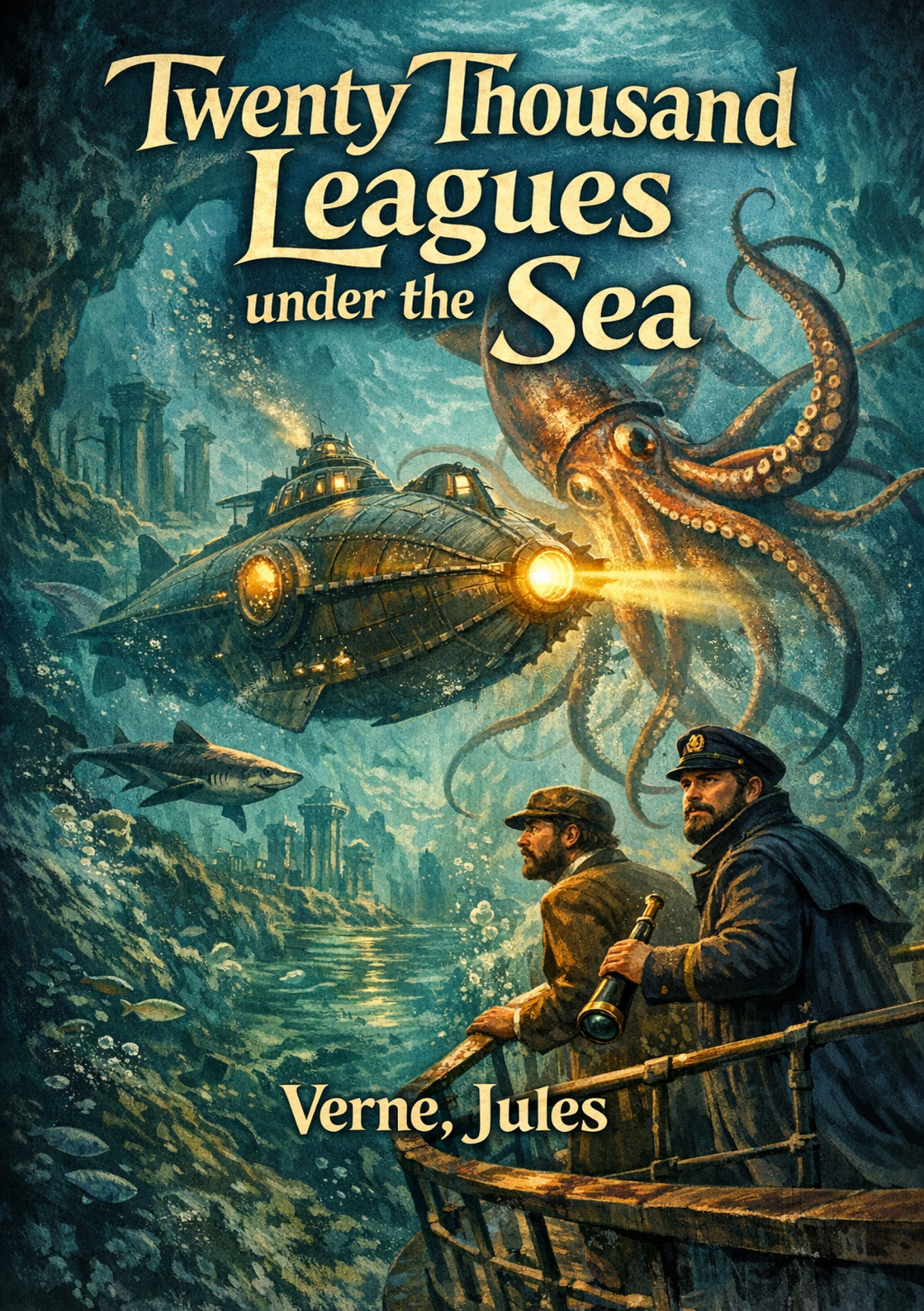

Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Sea
Verne, Jules

Contents

CHAPTER I A SHIFTING REEF 3
CHAPTER II PRO AND CON 12
CHAPTER III I FORM MY RESOLUTION 19
CHAPTER IV NED LAND 26
CHAPTER V: AT A VENTURE 35
CHAPTER VI AT FULL STEAM 42
CHAPTER VII AN UNKNOWN SPECIES OF WHALE 52
CHAPTER VIII MOBILIS IN MOBILI 60
CHAPTER IX NED LAND'S OUTBURSTS 69
CHAPTER X THE MAN OF THE SEAS 74
CHAPTER XI ALL BY ELECTRICITY 92
CHAPTER XII SOME FIGURES 100
CHAPTER XIII THE BLACK RIVER 108
CHAPTER XIV A NOTE OF INVITATION 117
CHAPTER XV A WALK ON THE BOTTOM OF THE SEA 127
CHAPTER XVI A SUBMARINE FOREST 133
CHAPTER XVII FOUR THOUSAND LEAGUES UNDER T... 142
CHAPTER XVIII VANIKORO 150
CHAPTER XIX TORRES STRAITS 160
CHAPTER XX A FEW DAYS ON LAND 169
CHAPTER XXI CAPTAIN NEMO'S THUNDERBOLT 180
CHAPTER XXII "ÆGRI SOMNIA" 194
CHAPTER XXIII THE CORAL KINGDOM 203
CHAPTER I: THE INDIAN OCEAN 212
CHAPTER II A NOVEL PROPOSAL OF CAPTAIN NEMO'S 222

CHAPTER III A PEARL OF TEN MILLIONS 229
CHAPTER IV THE RED SEA 242
CHAPTER V THE ARABIAN TUNNEL 255
CHAPTER VI THE GRECIAN ARCHIPELAGO 264
CHAPTER VII THE MEDITERRANEAN IN FORTY-EIGHT... 277
CHAPTER VIII VIGO BAY 282
CHAPTER IX A VANISHED CONTINENT 295
CHAPTER X THE SUBMARINE COAL-MINES 307
CHAPTER XI THE SARGASSO SEA 317
CHAPTER XII CACHALOTS AND WHALES 324
CHAPTER XIII THE ICEBERG 336
CHAPTER XIV THE SOUTH POLE 347
CHAPTER XV ACCIDENT OR INCIDENT? 360
CHAPTER XVI LACK OF AIR 369
CHAPTER XVII FROM CAPE HORN TO THE AMAZON 381
CHAPTER XVIII THE POULPS 390
CHAPTER XIX THE GULF STREAM 399
CHAPTER XX FROM LATITUDE 47° 24′ TO LONGITUDE... 409
CHAPTER XXI A HECATOMB 416
CHAPTER XXII THE LAST WORDS OF CAPTAIN NEMO 428
CHAPTER XXIII CONCLUSION 438

CHAPTER I A SHIFTING REEF

The year 1866 was marked by a remarkable event, a mysterious and baffling phenomenon that surely no one has yet forgotten. Leaving aside the rumors that stirred up people connected with the sea and captured the public imagination even far inland, seafaring men in particular were intensely excited. Merchants, ordinary sailors, ship captains, skippers in both Europe and America, naval officers of every nation, and the governments of several states on the two continents were all deeply concerned with the matter.

For some time, ships had been encountering “an enormous thing,” a long, spindle-shaped object, sometimes phosphorescent, and far larger and faster in its movements than a whale.

The reports of this apparition, recorded in various logbooks, agreed on most points: the shape of the object or creature, the tireless speed of its movements, its astonishing power of motion, and the strange vitality it seemed to possess. If it was a cetacean, it was larger than any yet classified by science. If we take the average of the observations made at different times—setting aside the cautious estimate of those who gave it a length of two hundred feet, as well as the exaggerated claims that described it as a mile wide and three miles long—we may reasonably conclude that this mysterious being, if it existed at all, far exceeded every size accepted by the ichthyologists of the time. Yet its existence was undeniable. And given the human tendency to favor the marvelous, we can understand the excitement this supernatural apparition caused throughout the



world. As for dismissing it as a fable, that was out of the question.

On July 20, 1866, the steamer Governor Higginson, belonging to the Calcutta and Burnach Steam Navigation Company, encountered this moving mass five miles off the east coast of Australia. At first, Captain Baker thought he was looking at an unknown sandbank. He even got ready to fix its exact position. But then the mysterious object sent up two columns of water, which shot 150 feet into the air with a hissing sound. So unless that sandbank was somehow erupting like a geyser at intervals, the Governor Higginson was dealing with nothing less than an aquatic mammal, unknown until then, that expelled columns of water mixed with air and vapor through its blowholes.

Similar events were reported on July 23 of the same year in the Pacific Ocean by the Columbus, of the West India and Pacific Steam Navigation Company. But this extraordinary whale-like creature could move from one place to another with astonishing speed. In the space of just three days, the Governor Higginson and the Columbus had seen it at two different points on the chart more than seven hundred nautical leagues apart.

Fifteen days later, two thousand miles farther on, the Helvetia, of the Compagnie-Nationale, and the Shannon, of the Royal Mail Steamship Company, were sailing close to the wind in the part of the Atlantic between the United States and Europe when they signaled to each other that they had sighted the monster at 42° 15′ N. latitude and 60° 35′ W. longitude. From these simultaneous observations, they believed they were justified in estimating the mammal's minimum length at more than three

hundred and fifty feet, since the Shannon and the Helvetia were both smaller than it, though each measured three hundred feet from end to end.

Yet the largest whales, the ones found in the seas around the Aleutian, Kulammak, and Umgullich islands, have never been more than sixty yards long, if they even reach that size.

As these reports kept coming in one after another—new observations made aboard the transatlantic ship Pereire, news of a collision between the Inman liner Etna and the monster, an official report filed by the officers of the French frigate Normandie, and a highly precise survey carried out by Commodore Fitz-James's staff aboard the Lord Clyde—they had a strong effect on public opinion. Careless thinkers joked about the phenomenon, but serious, practical nations such as England, America, and Germany treated it much more seriously.

In every crowded public place, the monster became the latest craze. People sang about it in cafés, mocked it in the newspapers, and put it on the stage. All sorts of stories about it were passed around. Newspapers printed caricatures of every kind of gigantic imaginary creature, from the white whale—the dreadful "Moby Dick" of the polar regions—to the enormous kraken, whose tentacles could wrap around a ship of five hundred tons and drag it down into the depths of the ocean. Even the legends of ancient times were brought back, along with the views of Aristotle and Pliny, who accepted the existence of such monsters, as well as the Norwegian tales of Bishop Pontoppidan, the accounts of Paul Heggede, and finally the reports of Mr. Harrington, whose honesty no one could

doubt. He claimed that while aboard the Castillan in 1857, he had seen this enormous serpent, which until then had never appeared in any seas except those of the old “Constitutionnel.”

Then the endless debate broke out between believers and skeptics in learned societies and scientific journals. “The question of the monster” set everyone’s mind on fire. Editors of scientific journals argued with those who believed in the supernatural and poured out oceans of ink during this memorable dispute. Some even came to blows, for from arguing about the sea serpent they moved on to personal attacks.

For six months, the debate raged back and forth in the leading publications of the Geographical Institution of Brazil, the Royal Academy of Science of Berlin, the British Association, and the Smithsonian Institution in Washington. It also filled the discussions of the “Indian Archipelago,” the Cosmos of the Abbé Moigno, Petermann’s Mittheilungen, and the scientific columns of major newspapers in France and elsewhere. The cheaper papers joined in with sharp attacks and endless enthusiasm. These satirical writers mocked a remark by Linnaeus, quoted by the monster’s opponents, insisting that “nature did not make fools,” and they urged their readers not to insult nature by believing in krakens, sea-serpents, “Moby Dicks,” and the other fantasies of feverish sailors. At last, an article in a well-known satirical journal, written by one of its most popular contributors, the head of the staff, finished off the monster like Hippolytus, striking the final blow in the middle of a universal roar of laughter. Wit had defeated science.

During the first months of 1867, the question seemed dead and buried, never likely to return, when new facts were laid before the public. It was no longer a scientific puzzle to solve, but a real danger that had to be seriously avoided. The whole issue took on a very different form. The monster became a small island, a rock, a reef—but a reef of uncertain and shifting size.

On March 5, 1867, the Moravian, of the Montreal Ocean Company, was sailing at night in 27° 30′ latitude and 72° 15′ longitude when she struck, on her starboard quarter, a rock that appeared on no chart of that part of the sea. Driven by both the wind and her four hundred horsepower engines, she was moving at thirteen knots. If the hull of the Moravian had not been exceptionally strong, the shock would have broken her apart, and she would have sunk with the 237 passengers she was bringing home from Canada.

The accident happened at about five in the morning, just as day was breaking. The quarter-deck officers rushed to the stern of the ship. They searched the sea with the greatest care. They saw nothing except a strong whirlpool about three cable lengths away, as though the surface had been violently disturbed. They took the exact bearings of the spot, and the Moravian continued on its course with no visible damage. Had it struck a submerged rock, or some huge wreck? They could not say. But when the ship's hull was inspected during repairs, they found that part of the keel had been broken.

Serious as this incident was, it might have been forgotten like so many others if the same thing had not happened again three weeks later under similar circumstances. But because of the

nationality of the vessel that was struck, and the reputation of the company that owned her, the story spread widely.

On April 13, 1867, with the sea calm and the breeze favorable, the Scotia of the Cunard Line was at 15° 12′ longitude and 45° 37′ latitude. She was traveling at a speed of thirteen and a half knots.

At seventeen minutes past four in the afternoon, while the passengers were gathered at lunch in the main saloon, a slight shock was felt along the hull of the Scotia, on her quarter, a little behind the port paddle.

The Scotia had not run into anything; instead, something had struck her, and it seemed to be sharp and piercing rather than blunt. The impact was so slight that no one would have been alarmed if the carpenter's watch had not rushed onto the bridge shouting, "We are sinking! we are sinking!" At first the passengers were badly frightened, but Captain Anderson quickly reassured them. The danger could not be immediate. The Scotia was divided by strong bulkheads into seven compartments, and she could withstand any leak without serious risk. Captain Anderson went down into the hold at once. There he found that seawater was pouring into the fifth compartment, and the speed of the flooding showed that the force of the water was great. Fortunately, the boilers were not in that compartment, or the fires would have been put out at once. Captain Anderson immediately ordered the engines stopped, and one of the crew went down to determine how serious the damage was. A few minutes later they discovered a large hole in the ship's bottom, two yards across. A leak like that could not

be repaired, and the Scotia, with her paddles half submerged, had no choice but to continue on her course. She was then three hundred miles from Cape Clear, and after a delay of three days, which caused great anxiety in Liverpool, she entered the company's basin.

The engineers examined the Scotia after she had been placed in dry dock. They could hardly believe what they saw. Two and a half yards below the waterline was a clean tear in the shape of an isosceles triangle. The break in the iron plates was so sharply cut that it could not have been done more neatly by a punch. It was clear, then, that whatever had made the hole was no ordinary instrument. After being driven forward with tremendous force and piercing an iron plate 1-3/8 inches thick, it had then pulled itself back in a retreat that was truly impossible to explain.

This was the latest event, and it once again stirred up a flood of public opinion. From that moment on, every unfortunate accident that could not be explained in some other way was blamed on the monster. This imaginary creature was held responsible for all these shipwrecks, which unfortunately were numerous. Of the three thousand ships whose losses were recorded each year at Lloyd's, no fewer than two hundred sailing ships and steamships were thought to be totally lost simply because no news of them was ever received.

Now the "monster," rightly or wrongly, was being blamed for their disappearance, and because of it, travel and communication between the continents were becoming more and more dangerous. The public demanded, in no uncertain

terms, that the seas be cleared of this terrifying cetacean at any cost.

CHAPTER II PRO AND CON

When these events took place, I had just returned from a scientific expedition in the unpleasant region of Nebraska, in the United States. In my role as Assistant Professor at the Museum of Natural History in Paris, the French Government had assigned me to that expedition. After six months in Nebraska, I reached New York near the end of March, carrying a valuable collection with me. I was to leave for France in the first days of May. In the meantime, I was busy classifying my mineral, botanical, and zoological specimens when the accident happened to the Scotia.

