him, I preferred mineralogy to all the other sciences. My anxiety was to gain real knowledge of the earth. Geology and mineralogy were to us the sole objects of life, and in connection with these studies many a fair specimen of stone, chalk, or metal did we break with our hammers.

Steel rods, loadstones, glass pipes, and bottles of various acids were oftener before us than our meals. My uncle Hardwigg was once known to classify six hundred different geological specimens by their weight, hardness, fusibility, sound, taste, and smell.

He corresponded with all the great, learned, and scientific men of the age. I was, therefore, in constant communication with, at all events the letters of, Sir Humphry Davy, Captain Franklin, and other great men.

But before I state the subject on which my uncle wished to confer with me, I must say a word about his personal appearance. Alas! my readers will see a very different portrait of him at a future time, after he has gone through the fearful adventures yet to be related.

My uncle was fifty years old; tall, thin, and wiry. Large spectacles hid, to a certain extent, his vast, round, and goggle eyes, while his nose was irreverently compared to a thin file. So much indeed did it resemble that useful article, that a compass was said in his presence to have made considerable N (Nasal) deviation.

The truth being told, however, the only article really attracted to my uncle's nose was tobacco.

Another peculiarity of his was, that he always stepped a yard at a time, clenched his fists as if he were going to hit you, and was, when

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