I was thoroughly familiar with the subject everyone was talking about. How could I not be? I had read and reread all the American and European newspapers without coming any closer to a conclusion. The mystery baffled me. Unable to form a firm opinion, I swung from one extreme view to the other. That something really existed could not be doubted, and those who refused to believe it were invited to put their finger on the wound in the Scotia.

When I arrived in New York, the debate was at its peak. The theory of a floating island, or an inaccessible sandbank, defended by people poorly qualified to judge, had been abandoned. And in fact, unless this shoal had a machine in its stomach, how could it move from place to place with such astonishing speed?

For the same reason, people also gave up the idea that it was the floating hull of some enormous wreck.

That left only two possible explanations, and they split opinion into two clear camps: on one side were those who believed in a monster of colossal strength; on the other were those who believed in an underwater vessel with enormous driving power.

But this last theory, plausible as it seemed, could not survive the investigations carried out in both the Old World and the New. It was unlikely that a private individual would have such a machine at his disposal. Where, when, and how had it been built? And how could its construction have been kept secret? A government, certainly, might possess such a destructive device. And in these troubled times, when human ingenuity had greatly increased the power of weapons of war, it was possible that a nation might be testing such a formidable engine without the knowledge of others. After the chassepots came the torpedoes; after the torpedoes, the submarine rams; then—the reaction. At least, I hope so.

But the theory that it was a war machine collapsed once the governments made their declarations. Since the public interest was involved, and transatlantic communications were being affected, there was no reason to doubt their truthfulness. Still, how could one believe that the construction of such a submarine vessel had escaped public notice? For a private individual to keep such a secret under those conditions would have been extremely difficult, and for a state, whose every action is constantly watched by powerful rivals, plainly impossible.

After investigations in England, France, Russia, Prussia, Spain, Italy, and America, and even in Turkey, the idea of a submarine

monitor was finally dismissed.

When I arrived in New York, several people did me the honor of asking my opinion about the phenomenon in question. In France I had published a quarto work in two volumes entitled "Mysteries of the Great Submarine Grounds." The book, which had been highly praised in learned circles, had earned me a particular reputation in this rather obscure branch of Natural History. People asked for my advice. As long as I could deny that the thing was real, I gave an unqualified no. But before long, finding myself cornered, I was forced to state my position plainly. At last, even "the Honourable Pierre Aronnax, Professor in the Museum of Paris," was called upon by the New York Herald to give some definite opinion. So I did. I spoke, because I lacked the power to keep silent. I examined the question in all its forms, political and scientific alike; and I give here an extract from a carefully considered article that I published in the issue of the 30th of April. It read as follows:

"After examining the different hypotheses one by one and rejecting every other explanation, we are forced to admit that a marine animal of enormous power exists."

"The great depths of the ocean are completely unknown to us. Soundings cannot reach them. What happens in those distant depths? What creatures live there, or could live there, twelve or fifteen miles below the surface? What is the structure of these animals? We can hardly even guess. Still, the answer to the problem put before me may change the terms of the dilemma. Either we know all the kinds of beings that inhabit our planet, or we do not. If we do not know them all—if Nature still keeps

secrets from us in ichthyology—then it is perfectly reasonable to accept the existence of fishes, or cetaceans of other kinds, or even entirely new species, organized to live in layers of the sea beyond the reach of soundings, and brought only at long intervals to the upper levels of the ocean by some accident, whether strange or capricious."

"If, on the other hand, we do know all living kinds, then we must look for the animal in question among the marine creatures already classified; and in that case, I would be inclined to accept the existence of a gigantic narwhal."

"The common narwhal, or unicorn of the sea, often reaches a length of sixty feet. Increase its size fivefold or tenfold. Give it strength in proportion to that size. Lengthen its destructive weapon, and you have the animal we need. It would match the dimensions reported by the officers of the Shannon, possess the instrument required to make the hole in the Scotia, and have the power needed to pierce the steamer's hull."

"Indeed, the narwhal is armed with a kind of ivory sword—a halberd, as some naturalists call it. Its main tusk is as hard as steel. Some of these tusks have been found buried in the bodies of whales, which the unicorn attacks successfully every time. Others have been pulled out, with great difficulty, from the bottoms of ships that they had pierced clean through, the way a gimlet bores through a barrel. The Museum of the Faculty of Medicine of Paris possesses one of these weapons, measuring two and a quarter yards in length and fifteen inches in diameter at the base."

“Very well! Imagine this weapon were six times stronger and the animal ten times more powerful. Send it forward at twenty miles an hour, and you would get an impact strong enough to cause the required disaster. So, until I learn more, I will continue to believe it is a gigantic sea unicorn, armed not with a halberd but with a true spur, like the armored frigates, or war ‘rams,’ whose great weight and driving force it would share. In that way, this puzzling phenomenon can be explained—unless it is something beyond anything anyone has ever imagined, seen, noticed, or experienced, which is still just possible.”

Those last words were a cowardly retreat on my part. But to a certain extent, I wanted to protect my dignity as a professor and not give the Americans too much reason to laugh, since they laugh heartily when they do laugh.

I had left myself a way out. In reality, though, I accepted the existence of the “monster.” My article was discussed with great enthusiasm, and that gave it considerable prestige. It gathered a number of supporters around it. The explanation it offered at least gave free rein to the imagination. The human mind takes pleasure in grand visions of supernatural creatures. And the sea is exactly the best setting for them, the only environment in which these giants—beside which land animals such as elephants or rhinoceroses are nothing—can be created or allowed to grow.”

The industrial and commercial newspapers looked at the issue mainly from that angle. The Shipping and Mercantile Gazette, Lloyd’s List, the Packet-Boat, and the Maritime and Colonial Review—papers closely tied to insurance companies that were

threatening to raise their premium rates—were all in complete agreement. Public opinion had made itself clear. The United States moved first, and in New York preparations began for an expedition to hunt down this narwhal. A very fast frigate, the Abraham Lincoln, was commissioned as quickly as possible. The naval arsenals were opened to Commander Farragut, who hurried to arm his ship. But, as so often happens, the moment the decision was made to pursue the monster, the monster vanished. For two months, no one heard anything about it. No ship encountered it. It seemed as though this unicorn knew about the plans being laid against it. It had been discussed so much, even over the Atlantic cable, that jokers claimed the nimble creature had intercepted a telegram on the way and was taking full advantage of the news.

So when the frigate had been equipped for a long voyage and supplied with fearsome hunting gear, no one knew which direction to take. Impatience mounted quickly. Then, on July 2, word came that a steamer on the San Francisco line, sailing from California to Shanghai, had seen the animal three weeks earlier in the North Pacific Ocean. The excitement caused by this news was intense. The ship was reprovisioned and loaded with coal.

Three hours before the Abraham Lincoln left the Brooklyn pier, I received a letter written as follows:

"To M. Aronnax, Professor at the Museum of Paris, Fifth Avenue Hotel, New York.

"Sir,—If you are willing to join the Abraham Lincoln on this expedition, the Government of the United States will be pleased

to have France represented in the enterprise. Commander Farragut has a cabin reserved for you.

"Very cordially yours, "J. B. Hobson, "Secretary of Marine."

CHAPTER III I FORM MY RESOLUTION

Three seconds before J. B. Hobson's letter arrived, I was no more inclined to hunt the unicorn than I was to try crossing the North Sea. Three seconds after reading the letter from the honorable Secretary of Marine, I felt that my true calling—the one purpose of my life—was to pursue this troublesome monster and rid the world of it.

But I had just come back from an exhausting journey, tired and eager for rest. I wanted nothing more than to see my country again, my friends, my little home by the Jardin des Plantes, and my dear, precious collections. But nothing could hold me back. I forgot everything—fatigue, friends, and collections—and accepted the American Government's offer without hesitation.

"Besides," I thought, "all roads lead back to Europe—for my particular benefit—and I need not rush toward the coast of France. This worthy creature may very well allow itself to be captured in European seas—for my particular benefit—and I will bring back no less than half a yard of its ivory halberd for the Museum of Natural History." But first I had to go in search of this narwhal in the North Pacific Ocean, which, if I wanted to return to France, meant taking the road to the antipodes.

"Conseil," I called impatiently.

Conseil was my servant, a loyal and devoted Flemish fellow who had accompanied me on all my travels. I was fond of him, and he was equally fond of me. By nature he was calm, by principle



methodical, and by habit diligent. Life's many surprises hardly ever disturbed him. He was quick with his hands and capable in any task I asked of him. And despite his name, he never gave advice—even when I asked for it.

For the past ten years, Conseil had followed me wherever science led. Not once did he complain about the length or hardship of a journey, or object to packing his portmanteau for any country, no matter how distant—whether China or the Congo. On top of that, he enjoyed excellent health, seemed immune to illness, and had strong muscles but no nerves, so to speak; and of course he had good morals. This young man was thirty years old, and his age compared to his master's as fifteen does to twenty. May I be forgiven for admitting that I was forty?

But Conseil did have one fault: he was excessively formal, and he never spoke to me except in the third person, which could sometimes be irritating.

"Conseil," I said again, my hands shaking with excitement as I started getting ready to leave.

I had complete confidence in this devoted boy. Normally, I never asked whether it was convenient for him to accompany me on my travels. But this time the expedition might last a long while, and the undertaking could be dangerous, since we were hunting an animal capable of sinking a frigate as easily as if it were a nutshell. Even the calmest man in the world would have had to stop and think. What would Conseil say?

"Conseil," I called a third time.

Conseil came in.

“Did you call, sir?” he said as he entered.

“Yes, my boy. Get ready for me, and for yourself as well. We leave in two hours.”

“As you wish, sir,” Conseil replied calmly.

“There’s not a moment to lose. Pack all my travel things into my trunk—coats, shirts, stockings—don’t stop to count them, just put in as many as you can, and be quick.”

“And your collections, sir?” Conseil asked.

“We’ll think about them later.”

“What! The archiotherium, the hyracotherium, the oreodons, the cheropotamus, and the other skins?”

“They can keep them at the hotel.”

“And your live Babiroussa, sir?”

“They’ll feed it while we’re away. Besides, I’ll give orders to send our menagerie on to France.”

“Then we are not returning to Paris?” said Conseil.

“Oh, certainly,” I answered evasively, “but by a roundabout route.”

“Will that route suit you, sir?”

“Oh, it will be nothing—just not quite the most direct way, that’s all. We are taking passage on the Abraham Lincoln.”

“As you think best, sir,” Conseil replied coolly.

“You see, my friend, this concerns the monster—the famous narwhal. We are going to rid the seas of it. The author of a quarto work in two volumes, ‘Mysteries of the Great Submarine Grounds,’ simply cannot refuse to sail with Commander Farragut. It is a glorious mission, but a dangerous one. We have no idea where we may end up; these creatures can be very unpredictable. But go we must. We have a captain who is thoroughly alert.”

I opened a line of credit for Babiroussa, and with Conseil right behind me, I jumped into a cab. Our luggage was taken straight to the frigate’s deck. I hurried on board and asked for Commander Farragut. One of the sailors led me to the poop, where I found myself face to face with a handsome officer who held out his hand to me.

“Monsieur Pierre Aronnax?” he said.

“The same,” I replied. “Commander Farragut?”

“Welcome, Professor; your cabin is ready for you.”

I bowed and asked to be shown to the cabin assigned to me.

The Abraham Lincoln had been well selected and outfitted for her new mission. She was a fast frigate, equipped with high-pressure engines that could work at seven atmospheres of pressure. With this power, the Abraham Lincoln could make an average speed of nearly eighteen and a third knots an hour—a considerable speed, but still not enough to take on this gigantic cetacean.

The frigate’s interior arrangements matched her fine seagoing qualities. I was quite pleased with my cabin, which was in the

stern and opened onto the gunroom.

“We shall be very comfortable here,” I said to Conseil.

“With your permission, sir, as comfortable as a hermit crab in a whelk shell,” said Conseil.

I left Conseil to put our trunks neatly away and went back up to the poop to look over the preparations for departure.

At that moment, Commander Farragut was giving orders for the last mooring lines holding the Abraham Lincoln to the Brooklyn pier to be cast off. So within a quarter of an hour, perhaps less, the frigate would have sailed without me. I would have missed this extraordinary, supernatural, and incredible expedition, the account of which may well be met with some skepticism.

But Commander Farragut would not lose a single day or even an hour in searching the seas where the animal had been seen. He sent for the engineer.

“Is the steam up to full pressure?” he asked.

“Yes, sir,” the engineer replied.

“Full speed ahead,” cried Commander Farragut.

The Brooklyn docks, and the whole stretch of New York along the East River, were packed with spectators. Five hundred thousand voices broke into three rounds of cheers. Thousands of handkerchiefs waved above the tightly packed crowd, saluting the Abraham Lincoln as she made her way toward the Hudson, at the tip of the long peninsula that forms the city of New York. Then the frigate followed the New Jersey shore along the right bank of the beautiful river, lined with villas, and

passed between the forts, which greeted her with salutes from their heaviest guns. The Abraham Lincoln answered by raising the American flag three times, its thirty-nine stars shining brightly from the mizzenmast. Then, slowing to enter the narrow channel marked by buoys in the inner bay formed by Sandy Hook Point, she sailed along the long sandy beach, where several thousand spectators gave her one last cheer. The escort of boats and tenders still followed the frigate and stayed with her until they reached the lightship, whose two lights marked the entrance to the New York Channel.

At six bells, the pilot climbed into his boat and returned to the little schooner waiting under our lee. The fires were stoked up. The screw churned the waves faster. The frigate ran along the low yellow coast of Long Island. Then, at eight bells, after the lights of Fire Island had faded from sight in the northwest, she steamed at full speed out onto the dark waters of the Atlantic.

CHAPTER IV NED LAND

Captain Farragut was a skilled seaman, fully worthy of the frigate he commanded. He and his vessel were completely united. He was its very soul. As for the cetacean, he had no doubts at all, and he would not allow anyone on board to question that the animal existed. He believed in it the way certain devout women believe in the leviathan—through faith, not reason. The monster was real, and he had sworn to clear the seas of it. He was like a Knight of Rhodes, another Dieudonné de Gozon, setting out to face the serpent that had ravaged the island. Either Captain Farragut would kill the narwhal, or the narwhal would kill the captain. There was no third possibility.

The officers on board agreed with their commander. They were constantly talking, debating, and calculating the odds of an encounter, while scanning the vast surface of the ocean with the closest attention. More than one of them willingly took a place in the cross-trees, though under any other circumstances he would have cursed such a post. From sunrise to sunset, the rigging was crowded with sailors. The heat of the deck burned their feet so badly that it became unbearable. Even so, the Abraham Lincoln had still not entered the suspected waters of the Pacific. As for the crew, they wanted nothing more than to come across the unicorn, harpoon it, haul it aboard, and kill it. They watched the sea with intense eagerness.

Captain Farragut had also announced a reward of two thousand dollars for whoever first spotted the monster, whether cabin-boy, ordinary sailor, or officer.



You can imagine how sharply every eye was used on board the Abraham Lincoln.

As for me, I was no less eager than the others, and I gave my full share to our daily watch. The frigate might well have been called the Argus, and for good reason. Only one man among us, Conseil, seemed to object through his indifference to the question that absorbed us all, and he appeared completely out of step with the excitement on board.

I have already said that Captain Farragut had carefully equipped his ship with every device needed to capture the gigantic cetacean. No whaling vessel had ever been better armed. We had every known weapon, from the hand-thrown harpoon to the barbed arrows fired from a blunderbuss and the explosive balls of the duck-gun. On the forecastle stood a superb breech-loading cannon, very thick at the breech and very narrow in the bore, a model of which had been displayed at the Exhibition of 1867. This valuable American weapon could easily fire a conical projectile weighing nine pounds to an average distance of ten miles.

So the Abraham Lincoln lacked no means of destruction; and better still, she had Ned Land on board, the prince of harpooners.

Ned Land was a Canadian with remarkably quick hands, and no one could match him in his dangerous trade. He had exceptional skill, calmness, daring, and cunning, and only a very crafty whale or an unusually “cute” cachalot could escape his harpoon.

Ned Land was about forty years old. He was a tall man, more than six feet in height, powerfully built, serious and quiet, though at times violent and intensely passionate when contradicted. He was striking in appearance, but above all it was the boldness of his gaze that gave his face its distinctive character.

Anyone who calls himself Canadian also calls himself French; and although Ned Land was not very talkative, I must admit that he took a certain liking to me. My nationality no doubt drew him toward me. It gave him a chance to speak, and me a chance to hear, that old language of Rabelais, still spoken in some Canadian provinces. The harpooner's family originally came from Quebec, and they were already a clan of hardy fishermen when that town still belonged to France.

Little by little, Ned Land developed a taste for conversation, and I loved listening to the stories of his adventures in the polar seas. He described his hunts and his battles with a natural poetic force. His storytelling rose to the level of epic, and it seemed to me that I was hearing a Canadian Homer sing the Iliad of the northern regions.

This is how I portray this hardy companion, exactly as I knew him. We are old friends now, bound by that unchanging friendship born and strengthened in extreme danger. Ah, brave Ned! I ask only to live a hundred years more, so that I may have longer to dwell on your memory.

Now, what was Ned Land's opinion about the marine monster? I must admit that he did not believe in the unicorn, and he was the only man on board who did not share that universal

conviction. He even avoided the subject, which one day I thought it my duty to press him on. On a magnificent evening, July 30—that is, three weeks after our departure—the frigate was off Cape Blanc, thirty miles to leeward of the coast of Patagonia. We had crossed the Tropic of Capricorn, and the Straits of Magellan lay less than seven hundred miles to the south. In less than eight days, the Abraham Lincoln would be cutting through the waters of the Pacific.

Ned Land and I sat on the poop, talking about one thing and another as we looked out over this mysterious sea, whose great depths no human eye had yet been able to reach. I naturally steered the conversation toward the giant unicorn and weighed the expedition's chances of success or failure. But when I saw that Ned was letting me do most of the talking, I questioned him more directly.

"Well, Ned," I said, "is it really possible that you are not convinced this cetacean we're pursuing exists? Do you have some particular reason for being so skeptical?"

The harpooner stared at me for a few moments before answering. Then he struck his broad forehead with his hand—a habit of his—as if gathering his thoughts, and at last said, "Perhaps I do, M. Aronnax."

"But, Ned, you're a whaler by trade, familiar with all the great marine mammals. You, of all people, should be the last to doubt it in circumstances like these. Your imagination, if anyone's, ought to be ready to accept the idea of enormous cetaceans!"

“That’s exactly where you’re mistaken, Professor,” Ned replied. “Ordinary people may believe in extraordinary comets crossing space, or in antediluvian monsters living deep inside the earth; that is understandable. But no astronomer or geologist believes in such fantasies. As a whaler, I’ve tracked many cetaceans, harpooned a great number, and killed several. But no matter how strong or well armed they were, neither their tails nor their weapons could even scratch the iron plates of a steamer.”

“But, Ned, there are stories of ships that the narwhal’s teeth have pierced clean through.”

“Wooden ships—that may be possible,” the Canadian replied, “but I’ve never seen it myself. And until I have better proof, I deny that whales, cetaceans, or sea-unicorns could ever produce the effect you describe.”

“Well, Ned, I say it again, and I say it with a conviction based on the logic of the facts. I believe in the existence of a powerfully built mammal, belonging to the vertebrate branch, like whales, cachalots, or dolphins, and equipped with a defensive horn of great piercing force.”

“Hum!” said the harpooner, shaking his head like a man who had no intention of being convinced.

“Notice one thing, my good Canadian,” I went on. “If such a creature really exists, if it lives in the depths of the ocean, if it moves through layers of water miles below the surface, then it must have a body of extraordinary strength, beyond anything we can compare it to.”

“And why would it need such a powerful body?” Ned asked.

“Because it would take immense strength to remain in those depths and withstand the pressure there. Listen to me. Let us say that atmospheric pressure is equal to the weight of a column of water thirty-two feet high. In fact, the column would be a little shorter, since we are talking about seawater, which is denser than fresh water. Now then, Ned, when you dive, for every thirty-two feet of water above you, your body bears pressure equal to one atmosphere—that is, 15 pounds on every square inch of its surface. So at 320 feet, the pressure equals 10 atmospheres; at 3,200 feet, 100 atmospheres; and at 32,000 feet, 1,000 atmospheres—that is, about 6 miles. In other words, if you could reach that depth in the ocean, every square three-eighths of an inch of your body’s surface would have to bear a pressure of 5,600 pounds. Ah, my brave Ned, do you know how many square inches there are on the surface of your body?”

“I have no idea, M. Aronnax.”

“About 6,500. And since atmospheric pressure is really about 15 pounds to the square inch, your 6,500 square inches are, at this very moment, bearing a pressure of 97,500 pounds.”

“Without my noticing it?”

“Without your noticing it. And if that pressure does not crush you, it is because the air enters the inside of your body with equal force. That creates a perfect balance between the pressure inside and the pressure outside, so they cancel each other out, and you can bear it without discomfort. But in the water, it is different.”

“Yes, I understand,” Ned replied, now listening more closely. “Because the water surrounds me, but does not enter me.”

“Exactly, Ned. At 32 feet below the sea’s surface, you would be under a pressure of 97,500 pounds. At 320 feet, it would be ten times that. At 3,200 feet, a hundred times. And at 32,000 feet, a thousand times that pressure—97,500,000 pounds. In other words, you would be crushed flat, as if you had been pressed between the plates of a hydraulic machine!”

“The devil!” Ned exclaimed.

“Very well, my good harpooner. If some vertebrate several hundred yards long, and proportionately broad, can live at such depths—depths where its surface would be subjected to millions of square inches, and therefore tens of millions of pounds of pressure—we must reckon with the force it endures. Think, then, of the strength of its bones and the power of its whole body to withstand such pressure!”

“Why!” Ned Land exclaimed. “They must be made of iron plates eight inches thick, like armored frigates.”

“Just so, Ned. And think what destruction such a mass could cause if it were driven at the speed of an express train against a ship’s hull.”

“Yes—certainly—perhaps,” the Canadian replied, unsettled by these figures but still unwilling to admit defeat.

“Well, have I convinced you?”

“You have convinced me of one thing, sir: if such animals really do exist in the depths of the sea, they must indeed be as strong

as you say."

"But if they do not exist, my stubborn harpooner, how do you explain the accident to the Scotia?"

CHAPTER V: AT A VENTURE

For a long time, the voyage of the Abraham Lincoln passed without any remarkable incident. But one event did occur that showed Ned Land's extraordinary skill and proved how much confidence we could place in him.

On June 30, the frigate hailed some American whaling ships, and from them we learned that they knew nothing about the narwhal. But the captain of one of them, the Monroe, knew that Ned Land had signed on to the Abraham Lincoln and asked for his help in chasing a whale they had spotted. Commander Farragut, eager to see Ned Land in action, gave him permission to go aboard the Monroe. Fortune favored our Canadian so well that, instead of taking one whale, he harpooned two with a double strike, hitting one straight through the heart and catching the other after a few minutes of pursuit.

Clearly, if the monster ever had to face Ned Land's harpoon, I would not bet on the monster.

The frigate raced along the southeastern coast of America. On July 3 we reached the entrance to the Strait of Magellan, abreast of Cape Virgins. But Commander Farragut refused to take that winding passage and instead rounded Cape Horn.

The crew agreed with him. And indeed, it seemed possible that they might encounter the narwhal in that narrow passage. Many of the sailors insisted that the monster could never get through there—"it's far too big for that!"

On July 6, at about three o'clock in the afternoon, the Abraham Lincoln, fifteen miles to the south, rounded that lonely island, that lost rock at the tip of the American continent, which some Dutch sailors had named after their hometown: Cape Horn. The ship then set a northwesterly course, and the next day the frigate's screw was finally churning the waters of the Pacific.

"Keep your eyes open!" the sailors shouted.

And they kept them wide open. Eyes and spyglasses alike—though admittedly a little dazzled by the prospect of two thousand dollars—never rested for an instant. Day and night they watched the surface of the sea, and even nyctalopes, whose ability to see in the dark increased their chances a hundredfold, would have had to work hard to win the prize.

As for me, money held no appeal, and I was among the most attentive people on board. I spent only a few minutes eating and only a few hours sleeping. Rain or sunshine made no difference to me. I never left the ship's poop deck. One moment I was leaning on the forecastle netting, the next on the taffrail, greedily watching the soft foam whitening the sea as far as the eye could see. And how often I shared the excitement of most of the crew when some unpredictable whale lifted its black back above the waves! In an instant, the poop deck was crowded. Sailors and officers came pouring out of the cabins, all with pounding hearts and anxious eyes, following the cetacean's course. I stared and stared until I was nearly blind, while Conseil, always calm, kept saying in an even voice:

"If you didn't squint so much, sir, you would see better!"

But the excitement came to nothing. The Abraham Lincoln slowed down and headed toward the animal that had been sighted, only to find it was an ordinary whale, or common cachalot, which soon vanished amid a storm of curses.

But the weather was fine. The voyage was proceeding under the most favorable conditions. It was the bad season in Australia then, since July in that part of the world corresponds to our January in Europe, but the sea was beautiful and easy to scan across a vast distance.

On July 20, we crossed the Tropic of Capricorn at 105° longitude, and on the 27th of that same month we crossed the equator on the 110th meridian. After that, the frigate turned more decisively west and swept through the central Pacific. Commander Farragut believed, with good reason, that it was best to stay in deep water and keep away from continents and islands, which the creature itself seemed to avoid—perhaps, as most of the crew suggested, because there was not enough water for it there. The frigate passed some distance from the Marquesas and the Sandwich Islands, crossed the Tropic of Cancer, and headed for the China Seas. We were now in the very region where the monster had last been causing trouble, and, to tell the truth, life on board was no longer bearable. Our hearts pounded, as if bracing for some future, incurable aneurysm. The whole crew was in a state of nervous excitement that I can hardly describe. No one could eat. No one could sleep. Twenty times a day, some mistake or trick of the eye by a sailor perched on the taffrail would set off a wave of terrified sweating. With these shocks repeated over and over, we were driven into such a violent state of tension that some reaction

was bound to follow.

And in fact, the reaction soon came. For three months—during which each day felt as long as an age—the Abraham Lincoln plowed through all the waters of the North Pacific. She chased whales, made sudden sharp turns from her course, swung abruptly from one tack to another, stopped without warning, put on steam, and backed now and then at the risk of damaging her machinery. Not a single stretch of the Japanese or American coast was left unsearched.

The strongest supporters of the expedition now became its fiercest critics. This change in feeling spread from the crew to the captain himself, and if Captain Farragut had not stood so firm, the frigate would certainly have turned straight south. This fruitless search could not go on much longer. The Abraham Lincoln had nothing to blame herself for; she had done everything possible to succeed. No American crew had ever shown more zeal or patience, and the failure could not be laid at their door. Nothing remained but to return.

This was reported to the commander. The sailors could no longer hide their dissatisfaction, and the service was suffering because of it. I will not say there was a mutiny on board, but after a fair period of stubborn resistance, Captain Farragut, like Columbus, asked for three more days of patience. If the monster did not appear within those three days, the helmsman was to give the wheel three turns, and the Abraham Lincoln would head for European waters.

This promise was made on November 2. It rallied the crew at once. Everyone watched the ocean with renewed intensity.

Each man longed for one last sighting to fix forever in his memory. Spyglasses were used with feverish energy. It was a bold challenge thrown at the giant narwhal, and it seemed as though he could hardly fail to answer the call and appear.

Two days passed. Steam was kept at half pressure, and a thousand plans were tried to catch the animal's attention and stir its apathy, if it happened to be in those waters. Large quantities of bacon were dragged behind the ship, much to the delight, I must admit, of the sharks. Small boats spread out in every direction around the Abraham Lincoln as she lay to, and they left no patch of sea unexplored. But the night of November 4 arrived, and the submarine mystery still had not revealed itself.

The next day, November 5, at noon, the delay would, morally speaking, be over. After that hour, Commander Farragut, true to his promise, was to turn southeast and abandon the northern Pacific forever.

The frigate was then at 31° 15′ north latitude and 136° 42′ east longitude. The coast of Japan was still less than two hundred miles to leeward. Night was falling. They had just struck eight bells. Great clouds covered the face of the moon, now in its first quarter. The sea rose and fell gently behind the vessel.

At that moment I was leaning forward against the starboard netting. Conseil stood beside me, staring straight ahead. The crew, perched in the ratlines, searched the horizon as it gradually narrowed and darkened. The officers swept the deepening gloom with their night glasses. At times the ocean flashed under rays of moonlight slipping between two clouds;

then every trace of light vanished again into the darkness.

As I looked at Conseil, I could see he was feeling some of the excitement that had spread to everyone else. At least, that was my impression. Perhaps for the first time, his nerves were stirred by real curiosity.

"Come, Conseil," I said, "this is our last chance to pocket the two thousand dollars."

"If I may say so, sir," Conseil replied, "I never counted on winning the prize. And if the government of the Union had offered a hundred thousand dollars, it would have been no worse off for it."

"You are right, Conseil. The whole business is foolish after all, and we rushed into it too carelessly. What a waste of time, and what useless excitement! We ought to have been back in France six months ago."

"In your little room, sir," Conseil replied, "and in your museum, sir. I would already have finished classifying all your fossils, sir. And the Babiroussa would be settled in its cage at the Jardin des Plantes, drawing all the curious people of the capital!"

"Just as you say, Conseil. I imagine there is a good chance we shall be laughed at for all our trouble."

"That is fairly certain," Conseil replied calmly. "I think they will make fun of you, sir. And must I say it?"

"Go on, my good friend."

"Well, sir, you will only be getting what you deserve."

"Indeed!"

"When one has the honor of being a savant like you, sir, one ought not to expose oneself to—"

Conseil did not have time to finish his compliment. In the middle of the general silence, a voice suddenly rang out. It was Ned Land shouting—

"Look out there! The very thing we are looking for—off our weather beam!"

CHAPTER VI AT FULL STEAM

At that cry, the entire crew rushed toward the harpooner—the commander, the officers, the mates, the sailors, and the cabin boys. Even the engineers left their engines, and the stokers their furnaces.

"It is only a cluster of phosphorescent particles," one of the officers cried.

"No, sir, certainly not," I replied. "Neither pholades nor salpæ have ever produced such a powerful light. That brightness is unmistakably electrical in nature. Besides, look, look! It is moving. It is going forward, backward—it is darting straight toward us!"

A cry went up across the frigate.

“Silence!” the Captain said. “Helm up. Reverse the engines.”

The steam was cut off, and the Abraham Lincoln, turning to port, traced a semicircle.

“Steady the helm, full speed ahead!” the Captain shouted.

The orders were carried out, and the frigate quickly pulled away from the blazing light.

I was wrong. The ship tried to veer away, but the unnatural creature came at us at twice her speed.

We could barely breathe. More stunned than frightened, we stood speechless and still. The creature gained on us, playing through the waves. It circled the frigate, which was then making fourteen knots, and wrapped it in electric rings like glowing



dust. Then it moved two or three miles away, leaving behind a phosphorescent trail like the great clouds of steam express trains leave in their wake. Suddenly, from the dark line of the horizon where it had withdrawn to gather speed, the monster rushed straight at the Abraham Lincoln with terrifying swiftness. It stopped abruptly about twenty feet from the hull and went dark—not by diving beneath the water, since its brightness did not fade, but all at once, as if the source of that brilliant glow had simply run out. Then it appeared again on the other side of the vessel, as though it had turned and slipped under the hull. A collision could have happened at any moment, and it would have been fatal for us. Even so, I was astonished by the frigate's maneuvers. She was fleeing, not attacking.

On the captain's face, usually so unreadable, I saw a look of baffled astonishment.

"M. Aronnax," he said, "I do not know what formidable creature I am dealing with, and I will not recklessly risk my frigate in this darkness. Besides, how can one attack such an unknown thing, or defend oneself against it? Let us wait for daylight. Then the situation will be different."

"Then you no longer doubt the nature of the animal, Captain?"

"No, sir. It is clearly a gigantic narwhal—and an electric one."

"Perhaps," I added, "it can only be approached with a gymnotus or a torpedo."

"No doubt," the captain replied, "if it has such terrible power, it is the most fearsome creature ever created. That is why, sir, I have to stay on my guard."

The captain, Ned Land, and I were then on the poop, straining our eyes into the deep darkness.

“Ned Land,” the commander asked, “you have often heard whales roaring?”

“Often, sir. But never whales whose mere sight would have earned me two thousand dollars. If only I can get within four harpoon lengths of it!”

“But if you are to approach it,” said the commander, “I would have to place a whaleboat at your disposal?”

“Certainly, sir.”

“That would mean playing with my men’s lives.”

“And with mine too,” the harpooner said simply.

Toward two o’clock in the morning, the blazing light appeared again, just as intense as before, about five miles to windward of the Abraham Lincoln. Despite the distance, and despite the noise of the wind and sea, we could clearly hear the powerful blows of the animal’s tail, and even its heavy breathing. It seemed that whenever the enormous narwhal rose to the surface to breathe, it drew air into its lungs the way steam fills the huge cylinders of a two-thousand-horsepower machine.

“Hm!” I thought. “A whale with the strength of a cavalry regiment would be quite a whale!”

We stayed on alert until daylight and made ready for the fight. The hunting gear was arranged along the hammock nettings. The second lieutenant loaded the blunderbusses, which could fire harpoons as far as a mile, and the long duck-guns with

explosive bullets that could deal fatal wounds even to the fiercest animals. Ned Land was satisfied with sharpening his harpoon—a terrible weapon in his hands.

At six o'clock, day began to break, and with the first faint light, the narwhal's electric glow vanished. By seven o'clock it was light enough, but a very thick sea fog blocked our view, and even the best spyglasses could not see through it. That filled us with disappointment and anger.

I climbed the mizzenmast. A few officers were already sitting on the mastheads. At eight o'clock, the fog still hung thick over the sea, but its heavy folds slowly began to lift. The horizon widened and grew clearer at the same time. Then, just as on the previous day, Ned Land's voice rang out:

"The creature itself, off the port quarter!" cried the harpooner.

Every eye turned to the spot he pointed out. There, a mile and a half from the frigate, a long, dark body rose about a yard above the waves. Its tail thrashed violently, churning up a great whirlpool. Never had a tail struck the sea with such force. A vast trail of dazzling white marked the animal's path and curved far behind it.

The frigate moved toward the cetacean, and I studied it closely.

The reports from the Shannon and the Helvetia had somewhat exaggerated its size. I judged its length to be no more than two hundred and fifty feet. As for its other dimensions, I could only guess that they were perfectly proportioned. While I was watching this extraordinary creature, two jets of steam and water burst from its blowholes and rose 120 feet into the air.

That told me how it breathed. I concluded with certainty that it belonged to the vertebrate branch, class Mammalia.

The crew waited impatiently for their commander's orders. After studying the animal carefully, he called for the engineer, who hurried over at once.

"Sir," said the commander, "do you have full steam up?"

"Yes, sir," the engineer replied.

"Good. Stoke the fires and give me all the steam you can."

Three cheers answered the order. The moment for the struggle had come. A few moments later, the frigate's two funnels poured out torrents of black smoke, and the deck shook with the pounding of the boilers.

Driven by her powerful screw, the Abraham Lincoln headed straight for the animal. It let the ship come within half a cable's length. Then, as if it scorned to dive, it turned slightly and stopped a short distance away.

The chase went on for nearly three-quarters of an hour, and the frigate did not gain even two yards on the cetacean. It was perfectly clear that at that pace we would never catch up with it.

"Well, Mr. Land," the captain asked, "do you advise me to launch the boats?"

"No, sir," Ned Land replied. "We won't catch that creature easily."

"What should we do, then?"

“Put on more steam, if you can, sir. With your permission, I’ll take my place under the bowsprit, and if we get close enough for a harpoon, I’ll throw mine.”

“Go ahead, Ned,” said the captain. “Engineer, increase the pressure.”

Ned Land went to his position. The fires were fed harder, the screw turned forty-three times a minute, and steam burst from the valves. We cast the log and calculated that the Abraham Lincoln was moving at 18½ miles an hour.

But the cursed animal was swimming at 18½ miles an hour as well.

For a full hour, the frigate held that speed without gaining even six feet. It was humiliating for one of the fastest ships in the American navy. The crew grew fiercely angry. The sailors shouted insults at the monster, which, as before, ignored them completely. The captain no longer merely twisted his beard—he bit it.

The engineer was called again.

“Have you given her full steam?”

“Yes, sir,” the engineer replied.

The Abraham Lincoln picked up speed. Its masts shook all the way down to their sockets, and the clouds of smoke could barely force their way out through the narrow funnels.

They cast the log a second time.

“Well?” the captain asked the man at the wheel.

“Nineteen and three-tenths miles, sir.”

“Put on more steam.”

The engineer obeyed. The manometer showed ten degrees. But the cetacean had quickened too, no doubt, for without seeming to strain itself, it was making 19.3 miles an hour.

What a chase! No, I cannot describe the feeling that ran through me. Ned Land stayed at his post, harpoon in hand. Several times the animal let us close in on it. “We’ll catch it! We’ll catch it!” the Canadian cried. But just as he was about to strike, the cetacean darted away at a speed that could not have been less than thirty miles an hour. Even when we were going as fast as possible, it toyed with the frigate, circling around it again and again. A cry of rage burst from everyone.

By noon, we were no farther ahead than we had been at eight that morning.

The captain then decided to use more direct measures.

“Ah!” he said, “that animal is faster than the Abraham Lincoln. Very well! We shall see whether it can escape these conical bullets. Send your men to the forecastle, sir.”

The forecastle gun was loaded at once and swung into position. But the shot passed several feet above the cetacean, which was half a mile away.

“Another shot, a little more to the right,” the commander cried, “and five dollars to whoever hits that infernal beast.”

An old gunner with a gray beard—I can still see him now—with a steady eye and a serious face, stepped up to the gun and took

careful aim. A loud report rang out, mixed with the cheers of the crew.

An old gray-bearded gunner . . . .

The bullet struck the animal, but not fatally. It glanced off the rounded surface and disappeared into the sea, two miles deep.

The chase began again, and the captain, leaning toward me, said—

“I will pursue that beast until my frigate bursts apart.”

“Yes,” I answered; “and you would be quite right to do so.”

I wished the beast would wear itself out, and not be as tireless as a steam engine. But it was no use. Hours passed without the slightest sign that it was growing exhausted.

Still, it must be said in praise of the Abraham Lincoln that she kept up the struggle tirelessly. I cannot estimate the distance she covered that unlucky day, November 6th, at less than three hundred miles. But night came on and cast its shadow over the rough ocean.

I thought our expedition was over, and that we would never see the extraordinary creature again. I was wrong. At ten-fifty that evening, the electric light appeared again, three miles to windward of the frigate, just as clear and intense as it had been the night before.

The narwhal seemed perfectly still. Perhaps, worn out by the day’s exertions, it was asleep, drifting with the movement of the waves. The captain decided to seize the opportunity.

He gave his orders. The Abraham Lincoln kept to half steam and moved forward carefully, so as not to wake its opponent. It was not unusual to come across whales in mid-ocean sleeping so deeply that they could be attacked successfully, and Ned Land had harpooned more than one while it slept. The Canadian went back to his position beneath the bowsprit.

The frigate drew near in silence, stopped two cables' lengths from the animal, and followed its course. No one breathed; a heavy silence hung over the bridge. We were less than a hundred feet from the blazing source, whose light grew stronger and dazzled our eyes.

At that moment, as I leaned on the forecastle bulwark, I saw Ned Land below me. He gripped the martingale with one hand and brandished his terrible harpoon with the other, scarcely twenty feet from the motionless animal. Suddenly his arm shot out, and he hurled the harpoon. I heard the ringing impact of the weapon, and it seemed to strike something hard. Instantly the electric light went out, and two enormous waterspouts crashed over the frigate's bridge, sweeping like a torrent from stem to stern, knocking men down and snapping the lashings of the spars. Then came a violent shock, and before I had time to catch myself, I was thrown over the rail and into the sea.

CHAPTER VII AN UNKNOWN SPECIES OF WHALE

This sudden fall stunned me so badly that I cannot clearly remember what I felt at the time. At first I was dragged down to a depth of about twenty feet. I am a strong swimmer—though I do not claim to rival Byron or Edgar Poe, who were masters of the art—and during that plunge I kept my presence of mind. Two powerful strokes brought me back to the surface. My first thought was of the frigate. Had the crew seen me go over? Had the Abraham Lincoln turned back? Would the captain send out a boat? Could I still hope to be rescued?

The darkness was overwhelming. I caught sight of a black shape vanishing to the east, its signal lights fading into the distance. It was the frigate. I was lost.

“Help! Help!” I shouted, desperately swimming toward the Abraham Lincoln.

My clothes weighed me down. They clung to my body and almost stopped me from moving.

I was sinking. I was suffocating.

“Help!”

That was my last cry. My mouth filled with water, and I fought against being dragged down into the depths. Suddenly a strong hand grabbed my clothes, and I felt myself pulled quickly back to the surface. Then I heard—yes, I heard—these words spoken in my ear:

“If master would be kind enough to lean on my shoulder, master would swim much more easily.”

With one hand, I grabbed the arm of my faithful Conseil.

“Is that you?” I said. “You?”

“Myself,” Conseil answered, “and awaiting master’s orders.”

“That collision threw you into the sea too, just as it did me?”

“No; but since I am in my master’s service, I followed him.”

The good fellow seemed to think that was perfectly natural.

“And the frigate?” I asked.

“The frigate?” Conseil replied, turning onto his back. “I think master would do better not to rely on her too much.”

“You think so?”

“I say so because, at the moment I threw myself into the sea, I heard the men at the wheel say, ‘The screw and the rudder are broken.’”

“Broken?”

“Yes, broken by the monster’s teeth. It is the only damage the Abraham Lincoln has suffered. But it is bad news for us—she no longer answers the helm.”

“Then we are lost!”

“Perhaps,” Conseil answered calmly. “Still, we have several hours ahead of us, and a good deal can be done in a few hours.”

Conseil's unshakable calm revived me. I swam with more energy; but my clothes cramped me, sticking to me like a weight of lead, and I had great difficulty staying afloat. Conseil noticed this.

"Will master let me cut a slit?" he said. Slipping an open knife under my clothes, he quickly sliced them from top to bottom. Then he skillfully pulled them off me while I swam for both of us.

Then I did the same for Conseil, and we kept swimming close together.

Even so, our situation was no less terrible. Perhaps no one had noticed that we were missing; and even if they had, the frigate could not turn, since it had lost its rudder. Conseil reasoned from that assumption and made his plans accordingly. The calm boy was completely self-possessed. We decided that our only chance of safety was to be picked up by the Abraham Lincoln's boats, so we had to hold out as long as possible while waiting for them. I resolved to conserve our strength, so that we would not both be exhausted at the same time; and this was the method we used: while one of us lay flat on his back, perfectly still, with arms crossed and legs stretched out, the other swam and pushed him ahead. This towing could not last more than ten minutes at a time; but by taking turns like this, we were able to keep going for several hours, perhaps until daybreak. It was a poor hope, but hope is so deeply rooted in the human heart. Besides, there were two of us. In fact, I declare—unlikely as it may seem—that even if I had tried to crush all hope, even if I had wanted to despair, I could not have done it.

The frigate had collided with the cetacean at about eleven o'clock the night before. I calculated, then, that we would have eight hours to swim before sunrise, something quite possible if we kept taking turns. The sea was very calm, which worked in our favor. At times I tried to see through the deep darkness, broken only by the phosphorescence stirred up by our movements. I watched the glowing waves that broke over my hand, their mirror-like surface marked with silvery rings. It might have seemed that we were bathing in quicksilver.

Around one o'clock in the morning, I was overcome by dreadful exhaustion. My limbs grew stiff with severe cramp. Conseil had to support me, and our survival depended on him alone. I heard the poor boy gasping; his breathing grew short and rapid. I realized that he could not hold out much longer.

"Leave me! Leave me!" I said to him.

"Leave my master? Never!" he replied. "I would drown first."

Just then the moon came out from behind the ragged edge of a thick cloud the wind was driving eastward. Its light glittered across the sea. That welcome glow revived us. My head cleared again. I scanned every part of the horizon. I saw the frigate. It was five miles away, a dark mass barely visible. But there were no boats.

I wanted to shout. But what use would that have been from so far away? My swollen lips could make no sound. Conseil could still force out a few words, and every so often I heard him cry, "Help! help!"

For a moment we stopped moving and listened. It may have been nothing more than a ringing in my ears, but it seemed to me that some cry answered Conseil's.

"Did you hear it?" I whispered.

"Yes! Yes!"

And Conseil gave another desperate cry.

This time there was no mistake. A human voice had answered ours. Was it the voice of some other unfortunate person, abandoned in the middle of the ocean, another victim of the collision the vessel had suffered? Or was it a boat from the frigate, calling to us through the darkness?

Conseil made one last effort. Leaning on my shoulder while I struck out desperately, he lifted himself halfway out of the water, then fell back exhausted.

"What did you see?"

"I saw—" he murmured. "I saw—but don't talk. Save all your strength!"

What had he seen? Then, for the first time, and I do not know why, the thought of the monster entered my mind. But that voice! The days when Jonahs could take refuge in the bellies of whales are long past. Still, Conseil began towing me again. From time to time he lifted his head, looked ahead, and gave a cry of recognition, answered by a voice coming closer and closer. I could barely hear it. My strength was gone. My fingers stiffened. My hand could no longer keep me afloat. My mouth opened convulsively and filled with salt water. Cold spread

through me. I lifted my head one last time, and then I sank.

At that moment something hard struck me. I clung to it. Then I felt myself being pulled up, lifted to the surface, and my chest gave way—I fainted.

I soon came to, thanks to the vigorous rubbing they gave me. I half-opened my eyes.

“Conseil!” I murmured.

“Did master call me?” Conseil asked.

At that moment, in the fading moonlight as the moon sank toward the horizon, I saw a face that was not Conseil’s and recognized it at once.

“Ned!” I cried.

“The very same, sir, still after his prize!” the Canadian replied.

“Were you thrown into the sea when the frigate was struck?”

“Yes, Professor; but I was luckier than you. I managed to get my footing almost at once on a floating island.”

“An island?”

“Or, to be more accurate, on our gigantic narwhal.”

“Explain yourself, Ned!”

“I simply discovered why my harpoon hadn’t pierced its skin and had been blunted.”

“Why, Ned? Why?”

“Because, Professor, that beast is made of sheet iron.”

The Canadian's last words sent a shock through my mind. I quickly pulled myself up onto the top of the creature—or object—that was half out of the water and serving as our refuge. I struck it with my foot. It was clearly a hard, impenetrable body, not the soft flesh that makes up the bodies of the great marine mammals. Still, this hard body might have been a bony shell, like those of antediluvian animals, and I might have been justified in classing this monster among amphibious reptiles such as tortoises or alligators.

But no. The dark back supporting me was smooth and polished, with no scales. My blow rang out with a metallic sound, and incredible as it seemed, I could only conclude that it was made of riveted plates.

There could be no doubt now. This monster, this natural phenomenon that had baffled the learned world and led sailors in both hemispheres so badly astray, was in fact something even more astonishing: a purely human construction.

We had no time to lose, however. We were lying on the back of a kind of submarine vessel that looked, as far as I could tell, like a huge fish made of steel. Ned Land had already reached that conclusion. Conseil and I could only agree with him.

Just then, a bubbling started at the rear of this strange craft, which was clearly driven by a propeller, and it began to move. We barely had time to grab hold of the upper part, which rose about seven feet above the water, and fortunately it was not moving very fast.

“As long as it keeps moving along the surface,” muttered Ned Land, “I do not mind. But if it decides to dive, I would not give two straws for my life.”

The Canadian might well have said even less. We clearly had to make contact with the beings—whoever they were—sealed up inside the machine. I searched the outside for some opening, a hatch, or, to use the technical term, a manhole. But the rows of iron rivets, firmly fastened along the seams of the iron plates, were straight and unbroken. Then the moon disappeared, leaving us in complete darkness.

Daybreak came. Morning mist surrounded us, but it soon lifted. I was about to examine the hull, which formed a kind of flat platform above the water, when I felt it slowly beginning to sink.

“Oh, confound it!” cried Ned Land, kicking the ringing metal plate. “Open up, you inhospitable scoundrels!”

Fortunately, the downward movement stopped. Then, suddenly, a noise came from inside the vessel, like iron panels being forced violently aside. One iron plate shifted, a man appeared, let out a strange cry, and vanished at once.

A few moments later, eight powerful men with masked faces appeared without a sound and pulled us down into their formidable machine.

CHAPTER VIII MOBILIS IN MOBILI

This violent abduction, carried out so brutally, happened with lightning speed. I trembled all over. Who were we dealing with? No doubt some new kind of pirates, roaming the sea in their own fashion.

The narrow panel had barely closed behind me before I was swallowed by darkness. My eyes, still dazzled by the light outside, could make out nothing. I felt my bare feet finding the rungs of an iron ladder. Ned Land and Conseil, held tightly, came down after me. At the bottom of the ladder, a door opened, then immediately slammed shut behind us.

We were alone. Where, I could not tell; I could hardly even guess. Everything was black—so completely black that even after several minutes my eyes could not detect the faintest glimmer.

Meanwhile, Ned Land was furious about what was happening and let his anger pour out freely.

“Confound it!” he cried. “These people come up to the Scotch when it comes to hospitality. They’re only a step away from being cannibals. I wouldn’t be surprised if they were, but I swear they won’t eat me without hearing my protest.”

“Calm yourself, friend Ned, calm yourself,” Conseil replied quietly. “Don’t cry out before you’re hurt. We’re not finished yet.”



“Not quite,” the Canadian shot back, “but close enough, anyway. Things look bad. Luckily, I still have my bowie knife, and I can see well enough to use it. The first of these pirates who lays a hand on me—”

“Don’t work yourself up, Ned,” I said to the harpooner, “and don’t put us in greater danger with pointless violence. Who knows? They may still listen to us. Let’s try instead to find out where we are.”

I felt my way around. After five steps, I reached an iron wall made of bolted plates. Turning back, I ran into a wooden table, with several stools set beside it. The floorboards of this prison were covered with a thick phormium mat that muffled the sound of footsteps. The bare walls showed no sign of any window or door. Conseil circled the other way and met me, and we returned to the middle of the cabin, which measured about twenty feet by ten. As for its height, even Ned Land, tall as he was, could not judge it.

Half an hour had already passed, and our situation had not improved, when the heavy darkness suddenly gave way to a blaze of light. Our prison was lit all at once—that is, it filled with a luminous glow so intense that at first I could not bear it. In its whiteness and brilliance, I recognized the electric light that had surrounded the submarine vessel like a magnificent phosphorescent display. After instinctively shutting my eyes, I opened them again and saw that this source of light came from a dull half-globe fixed in the ceiling of the cabin.

“At last we can see,” cried Ned Land, standing on guard with his knife in hand.

“Yes,” I said, “but we still know nothing about our situation.”

“Master must be patient,” said the unshakable Conseil.

The cabin suddenly lit up, and I was able to inspect it closely. It held only a table and five stools. The hidden door may as well have been airtight. I heard nothing. Inside this boat, everything seemed lifeless. Was it moving? Was it floating on the surface of the ocean, or sinking into its depths? I had no way to tell.

Then I heard bolts being drawn, the door opened, and two men came in.

One was short, very muscular, and broad-shouldered, with powerful limbs, a strong head, thick black hair, a heavy moustache, sharp, searching eyes, and the lively energy typical of the people of Southern France.

The second stranger deserves a fuller description. A follower of Gratiolet or Engel would have read his face like an open book. I immediately recognized his dominant qualities: self-confidence, because his head sat firmly on his shoulders and his black eyes moved about with cold certainty; calmness, because his somewhat pale skin suggested cool blood; energy, shown in the quick tightening of his high brows; and courage, because his deep breathing revealed great strength in his lungs.

I could not tell whether this man was thirty-five or fifty. He was tall, with a broad forehead, a straight nose, a sharply defined mouth, beautiful teeth, and slender, finely shaped hands that suggested a highly nervous temperament. He was certainly the most remarkable man I had ever met. One feature stood out in particular: his eyes, set rather far apart, seemed able to take in

nearly a quarter of the horizon at a glance.

This ability—I confirmed it later—gave him a range of vision far beyond Ned Land's. When this stranger fixed his gaze on something, his eyebrows drew together, his large eyelids narrowed to tighten his field of view, and he seemed to enlarge objects diminished by distance. It was as though he could see through those sheets of water that are opaque to our eyes, and read the very depths of the sea.

The two strangers wore caps made of sea otter fur and sea boots of sealskin. Their clothes were made from a special material that let them move freely. The taller man, clearly the one in command on board, studied us closely without saying a word. Then he turned to his companion and spoke to him in an unknown language. It was a rich, musical, flexible dialect, with vowels that seemed capable of many different accents.

The other man answered with a shake of the head and added two or three completely incomprehensible words. Then he seemed to question me with a look.

I answered in clear French that I did not know his language, but he did not seem to understand me, and my situation grew even more awkward.

"If master would tell our story," said Conseil, "perhaps these gentlemen may recognize a few words."

I began to recount our adventures, pronouncing every syllable clearly and leaving out not a single detail. I gave our names and positions, introducing Professor Aronnax, his servant Conseil, and Ned Land, the harpooner.

The man with the gentle, calm eyes listened quietly, even politely, and with the closest attention. But nothing in his face suggested that he had understood my story. When I finished, he said nothing. One option remained: to speak English. Perhaps they knew that nearly universal language. I knew it, and German as well—well enough to read it easily, though not to speak it correctly. Still, we had to make ourselves understood.

“Now it’s your turn,” I said to the harpooner. “Speak your best Anglo-Saxon, and try to do better than I did.”

Ned did not refuse, and he began our story again.

To his great annoyance, the harpooner seemed no more understandable than I had been. Our visitors did not move. They clearly understood neither the language of Arago nor that of Faraday.

I was deeply embarrassed. We had exhausted every language we could speak, and all to no purpose. I did not know what to do when Conseil said—

“If master permits, I will tell it in German.”

But despite the narrator’s polished language and fine accent, German got us nowhere. At last, baffled, I tried to recall my earliest lessons and tell our story in Latin, but that failed as well. When this final attempt proved useless, the two strangers exchanged a few words in their unknown language and withdrew.

The door closed.

“It’s a disgrace,” cried Ned Land, bursting out for the twentieth time. “We speak to those scoundrels in French, English, German, and Latin, and not one of them has the courtesy to answer!”

“Calm yourself,” I said to the hot-headed Ned. “Anger won’t help.”

“But don’t you see, Professor,” replied our quick-tempered companion, “that we’re going to die of hunger in this iron cage?”

“Bah!” said Conseil philosophically. “We can last a while yet.”

“My friends,” I said, “we must not give in to despair. We have been in worse situations than this. Do me the favor of waiting a little before deciding what to think of the commander and crew of this vessel.”

“I’ve already decided,” Ned Land replied sharply. “They’re villains.”

“Very well—and what country do they come from?”

“The land of rogues!”

“My brave Ned, that country does not appear very clearly on any map of the world. Still, I admit that the nationality of these two strangers is difficult to determine. They are certainly neither English, French, nor German. However, I am inclined to think that the commander and his companion were born in southern latitudes. There is southern blood in them. But from their appearance alone, I cannot tell whether they are Spaniards, Turks, Arabs, or Indians. As for their language, it is completely incomprehensible.”

“That is the drawback of not knowing every language,” said Conseil, “or of not having a single universal one.”

As he spoke, the door opened. A steward came in. He brought us clothes—coats and trousers—made of a material I did not recognize. I hurried to dress, and my companions did the same. Meanwhile, the steward—mute, perhaps deaf—set the table and laid out three plates.

“Now this is more like it,” said Conseil.

“Bah!” said the bitter harpooner. “What do you think they eat here? Tortoise liver, shark fillets, and steaks cut from sea-dogs.”

“We shall see,” said Conseil.

The dishes, made of bell metal, were set on the table, and we took our seats. Clearly, we were dealing with civilized people. If not for the electric light pouring over us, I could have imagined myself in the dining room of the Adelphi Hotel in Liverpool or the Grand Hotel in Paris. I should say, however, that there was neither bread nor wine. The water was fresh and clear, but it was only water, and that did not suit Ned Land’s taste. Among the dishes served to us, I recognized several kinds of fish prepared with great delicacy. Others, though excellent, I could not identify, nor could I tell whether they belonged to the animal or vegetable kingdom. As for the table service, it was elegant and perfectly tasteful. On every utensil—spoon, fork, knife, plate—a letter was engraved, with a motto above it, exactly as follows:

MOBILIS IN MOBILI N.

The letter N was no doubt the initial of the mysterious person who commanded this vessel at the bottom of the sea.

Ned and Conseil gave the matter little thought. They ate eagerly, and I did the same. Besides, I felt reassured about our fate. It seemed clear that our hosts did not intend to let us starve.

Still, everything comes to an end; everything passes, even the hunger of men who have gone fifteen hours without food. Once our appetites were satisfied, we were overcome with sleep.

“Upon my word, I shall sleep well,” said Conseil.

“So shall I,” replied Ned Land.

My two companions stretched out on the cabin carpet and were soon fast asleep. As for me, too many thoughts crowded my mind. Too many unsolved questions weighed on me. Too many fancies kept my eyes half open. Where were we? What strange power was carrying us along? I felt—or rather imagined I felt—the machine sinking to the deepest floor of the sea. Terrible nightmares came over me. In these mysterious refuges I saw a world of unknown animals, and this submarine boat seemed to belong to the same race as they did—alive, moving, and terrifying. Then my mind gradually grew calmer, my imagination drifted into a vague unconsciousness, and I soon fell into a deep sleep.

CHAPTER IX NED LAND'S OUTBURSTS

I do not know how long we slept, but we must have slept for a long time, because it completely restored us after our exhaustion. I woke first. My companions had not stirred and were still lying in their corner.

As soon as I rose from my rather hard bed, I felt my head clear and my thoughts steady. I then carefully examined our cell. Nothing inside had changed. The prison was still a prison, and we were still prisoners. However, while we slept, the steward had cleared away the table. I was breathing with difficulty. The heavy air seemed to press on my lungs. Although the cell was large, we had clearly used up much of the oxygen in it. In fact, each man consumes in an hour the oxygen contained in more than 176 pints of air, and that air, once loaded—as it was then—with nearly an equal amount of carbonic acid, becomes impossible to breathe.

The air in our prison had to be renewed, and no doubt the same was true for the whole submarine vessel. That raised a question in my mind. How did the commander of this floating home manage it? Did he produce air by chemical means, extracting the oxygen from chlorate of potash by heat and absorbing the carbonic acid with caustic potash? Or, more conveniently, more cheaply, and therefore more likely, did he simply rise to the surface and draw in air like a whale, renewing the vessel's supply for another twenty-four hours?



In fact, I was already forced to breathe more rapidly just to draw from the cell the little oxygen still left in it, when suddenly a stream of pure air refreshed me, carrying the salty scent of the sea. It was a bracing sea breeze, rich with iodine. I opened my mouth wide, and my lungs filled themselves with the fresh air.

At the same time, I felt the boat begin to roll. The iron-clad monster had clearly just risen to the surface of the ocean to breathe, like a whale. That showed me how the vessel was ventilated.

After breathing in the air freely, I looked for the pipe that had brought us this welcome breath, and I found it at once. Above the door was a ventilator through which streams of fresh air were replacing the stale atmosphere of the cell.

I was making these observations when Ned and Conseil woke almost at the same moment, revived by the fresh air. They rubbed their eyes, stretched, and were on their feet at once.

“Did master sleep well?” Conseil asked, with his usual politeness.

“Very well, my brave boy. And you, Mr. Land?”

“Soundly, Professor. But I’m not sure whether I’m right or not; it feels like a sea breeze!”

A sailor could not be mistaken, so I told the Canadian everything that had happened while he slept.

“Good!” he said. “That explains the roaring we heard when the supposed narwhal came in sight of the Abraham Lincoln."

“Exactly, Master Land; it was breathing.”

“Still, M. Aronnax, I have no idea what time it is, unless it’s dinner-time.”

“Dinner-time, my good fellow? Call it breakfast-time instead, for we have certainly begun another day.”

“So,” said Conseil, “we have slept for twenty-four hours?”

“That is my opinion.”

“I won’t argue with you,” replied Ned Land. “But whether it’s dinner or breakfast, the steward will be welcome, whatever he brings.”

“Master Land, we must follow the rules on board, and I suppose our appetites are ahead of the dinner hour.”

“That is just like you, friend Conseil,” said Ned impatiently. “You never lose your temper, always stay calm; you would give thanks before grace, and starve to death rather than complain!”

Time passed, and we were terribly hungry; yet this time the steward did not appear. It was far too long to leave us alone, if they truly meant us well. Ned Land, tortured by hunger, grew even angrier, and despite his promise, I feared an outburst as soon as he came face to face with one of the crew.

For two more hours Ned Land’s temper kept rising; he cried out and shouted, but to no purpose. The walls were deaf. Not a sound came from the boat: everything was as still as death. It was not moving, for I would have felt the vibration of the hull from the screw. Buried in the depths of the water, it no longer seemed to belong to the earth—and that silence was dreadful.

I was terrified, Conseil stayed calm, and Ned Land bellowed with rage.

Just then, we heard a noise outside. Footsteps rang on the metal floor. The locks turned, the door opened, and the steward came in.

Before I could rush forward to stop him, the Canadian had already knocked the man down and seized him by the throat. The steward was choking under the strength of his grip.

Conseil was already trying to pry the harpooner's hand from his half-strangled victim, and I was about to jump in to help, when I suddenly froze at the sound of these words in French—

"Be quiet, Master Land; and Professor, would you kindly listen to me?"

CHAPTER X THE MAN OF THE SEAS

It was the commander of the vessel speaking.

At those words, Ned Land sprang to his feet. The steward, almost strangled, staggered out at a signal from his master. Yet the commander's authority on board was so absolute that the man showed no sign of the resentment he must have felt toward the Canadian. Conseil, fascinated despite himself, and I, stunned, waited in silence to see how the scene would end.

Leaning against the corner of a table with his arms folded, the commander studied us closely. Did he hesitate to speak? Did he regret the French words he had just uttered? It almost seemed so.

After a few moments of silence, which none of us thought of breaking, he said in a calm, penetrating voice, "Gentlemen, I speak French, English, German, and Latin equally well. I could have answered you at our first meeting, but I wanted to know who you were first and then consider the matter. The account each of you gave, agreeing on all the essential points, convinced me of your identity. I now know that chance has brought before me Monsieur Pierre Aronnax, Professor of Natural History at the Museum of Paris, traveling abroad on a scientific mission; Conseil, his servant; and Ned Land, a Canadian harpooner aboard the frigate Abraham Lincoln of the United States Navy."

I bowed in agreement. The commander had not asked me a question, so there was nothing to answer. He spoke with complete ease and without any accent. His sentences were polished, his words precise, and he spoke with remarkable fluency. And yet I did not recognize him as a fellow countryman.

He went on in these words:

“You have no doubt thought, sir, that I delayed a long time before paying you this second visit. The reason is that, once I knew who you were, I wanted to consider carefully how I should deal with you. I hesitated for a long time. A series of most unfortunate circumstances has brought you into the presence of a man who has broken every tie with humanity. You have come to disturb my life.”

“Unintentionally!” I said.

“Unintentionally?” the stranger replied, raising his voice slightly. “Was it unintentional that the Abraham Lincoln pursued me across every sea? Was it unintentional that you came aboard this frigate? Was it unintentional that your cannonballs struck the plating of my vessel and bounced off? Was it unintentional that Mr. Ned Land hit me with his harpoon?”

I could hear controlled irritation in his words. But I had a very natural reply to these accusations, and I gave it.

“Sir,” I said, “you are no doubt unaware of the discussions that have taken place about you in America and Europe. You do not know that several accidents, caused by collisions with your submarine machine, have stirred public feeling on both continents. I will pass over the countless theories invented to

explain this inexplicable phenomenon, the secret of which you alone possess. But you must understand that, in chasing you across the open Pacific, the Abraham Lincoln believed it was pursuing some powerful sea monster, one from which the ocean had to be freed at any cost."

A faint smile touched the commander's lips. Then, in a calmer tone—

"M. Aronnax," he replied, "do you dare to claim that your frigate would not have pursued and fired on a submarine boat just as readily as it would a monster?"

This question embarrassed me, for Captain Farragut certainly might not have hesitated. He might well have thought it his duty to destroy such a machine, just as he would have destroyed a gigantic narwhal.

"Then you understand, sir," the stranger continued, "that I have the right to treat you as enemies?"

I deliberately gave no answer. What was the point of arguing a question like that when force could sweep aside even the strongest reasoning?

"I have hesitated for some time," the commander went on. "Nothing required me to offer you hospitality. If I chose to part from you, I would have no reason ever to see you again. I could put you back on the deck of the vessel that served as your refuge, sink beneath the water, and forget you had ever existed. Would that not be my right?"

"It might be the right of a savage," I replied, "but not of a civilized man."

“Professor,” the commander replied sharply, “I am not what you call a civilized man. I have broken with society completely, for reasons that I alone have the right to judge. So I do not obey its laws, and I ask you never to mention them to me again!”

He said this with complete clarity. A flash of anger and contempt lit the Unknown’s eyes, and for an instant I caught sight of the terrible past in this man’s life. He had not only placed himself outside human law, but made himself wholly independent of it—free in the strictest sense of the word, entirely beyond its reach. Who, then, would dare pursue him to the bottom of the sea, when on the surface he defied every attack made against him? What ship could withstand the impact of his submarine monitor? What armor, however thick, could endure the blows of his spur? No one could call him to account for his actions. God, if he believed in one—or his conscience, if he had one—were the only judges to whom he answered.

These thoughts passed quickly through my mind while the stranger remained silent, absorbed, as though withdrawn into himself. I watched him with a mixture of fear and fascination, much as Oedipus must have looked at the Sphinx.

After a fairly long silence, the commander spoke again.

“I have hesitated,” he said, “but I have decided that my own interests may be reconciled with the compassion every human being has a right to expect. You will remain aboard my vessel, since fate has brought you here. You will be free, and in return for that freedom I will impose only one condition. Your word of honor that you will submit to it will be enough.”

“Speak, sir,” I replied. “I assume this is a condition that a man of honor can accept?”

“Yes, sir. It is this: certain unforeseen events may make it necessary for me to confine you to your cabins for a few hours or even a few days. As I never wish to use force, I expect from you, above all the others, passive obedience. By acting in this way, I take full responsibility. I completely absolve you, because I make it impossible for you to see what must not be seen. Do you accept this condition?”

Then things happened on board which, to say the least, were strange, and which should not be seen by people who were not outside the bounds of society’s laws. Of all the surprises the future had in store for me, this might well prove to be one of the greatest.

“We accept,” I answered, “but I ask your permission, sir, to put one question to you—just one.”

“Speak, sir.”

“You said that we would be free on board.”

“Completely.”

“Then I ask you what you mean by that freedom.”

“Simply the freedom to go where you wish, to come and go, to see, and even to observe everything that happens here—except in rare circumstances. In short, the same freedom that my companions and I ourselves enjoy.”

It was clear that we did not understand each other.

“Forgive me, sir,” I continued, “but that kind of freedom is only the freedom every prisoner has to walk around his cell. It cannot be enough for us.”

“It will have to be enough for you.”

“What! Must we give up forever the hope of seeing our country, our friends, and our families again?”

“Yes, sir. But giving up that unbearable worldly yoke which men believe to be liberty may not be as painful as you think.”

“Well,” cried Ned Land, “I will never give my word of honor that I will not try to escape.”

“I did not ask for your word of honor, Master Land,” the commander replied coldly.

“Sir,” I replied, growing angry despite myself, “you are taking advantage of your power over us. It is cruel.”

“No, sir, it is mercy. You are my prisoners of war. I am keeping you alive, when with a single word I could send you to the bottom of the ocean. You attacked me. You tried to uncover a secret that no one in the world must ever know—the secret of my entire existence. And you think I am going to send you back to that world, which must know me no longer? Never! By keeping you here, I am not protecting myself from you—I am protecting myself.”

These words made it clear that the commander had made up his mind, and no argument would change it.

“Then, sir,” I replied, “you are simply giving us a choice between life and death?”

“Exactly.”

“My friends,” I said, “when a question is put in those terms, there is nothing to say. But no word of honor binds us to the master of this vessel.”

“None, sir,” the unknown man answered.

Then, in a gentler tone, he went on—

“Now allow me to finish what I have to say. I know who you are, M. Aronnax. Perhaps you and your companions will not have much reason to complain about the chance that has tied you to my fate. Among the books I value most, you will find the work you published on ‘the depths of the sea.’ I have read it often. You took your study as far as earthly science allowed. But you do not know everything—you have not seen everything. So let me tell you, Professor, that you will not regret the time you spend aboard my vessel. You are about to visit a world of wonders.”

The commander’s words had a powerful effect on me. I cannot deny it. He had touched my weak point, and for a moment I forgot that even the study of such sublime subjects was not worth the loss of freedom. Besides, I trusted the future to settle that grave question. So I was content to say—

“What name should I use when I address you?”

“Sir,” the commander replied, “to you I am only Captain Nemo; and to me, you and your companions are only the passengers of the Nautilus.”

Captain Nemo called out. A steward appeared. The captain gave him orders in that strange language I could not understand. Then he turned to the Canadian and Conseil—

“A meal is waiting for you in your cabin,” he said. “Please follow this man.”

“And now, M. Aronnax, our breakfast is ready. Allow me to lead the way.”

“I am at your service, Captain.”

I followed Captain Nemo, and as soon as I passed through the door, I found myself in a sort of passage lit by electricity, like the waist of a ship. After we had gone about a dozen yards, a second door opened before me.

I entered a dining room decorated and furnished in a severe, restrained style. Tall oak sideboards, inlaid with ebony, stood at either end of the room, and on their shelves china, porcelain, and glass of immense value glittered. The silver on the table shone in the light pouring down from the luminous ceiling, while exquisite paintings softened and tempered the brightness.

In the center of the room stood a richly set table. Captain Nemo showed me the place where I was to sit.

Breakfast consisted of several dishes, all supplied by the sea alone, and I did not know what some of them were or how they had been prepared. I admitted that they were good, though they had a distinctive flavor that I soon grew used to. These various foods seemed to me rich in phosphorus, and I concluded that they must be of marine origin.

Captain Nemo looked at me. I asked no questions, but he guessed my thoughts and answered, on his own, the questions I was eager to put to him.

“Most of these dishes are unfamiliar to you,” he said. “Still, you may eat them without fear. They are wholesome and nourishing. Long ago I gave up the food of the earth, and I am never ill now. My crew, who are in excellent health, live on the same food.”

“So,” I said, “all these foods come from the sea?”

“Yes, Professor, the sea provides everything I need. Sometimes I drag my nets behind me, and when I haul them in they are almost bursting. Sometimes I hunt in the middle of this element, which seems beyond man’s reach, and pursue the creatures that live in my underwater forests. My herds, like those of Neptune’s ancient shepherds, graze without fear in the vast prairies of the ocean. I own a great domain there, which I cultivate myself, and which is always sown by the hand of the Creator of all things.”

“I can easily understand, sir, that your nets provide excellent fish for your table. I can also understand that you hunt sea creatures in your underwater forests. But I cannot understand at all how even the smallest bit of meat could appear on your menu.”

“What you think is meat, Professor, is nothing but turtle fillet. And here are dolphins’ livers, which you are taking for a pork ragout. My cook is a talented man who is exceptionally skilled at preparing these different products of the sea. Taste all these dishes. Here is a preserve of holothuria that a Malay would call unmatched in the world. Here is a cream made with milk

supplied by the cetacea and sugar from the great fucus of the North Sea. And finally, allow me to offer you some preserve of anemones, which is as good as the finest fruits."

I tasted them, more out of curiosity than with any real expertise, while Captain Nemo held me spellbound with his extraordinary stories.

"You love the sea, Captain?"

"Yes, I love it! The sea is everything. It covers seven-tenths of the globe. Its breath is pure and healthy. It is an immense desert where a man is never alone, because he feels life moving all around him. The sea is the very expression of a supernatural and marvelous existence. It is nothing but love and emotion; it is the 'Living Infinite,' as one of your poets has called it. In truth, Professor, Nature reveals herself in it through her three kingdoms: mineral, vegetable, and animal. The sea is Nature's vast reservoir. The globe began with the sea, so to speak; and who knows whether it may not end with it as well? In it there is perfect tranquility. The sea does not belong to despots. On its surface, men can still enforce unjust laws, fight, tear one another to pieces, and be swept up in the horrors of the earth. But thirty feet below the surface, their rule ends, their influence is extinguished, and their power vanishes. Ah, sir, live—live in the heart of the waters! Only there is there independence! There I acknowledge no masters! There I am free!"

Captain Nemo suddenly fell silent in the middle of this passionate speech, which had completely carried him away. For a few moments he paced back and forth in great agitation. Then he grew calmer, recovered his usual cold expression, and

turned toward me.

“Now, Professor,” he said, “if you would like to inspect the Nautilus, I am at your service.”

Captain Nemo stood up, and I followed him. A double door at the back of the dining room opened, and I stepped into a room the same size as the one I had just left.

It was a library. Tall bookcases of dark violet ebony, inlaid with brass, held a great number of uniformly bound books on their broad shelves. They followed the curve of the room and ended below in large brown leather divans, shaped for maximum comfort. Small movable reading stands, designed to slide in and out as needed, let a reader rest a book while reading. In the center stood a huge table covered with pamphlets, among them several newspapers that were already old. Electric light filled the room, shining from four frosted globes half set into the scrollwork of the ceiling. I looked around with genuine admiration at this ingeniously arranged room, and I could hardly believe what I was seeing.

“Captain Nemo,” I said to my host, who had just stretched out on one of the divans, “this library would do credit to more than one palace on the Continent, and I am utterly amazed to think that it can follow you to the bottom of the sea.”

“Where could one find greater solitude or silence, Professor?” Captain Nemo replied. “Did your study at the Museum give you such perfect quiet?”

“No, sir, and I must admit that mine is a very poor one compared with yours. You must have six or seven thousand volumes

here."

"Twelve thousand, M. Aronnax. These are the only ties that still bind me to the earth. But I was done with the world on the day my Nautilus plunged beneath the waters for the first time. That day I bought my last books, my last pamphlets, my last newspapers, and since then I have liked to think that men no longer think or write. Besides, Professor, these books are at your service, and you may use them freely."

I thanked Captain Nemo and went over to the library shelves. Books on science, morality, and literature were plentiful, in every language; but I did not see a single work on political economy. That subject seemed to be strictly forbidden. Strangely enough, the books were arranged without order, whatever their language. This mixture showed that the Captain of the Nautilus must have read at random, taking up whatever book happened to come to hand.

"Sir," I said to the Captain, "I thank you for placing this library at my disposal. It contains scientific treasures, and I shall make good use of them."

"This room is not only a library," said Captain Nemo, "it is also a smoking room."

"A smoking room!" I cried. "Then one may smoke on board?"

"Certainly."

"Then, sir, I am forced to believe that you have kept up communication with Havannah."

“Not at all,” the Captain answered. “Accept this cigar, M. Aronnax; and though it does not come from Havannah, you will enjoy it, if you are a connoisseur.”

I took the cigar he offered me. Its shape reminded me of the ones in London, but it looked as if it were made from golden leaves. I lit it at a small brazier set on an elegant bronze stand and took my first puffs with all the pleasure of a smoker who has gone two days without smoking.

“It is excellent, but it is not tobacco.”

“No!” the Captain replied. “This tobacco comes neither from Havana nor from the East. It is a kind of seaweed, rich in nicotine, which the sea supplies me with, though rather sparingly.”

At that moment, Captain Nemo opened a door opposite the one through which I had entered the library, and I stepped into an immense, brilliantly lit drawing room.

It was a large rectangular room, thirty feet long, eighteen wide, and fifteen high. A glowing ceiling, decorated with delicate arabesques, cast a soft, clear light over all the wonders gathered in this museum. For it was, in fact, a museum, where an intelligent and lavish hand had assembled treasures of both nature and art in the artful disorder of a painter’s studio.

Thirty masterpieces, all in matching frames and separated by rich drapery, decorated the walls, which were covered with tapestries of severe design. I saw works of immense value, most of which I had already admired in Europe’s great private collections and public exhibitions. The old masters were

represented by a Madonna by Raphael, a Virgin by Leonardo da Vinci, a nymph by Corregio, a woman by Titian, an Adoration by Veronese, an Assumption by Murillo, a portrait by Holbein, a monk by Velasquez, a martyr by Ribera, a fair by Rubens, two Flemish landscapes by Teniers, three small genre paintings by Gerard Dou, Metsu, and Paul Potter, two works by Géricault and Prudhon, and several seascapes by Backhuysen and Vernet. Among the modern painters were works signed by Delacroix, Ingres, Decamps, Troyon, Meissonier, Daubigny, and others. In the corners of this magnificent museum stood several admirable marble and bronze statues modeled after the finest antique examples. As the Captain of the Nautilus had predicted, I was already beginning to feel overwhelmed with amazement.

“Professor,” said this strange man, “you must forgive the informal way in which I am receiving you, and the disorder of this room.”

“Sir,” I replied, “without even asking who you are, I can tell that you are an artist.”

“Only an amateur, nothing more, sir. Once, I loved collecting these beautiful works made by human hands. I hunted for them eagerly and tracked them down tirelessly, and I managed to gather some objects of great value. They are the last keepsakes I have from that world, which is dead to me. To my eyes, your modern artists are already ancient; they have existed for two or three thousand years. In my mind, I place them all together. Great masters have no age.”

“And these musicians?” I said, pointing to works by Weber, Rossini, Mozart, Beethoven, Haydn, Meyerbeer, Hérold,

Wagner, Auber, Gounod, and many others, spread across a large piano-organ built into one of the drawing-room panels.

“These musicians,” Captain Nemo replied, “are contemporaries of Orpheus; for in the memory of the dead, all differences of time disappear. And I am dead, Professor—as dead as those friends of yours who are sleeping six feet under the earth!”

Captain Nemo fell silent and seemed to sink into deep thought. I watched him with great interest, silently studying the strange expression on his face. Leaning on his elbow at the corner of an expensive mosaic table, he no longer saw me—he had forgotten that I was there.

I did not interrupt his reverie, and went on examining the curiosities that filled this drawing-room.

Beneath elegant glass cases fastened with copper rivets were arranged and labeled the most precious treasures of the sea ever placed before a naturalist’s eyes. One can imagine my delight as a professor.

The section devoted to zoophytes contained the most striking examples from the two groups of polyps and echinoderms. In the first group were tubipores; fan-shaped gorgonians; soft sponges from Syria; ises from the Moluccas; pennatules; a superb virgularia from the Norwegian seas; brightly colored umbellulariæ; alcyonarians; and a whole series of madrepores, so skillfully classified by my master, Milne Edwards. Among them I noticed some remarkable flabellinæ oculinæ from Bourbon Island, the “Neptune’s car” of the Antilles, and magnificent varieties of coral. In short, there was every kind of those curious polyps from which entire islands are formed,

islands that will one day become continents. The echinoderms, notable for their covering of spines, were also fully represented: asterias, sea stars, pentacrines, comatules, astérophons, sea urchins, holothurians, and others together made up a complete collection of the group.

A somewhat high-strung conchologist would certainly have fainted at the sight of the other, even more numerous cases, where the mollusk specimens were arranged. It was a collection of priceless value, and I do not have time to describe it in detail. From memory, I will mention only the elegant royal hammer-shell of the Indian Ocean, its neat white spots standing out vividly against a red-brown background; a brilliantly colored imperial spondylus, bristling with spines, a rare specimen in European museums—I estimated it to be worth no less than £1,000; a common hammer-shell from the seas of New Holland, though one obtained only with difficulty; exotic buccardia from Senegal; fragile white bivalve shells that a breath might have shattered like a soap bubble; several varieties of the aspirgillum of Java, a kind of calcareous tube edged with leaflike folds and much debated by amateurs; a whole series of trochuses, some greenish-yellow and found in American seas, others reddish-brown and native to Australian waters, and still others from the Gulf of Mexico, remarkable for their overlapping shells; stellaria from the Southern Seas; and finally, rarest of all, the magnificent spur shell of New Zealand. There were, in fact, delicate and fragile shells of every kind, all bearing the fitting names that science has given them.

In separate compartments lay chaplets of pearls of extraordinary beauty, catching the electric light in tiny flashes of

fire: pink pearls taken from the pinna-marina of the Red Sea; green pearls from the haliotyde iris; yellow, blue, and black pearls, the remarkable products of various mollusks from every ocean, and of certain mussels from the waterways of the North; and finally, several priceless specimens gathered from the rarest pintadines. Some of these pearls were larger than a pigeon's egg. They were worth as much as, or more than, the one the traveler Tavernier sold to the Shah of Persia for three million francs, and they surpassed the pearl owned by the Imaum of Muscat, which I had believed had no equal in the world.

It was simply impossible to estimate the value of this collection. Captain Nemo must have spent millions acquiring these various specimens, and I was wondering from what source he had drawn such wealth to indulge his passion for collecting when I was interrupted by these words—

"You are examining my shells, Professor? They must certainly be of interest to a naturalist. But to me they have a far greater charm, because I collected every one of them with my own hand, and there is not a sea anywhere on the globe that has escaped my explorations."

"I can understand, Captain, the pleasure of moving among such riches. You are one of those who have gathered your treasures for yourself. No museum in Europe possesses such a collection of the ocean's productions. But if I spend all my admiration on it, I shall have none left for the vessel that carries it. I do not wish to pry into your secrets, but I must admit that this Nautilus, the power contained within it, the mechanisms that allow it to

operate, and the force that drives it all stir my curiosity to the highest degree. I see instruments hanging on the walls of this room whose purpose I do not know."

"You will find these same instruments in my own room, Professor, where I shall be very glad to explain their use to you. But first, come and inspect the cabin set aside for your own use. You must see how you are to be accommodated aboard the Nautilus."

I followed Captain Nemo through one of the doors that opened off the drawing-room and back onto the central deck. He led me toward the bow, where I found not a cabin but an elegant room furnished with a bed, a dressing table, and several other pieces of furniture.

All I could do was thank my host.

"Your room is next to mine," he said, opening a door, "and mine opens into the drawing-room we have just left."

I stepped into the Captain's room. It was stark, almost monastic in appearance: a small iron bed, a table, and a few toilet articles, all lit by a skylight. There was nothing comfortable about it, only the bare necessities.

Captain Nemo pointed to a chair.

"Please sit down," he said. I sat, and he began:

Captain Nemo's state-room

CHAPTER XI ALL BY ELECTRICITY

“Sir,” said Captain Nemo, pointing out the instruments hanging on the walls of his room, “these are the devices needed to navigate the Nautilus. Here, as in the drawing-room, I keep them constantly before me, and they show me my position and exact course in the middle of the ocean. Some of them are familiar to you: the thermometer, which gives the temperature inside the Nautilus; the barometer, which shows the weight of the air and predicts changes in the weather; the hygrometer, which measures the dryness of the atmosphere; the storm-glass, whose contents, as they decompose, warn of approaching storms; the compass, which directs my course; the sextant, which gives the latitude from the height of the sun; the chronometers, by which I calculate longitude; and telescopes for day and night, which I use to examine the horizon when the Nautilus rises to the surface of the waves.”

“Those are the usual nautical instruments,” I replied, “and I know what they are for. But these others, I assume, serve the special needs of the Nautilus. This dial with the moving needle is a manometer, is it not?”

“Yes, it is a manometer. And because it is connected with the water and shows its external pressure, it also tells us our depth.”

“And these other instruments, whose purpose I cannot make out?”



“Professor, I should explain a few things. Would you be kind enough to listen?”

He was silent for a moment, then said—

“There is a powerful force at work on my vessel—obedient, swift, and easy to use, suited to every purpose, and supreme on board. Everything is done through it. It provides light and heat, and it is the very heart of all my machinery. That force is electricity.”

“Electricity?” I exclaimed in surprise.

“Yes, sir.”

“Even so, Captain, your vessel moves with extraordinary speed, and that does not seem consistent with electric power. Up to now, its mechanical force has been limited, and it has only been able to produce a small amount of power.”

“Professor,” said Captain Nemo, “my electricity is not like everyone else’s. You know what seawater is made of. In a thousand grammes, there are 96½ percent water and about 2-2/3 percent chloride of sodium; then, in smaller quantities, chlorides of magnesium and potassium, bromide of magnesium, sulphate of magnesia, and sulphate and carbonate of lime. You see, then, that chloride of sodium makes up a large part of it. So it is this sodium that I extract from seawater and use in my compounds. I owe everything to the ocean. It produces electricity, and electricity gives the Nautilus heat, light, motion—in a word, life.”

“But not the air you breathe?”

“Oh, I could produce the air I need to breathe, but there is no need, because I can rise to the surface whenever I wish. Still, even if electricity does not provide me with breathable air, it does power the strong pumps kept in large reservoirs, which allow me, when necessary, to remain in the depths of the sea for as long as I choose. It gives me a steady, unbroken light that the sun cannot. Now look at this clock. It is electric, and it keeps time with a precision beyond the best chronometers. I have divided it into twenty-four hours, like Italian clocks, because for me there is neither night nor day, neither sun nor moon, but only the artificial light I carry with me to the bottom of the sea. Look—at this moment, it is ten o’clock in the morning.”

“Exactly.”

“Here is another use of electricity. This dial hanging in front of us shows the Nautilus’s speed. An electric wire connects it to the propeller, and the needle shows the actual speed. Look—we are now moving steadily at fifteen miles an hour.”

“It is marvelous! And I see, Captain, that you were right to use this force in place of wind, water, and steam.”

“We are not finished yet, M. Aronnax,” said Captain Nemo, rising. “If you will come with me, we will examine the stern of the Nautilus.”

In fact, I already knew the layout of the front part of this submarine vessel exactly. Starting from the bow, it was arranged as follows: the dining room, five yards long, separated from the library by a watertight partition; the library, five yards long; the large drawing room, ten yards long, separated from the Captain’s room by a second watertight partition; that room,

five yards long; mine, two and a half yards; and finally an air reservoir, seven and a half yards long, extending to the bows. The total length was thirty-five yards, or one hundred and five feet. The partitions had doors that closed hermetically by means of india-rubber fittings, and they guaranteed the safety of the Nautilus in case of a leak.

I followed Captain Nemo through the middle of the vessel and reached its center. There was a kind of shaft opening between two partitions. An iron ladder, secured by an iron hook to the partition, led upward. I asked the Captain what the ladder was for.

“It leads to the small boat,” he said.

“What! You have a boat?” I cried in surprise.

“Certainly. It is an excellent craft, light and unsinkable, and it serves both as a fishing boat and as a pleasure boat.”

“But then, when you want to get into it, you have to come up to the surface of the water?”

“Not at all. This boat is fixed to the upper part of the Nautilus’s hull and fits into a specially made recess. It is covered, completely watertight, and fastened with strong bolts. This ladder leads to a hatch in the hull of the Nautilus that lines up with a similar opening in the side of the boat. Through these two openings, I enter the little vessel. They close the one belonging to the Nautilus; I close the other by tightening it with screws. Then I release the bolts, and the little boat rises to the surface of the sea with tremendous speed. Once there, I open the hatch in the deck, which has remained carefully sealed until then; I step

the mast, raise my sail, take my oars, and away I go."

"But how do you get back on board?"

"I do not come back, M. Aronnax; the Nautilus comes to me."

"At your command?"

"At my command. An electric wire connects us. I send it a telegraph message, and that is enough."

"Truly," I said, astonished by these wonders, "nothing could be simpler."

After passing the stairwell that led up to the platform, I came to a cabin six feet long, where Conseil and Ned Land, delighted with their meal, were eating it eagerly. Beyond that, a door opened into a kitchen nine feet long, set between the large storerooms. There, electricity, even better than gas, handled all the cooking. Currents running beneath the furnaces gave off heat to platinum sponges, and the temperature was kept steady and evenly distributed. They also warmed a distilling apparatus which, through evaporation, produced excellent drinking water. Near the kitchen was a comfortably fitted bathroom, with taps for hot and cold water.

Next to the kitchen was the vessel's berthroom, sixteen feet long. But the door was closed, and I could not see how it was arranged, which might have given me some idea of how many men were employed on board the Nautilus.

At the far end was a fourth partition separating this room from the engine room. A door opened, and I stepped into the compartment where Captain Nemo—clearly an engineer of the

highest skill—had installed his propulsion machinery. The engine room was brightly lit and at least sixty-five feet long. It was divided into two sections: the first held the equipment for generating electricity, and the second contained the machinery that transmitted it to the propeller. I studied it with intense interest, trying to understand how the Nautilus worked.

“You see,” said the Captain, “I use Bunsen’s apparatus, not Ruhmkorff’s. Ruhmkorff’s would not have been powerful enough. Bunsen’s require fewer units, but they are strong and large, and experience has shown me that this is best. The electricity they produce is carried forward, where it acts through very large electromagnets on a system of levers and gears that transmit the motion to the propeller shaft. This propeller, which is nineteen feet in diameter with a pitch of twenty-three feet, makes about a hundred and twenty revolutions per second.”

“And that gives you?”

“A speed of fifty miles an hour.”

“I saw the Nautilus maneuver in front of the Abraham Lincoln, and I already have some idea of its speed. But that is not enough. We must also know how it is guided. We must be able to steer it right or left, up or down. How do you descend to great depths, where the resistance keeps increasing and reaches hundreds of atmospheres? How do you rise again to the surface of the ocean? And how do you keep the vessel balanced at the proper level? Am I asking too much?”

“Not at all, Professor,” the Captain replied, with a slight hesitation. “Since you may never leave this submarine vessel, I can tell you. Come into the saloon. That is our usual study, and there you shall learn everything you want to know about the Nautilus.”

CHAPTER XII SOME FIGURES

A moment later we were seated on a divan in the saloon, smoking. The Captain showed me a drawing that gave the plan, section, and elevation of the Nautilus. Then he began his description with these words:

“Here, M. Aronnax, are the exact dimensions of the vessel you are in. It is an elongated cylinder with ical ends. In shape, it closely resembles a cigar, a design already used in London for several vessels of this kind. From stem to stern, this cylinder is exactly 232 feet long, and its greatest width is twenty-six feet. It is not built quite like your ocean-going steamers, but its lines are long enough and its curves gradual enough for the water to slip past easily, without hindering its movement. From these two measurements, you can make a simple calculation of the Nautilus’s surface area and volume. Its surface area is 6,032 feet, and its volume is about 1,500 cubic yards. In other words, when fully submerged, it displaces 50,000 feet of water, or weighs 1,500 tons.”

“When I drew up the plans for this submarine vessel, I intended nine-tenths of it to remain submerged. As a result, it should displace only nine-tenths of its total volume—that is, it should weigh only that many tons. So, with the dimensions I have just given, I could not allow its weight to go beyond that limit.”

“The Nautilus is made of two hulls, one inside the other, connected by T-shaped iron supports that give it great strength. In fact, because of this cellular structure, it withstands pressure like a solid block. Its sides cannot give way. It holds together by

its own structure, not merely by the tightness of its rivets. And the uniform strength of its construction, created by the perfect joining of its materials, allows it to face the roughest seas."

"These two hulls are made of steel plates, whose density is between .7 and .8 that of water. The inner hull is no less than two and a half inches thick and weighs 394 tons. The outer covering, along with the keel, which is twenty inches high and ten inches thick, weighs sixty-two tons by itself. The engine, the ballast, the various accessories and attached apparatus, as well as the partitions and bulkheads, weigh 961.62 tons. Are you following me?"

"I am."

"Then, when the Nautilus is floating under these conditions, one-tenth of it remains above the water. So if I build reservoirs equal to that tenth, able to hold 150 tons, and fill them with water, the vessel's weight rises to 1,507 tons and it becomes completely submerged. That is exactly what happens, Professor. These reservoirs are in the lower part of the Nautilus. I open the valves, they fill, and the vessel that was just level with the surface sinks."

"Very well, Captain, but now we come to the real difficulty. I can understand how you bring the vessel back to the surface. But when it dives below it, doesn't your submarine craft meet increasing pressure, and therefore an upward thrust of one atmosphere for every thirty feet of water—about fifteen pounds to the square inch?"

"Exactly, sir."

“Then unless you fill the Nautilus completely, I do not see how you can take it down to those depths.”

“Professor, you must not confuse statics with dynamics, or you will fall into serious error. Very little effort is needed to reach the lower depths of the ocean, because all bodies naturally tend to sink. When I wanted to determine the extra weight needed to submerge the Nautilus, I only had to calculate how much seawater decreases in volume as the depth increases.”

“That is clear enough.”

“Now, while water is not absolutely incompressible, it can be compressed only very slightly. In fact, according to the latest calculations, this reduction is only .000436 per atmosphere for every thirty feet of depth. So if I want to descend 3,000 feet, I must take into account the decrease in volume under a pressure equal to that of a column of water 1,000 feet high. The calculation is easy to check. I also have supplementary reservoirs that can hold a hundred tons. That allows me to sink to a considerable depth. When I want to rise again to sea level, I simply release the water; and if I want the Nautilus to emerge with one-tenth of her total volume above the surface, I empty all the reservoirs.”

I had no objection to this line of reasoning.

“I accept your calculations, Captain,” I replied. “I would be wrong to argue with them, since everyday experience confirms them. But I can see a real difficulty ahead.”

“What is it, sir?”

“At a depth of about 1,000 feet, the walls of the Nautilus bear a pressure of 100 atmospheres. So if you were to empty the supplementary reservoirs now, to lighten the vessel and bring it up to the surface, the pumps would have to overcome that pressure of 100 atmospheres, or 1,500 pounds to the square inch. From that, a power—”

“Which electricity alone can provide,” the Captain said quickly. “I repeat, sir, the driving power of my engines is almost unlimited. The pumps of the Nautilus are tremendously powerful, as you must have seen when their jets of water struck the Abraham Lincoln like a torrent. Besides, I use the auxiliary reservoirs only to reach an average depth of 750 to 1,000 fathoms, and I do that to manage my machinery. And when I want to visit the depths of the ocean five or six miles below the surface, I use slower methods, but ones that are no less certain.”

“What are they, Captain?”

“To explain that, I must tell you how the Nautilus is operated.”

“I am eager to learn.”

“To steer this vessel to starboard or port—to turn it, in short, along a horizontal course—I use an ordinary rudder fixed at the rear of the stern-post, controlled by a wheel and tackle. But I can also make the Nautilus rise and sink by vertical movement, using two inclined planes attached to its sides opposite the center of flotation. These planes can move in every direction and are operated from inside by powerful levers. If the planes are kept parallel with the vessel, it moves horizontally. If they are set at an angle, then, depending on that angle and driven by

the screw, the Nautilus either descends diagonally or rises diagonally, as I choose. And if I want to reach the surface more quickly, I stop the screw, and the pressure of the water makes the Nautilus rise straight up like a balloon filled with hydrogen."

"Excellent, Captain! But how can the helmsman keep to his course in the middle of the water?"

"The helmsman stands in a glass-enclosed chamber that rises above the hull of the Nautilus and is fitted with lenses."

"Can those lenses withstand such pressure?"

"Exactly. Glass may shatter from a blow, but it can still withstand a great deal of pressure. During some experiments in electric-light fishing in the Northern Seas in 1864, we saw panes less than a third of an inch thick hold against a pressure of sixteen atmospheres. The glass I use, however, is at least thirty times thicker."

"Granted. But even so, to see, the light must be stronger than the darkness. In the dark depths of the water, how can you see anything?"

"A powerful electric reflector is mounted behind the steersman's cabin, and its rays light up the sea for half a mile ahead."

"Ah! Bravo, bravo, Captain! Now I can explain the phosphorescence of the supposed narwhal that puzzled us so much. And now I ask you: was the collision with the Nautilus and the Scotia, which caused such a stir, simply the result of a chance encounter?"

“Entirely accidental, sir. I was sailing only one fathom below the surface when the impact came. It caused no serious damage.”

“None, sir. But now, about your encounter with the Abraham Lincoln?”

“Professor, I regret what happened to one of the finest ships in the American navy. But they attacked me, and I had to defend myself. Even so, I was satisfied merely to put the frigate hors de combat; she should have no trouble being repaired at the next port.”

“Ah, Commander! Your Nautilus is truly a remarkable vessel.”

“Yes, Professor, and I love it as though it were part of me. If one of your ships is threatened at sea, the first thing you feel is that an abyss surrounds you above and below. But aboard the Nautilus, men never lose heart. There are no flaws to fear, because its double hull is as strong as iron. There is no rigging to manage, no sails for the wind to tear away, no boilers that might explode, no fire to dread, since the vessel is made of iron, not wood. There is no danger of running out of coal, because electricity alone powers it. There is no risk of collision, because it alone travels in deep water. There is no storm to endure, because when it dives beneath the surface, it enters complete calm. There, sir—that is the perfection of a vessel! And if it is true that the engineer trusts the ship more than the builder does, and the builder more than the captain himself, then you can understand the confidence I place in my Nautilus, for I am at once its captain, builder, and engineer.”

“But how were you able to build this remarkable Nautilus in secret?”

“Each separate part, M. Aronnax, came from a different part of the world. The keel was forged at Creusot; the propeller shaft at Penn & Co.’s in London; the iron plates of the hull at Laird’s in Liverpool; the screw itself at Scott’s in Glasgow. The reservoirs were made by Cail & Co. in Paris, the engine by Krupp in Prussia, its beak in Motala’s workshop in Sweden, and its mathematical instruments by Hart Brothers of New York, and so on. Each of these suppliers received my orders under a different name.”

“But those parts still had to be assembled and fitted together?”

“Professor, I had established my workshops on a deserted island in the ocean. There my workmen—that is, the brave men whom I trained and educated—and I assembled our Nautilus. Then, when the work was finished, fire destroyed every trace of what we had done on that island, an island so small that I could have leaped across it if I had wished.”

“Then this vessel must have cost a great deal?”

“M. Aronnax, an iron vessel costs £45 per ton. Now the Nautilus weighed 1,500 tons. That made its cost £67,500, with another £80,000 to fit it out, and about £200,000 in all, including the works of art and the collections it contains.”

“One last question, Captain Nemo.”

“Ask it, Professor.”

“You are rich?”

“Immensely rich, sir. I could pay off France’s national debt without even noticing the loss.”

I stared at this extraordinary man as he spoke. Was he trying to test how gullible I was? Time would tell.

CHAPTER XIII THE BLACK RIVER

The part of the earth covered by water is estimated at more than eighty million acres. This mass of water contains two billion two hundred and fifty million cubic miles, forming a spherical body sixty leagues in diameter, with a weight of three quintillion tons. To understand these figures, it helps to remember that a quintillion relates to a billion in the same way a billion relates to one. In other words, a quintillion contains as many billions as a billion contains units. This mass of water is roughly equal to the amount all the rivers on earth would pour out in forty thousand years.

In the geological ages, the igneous period followed the aqueous one. At first, the ocean covered everything. Then, little by little, during the Silurian period, the mountain peaks began to appear. Islands rose, then vanished again in partial floods, then reappeared and became permanent. They formed continents, until at last the earth took on the geographical arrangement we see today. The solid land had claimed from the waters thirty-seven million six hundred and fifty-seven square miles, equal to twelve billion nine hundred and sixty million acres.

The shape of the continents lets us divide the waters of the globe into five great regions: the Arctic or Frozen Ocean, the Antarctic or Frozen Ocean, the Indian Ocean, the Atlantic Ocean, and the Pacific Ocean.

The Pacific Ocean stretches from north to south between the two polar circles, and from east to west between Asia and



America, across 145 degrees of longitude. It is the calmest of seas. Its currents are wide and slow, its tides moderate, and its rainfall abundant. This was the ocean my fate first destined me to cross under these strange conditions.

“Sir,” said Captain Nemo, “if you please, we will take our bearings and fix the starting point of this voyage. It is a quarter to twelve. I am going up to the surface again.”

The Captain pressed an electric clock three times. The pumps began forcing water out of the tanks. On the manometer, the needle showed the Nautilus rising as the pressure changed, then it came to a stop.

“We have arrived,” said the Captain.

I went to the central staircase that opened onto the platform, climbed the iron steps, and found myself on the upper surface of the Nautilus.

The platform rose only three feet above the water. The front and rear of the Nautilus had that spindle shape which made the comparison to a cigar so fitting. I noticed that its iron plates, overlapping slightly, looked like the scales covering the bodies of our large land reptiles. That made it easy to understand why, despite every optical aid, this vessel had naturally been mistaken for a sea creature.

Near the middle of the platform, the longboat, half embedded in the vessel’s hull, formed a slight bulge. At the bow and stern stood two structures of moderate height, with sloping sides and partly enclosed by thick, lens-shaped glass. One was meant for the helmsman who guided the Nautilus; the other held a

powerful lantern to light the way.

The sea was beautiful, and the sky was clear. The long vessel barely felt the ocean's broad swells. A light east wind rippled the surface of the water. The horizon was free of fog, so it was easy to see. Nothing was in sight—not a sandbank, not an island. Just a vast desert of sea.

With the help of his sextant, Captain Nemo measured the sun's altitude, which would also give him the latitude. He waited a few moments until the sun's disc touched the horizon. As he took his observation, not a muscle moved; the instrument could not have been steadier in a marble hand.

Captain Nemo measured the sun's altitude

"Twelve o'clock, sir," he said. "Whenever you wish——"

I cast one last look over the sea, faintly tinted yellow by the Japanese coast, and went down to the saloon.

"And now, sir, I will leave you to your studies," the Captain added. "Our course is east-north-east, and our depth is twenty-six fathoms. Here are large-scale maps on which you may follow our route. The saloon is at your disposal, and, with your permission, I will withdraw." Captain Nemo bowed, and I remained alone, absorbed in thoughts that all centered on the commander of the Nautilus.

For a full hour I stayed lost in these reflections, trying to penetrate a mystery that fascinated me. Then my eyes fell on the vast planisphere spread across the table, and I placed my finger on the exact point where the given latitude and longitude met.

The sea has great rivers of its own, just as the continents do. These are distinct currents, recognized by their temperature and color. The most remarkable of them is the one called the Gulf Stream. Science has mapped the course of five principal currents across the globe: one in the North Atlantic, a second in the South Atlantic, a third in the North Pacific, a fourth in the South Pacific, and a fifth in the southern Indian Ocean. It is even likely that a sixth current once existed in the northern Indian Ocean, when the Caspian and Aral Seas formed a single vast sheet of water.

At the point marked on the planisphere, one of these currents was flowing: the Kuro-Scivo of the Japanese, the Black River. After leaving the Gulf of Bengal, where the direct rays of a tropical sun warm it, it passes through the Straits of Malacca along the coast of Asia, then turns into the North Pacific toward the Aleutian Islands. It carries with it trunks of camphor trees and other native products, and it traces the ocean's waves with the pure indigo of its warm water. This was the current the Nautilus was to follow. I traced it with my eyes, watched it disappear into the vast Pacific, and felt myself drawn along with it, when Ned Land and Conseil appeared at the door of the saloon.

My two brave companions stood frozen at the sight of the wonders spread out before them.

"Where are we, where are we?" the Canadian cried. "In the museum at Quebec?"

"My friends," I answered, motioning for them to come in, "you are not in Canada, but aboard the Nautilus, fifty yards below the

surface of the sea."

"But, M. Aronnax," said Ned Land, "can you tell me how many men are on board? Ten, twenty, fifty, a hundred?"

"I can't answer you, Mr. Land. For now, it's better to give up any thought of capturing the Nautilus or escaping from it. This vessel is a masterpiece of modern engineering, and I would be sorry not to have seen it. Many people would accept the situation forced on us, if only for the chance to move among such wonders. So stay calm, and let us try to observe what is happening around us."

"Observe!" the harpooner cried. "But we can't see anything in this iron prison! We are walking—we are sailing—blind."

Ned Land had barely spoken these words when everything was suddenly plunged into darkness. The glowing ceiling vanished so quickly that the abrupt change hurt my eyes.

We stood silent and motionless, not knowing what surprise awaited us, whether pleasant or unpleasant. Then we heard a sliding sound; it seemed as if panels were moving along the sides of the Nautilus.

"This is the very end of the end!" said Ned Land.

Suddenly light burst into the saloon from both sides through two oblong openings. The mass of water outside shone vividly in the electric glow. Two crystal panes separated us from the sea. At first I shuddered at the thought that this fragile barrier might give way, but thick copper bands held it in place and gave it an almost limitless strength.

The sea was clearly visible for a mile all around the Nautilus. What a spectacle! What pen could describe it? Who could paint the effects of the light passing through those transparent sheets of water, or the gentle shading from the lower depths to the upper layers of the ocean?

We know how transparent the sea is, and that its clarity far surpasses that of spring water. The mineral and organic substances suspended in it actually increase that transparency. In some parts of the ocean near the Antilles, a sandy bottom can be seen with astonishing clearness under seventy-five fathoms of water. The sun's rays seem able to penetrate to a depth of one hundred and fifty fathoms. But in the watery medium through which the Nautilus traveled, the electric radiance shone even in the heart of the waves. It was no longer luminous water, but liquid light.

On either side, a window opened onto this unexplored abyss. The dimness of the saloon made the brightness outside seem even more vivid, and we gazed out as though the clear crystal were the glass of an enormous aquarium.

"You wanted to see, friend Ned; well, now you do."

"Remarkable! remarkable!" muttered the Canadian, who, forgetting his bad temper, seemed to give in to an irresistible fascination. "A man would travel much farther than this to admire such a sight!"

"Ah!" I thought to myself, "now I understand this man's life; he has created a separate world for himself, where he keeps all his greatest marvels."

For two full hours, an aquatic army escorted the Nautilus. As they played and leaped, competing with one another in beauty, brilliance, and speed, I picked out the green labre; the banded mullet, marked with a double black line; the round-tailed goby, white with violet spots along its back; the Japanese scombrus, a beautiful mackerel of those seas, with a blue body and silvery head; the brilliant azurors, whose name alone seems beyond description; several banded spares, with blue-and-yellow variegated fins; the woodcocks of the sea, some of which grow to a yard in length; Japanese salamanders; spider lampreys; serpents six feet long, with small, lively eyes and a huge mouth bristling with teeth; along with many other species.

Our excitement stayed at its peak, and exclamations came one after another. Ned named the fish, and Conseil classified them. I was entranced by the liveliness of their movements and the beauty of their shapes. Never before had I been able to observe these animals alive and free in their natural element. I will not try to list every variety that passed before my dazzled eyes, the whole collection of the seas of China and Japan. These fish, more numerous than the birds of the air, had no doubt been drawn there by the brilliant glow of the electric light.

Suddenly daylight filled the saloon, the iron panels shut again, and the enchanting vision vanished. But for a long time I remained lost in thought, until my eyes fell on the instruments hanging on the partition. The compass still showed our course as N.N.E. The manometer registered a pressure of five atmospheres, equal to a depth of twenty-five fathoms, and the electric log showed a speed of fifteen miles an hour. I expected Captain Nemo to appear, but he did not. The clock showed five

o’clock.

Ned Land and Conseil went back to their cabin, and I withdrew to my room. My dinner was ready. It consisted of turtle soup made from the finest hawksbills, a surmullet served in puff paste, whose liver, prepared separately, was especially delicious, and fillets of emperor-holocanthus, which seemed to me even more flavorful than salmon.

I spent the evening reading, writing, and thinking. Then sleep overcame me, and I stretched out on my couch of zostera and slept deeply while the Nautilus glided swiftly through the current of the Black River.

CHAPTER XIV A NOTE OF INVITATION

The next day was the 9th of November. I woke after a long sleep of twelve hours. Conseil came, as usual, to ask how I had slept and to offer his services. He had left his friend the Canadian sleeping like a man who had done nothing else all his life. I let the good fellow chatter on as much as he liked, without troubling to answer him. My mind was occupied by the Captain's absence during our time together the day before, and I hoped to see him today.

As soon as I was dressed, I went into the saloon. It was empty.

I immersed myself in studying the treasures of shells displayed behind the glass. I also delighted in the great herbals filled with the rarest marine plants, which, though dried, had kept their beautiful colors. Among these precious hydrophytes I noticed some vorticellæ, pavonariæ, delicate ceramies tinted scarlet, some fan-shaped agari, and some natabuli like flat mushrooms, which had once been classified as zoophytes—in short, a complete collection of algæ.

The whole day passed without a visit from Captain Nemo. The saloon panels did not open. Perhaps they did not want us to grow tired of these beautiful sights.

The Nautilus was heading east-northeast at a speed of twelve knots, cruising at a depth of twenty-five to thirty fathoms below the surface.



The next day, November 10, it was the same emptiness, the same isolation. I did not see a single member of the crew. Ned and Conseil spent most of the day with me. They were astonished by the Captain's unexplained absence. Was this strange man ill? Had he changed his intentions toward us?

Still, as Conseil pointed out, we enjoyed complete freedom and were fed with great care and abundance. Our host was keeping the terms of our agreement. We had no cause for complaint. In truth, the strangeness of our fate had already brought us such marvelous compensation that we had no right to condemn it yet.

That day I began the journal of these adventures, which later allowed me to recount them with the greatest accuracy and in the smallest detail. I wrote it on paper made from zostera marina.

November 11, early in the morning. The fresh air moving through the interior of the Nautilus told me that we had risen to the surface of the ocean to renew our supply of oxygen. I made my way to the central staircase and climbed up to the platform.

It was six o'clock. The weather was cloudy, and the sea was gray but calm. There was hardly a ripple. I hoped to find Captain Nemo there, but would he be? I saw no one except the helmsman, enclosed in his glass cabin. Sitting on the part of the hull where the pinnace was fitted, I breathed in the salty breeze with delight.

Little by little, the fog faded under the sun's rays, and the glowing orb rose above the eastern horizon. The sea blazed beneath its light like a trail of gunpowder. High above, the scattered clouds shone with vivid, beautiful colors, and

countless "mare's tails," which foretold wind for the day, stretched across the sky. But what was wind to the Nautilus, a vessel no storm could frighten?

I was admiring the sunrise, so bright and full of life, when I heard footsteps coming toward the platform. I was ready to greet Captain Nemo, but instead his second-in-command appeared—the same man I had already seen during the Captain's first visit. He stepped onto the platform without seeming to notice me. Raising his powerful telescope to his eye, he carefully examined every part of the horizon. When he had finished, he went to the panel and spoke a sentence in these exact words. I remembered it because every morning it was repeated under exactly the same circumstances. This is what he said—

"Nautron respoc lorni virch."

I had no idea what it meant.

After saying these words, the second-in-command went below. I assumed the Nautilus was about to resume its underwater voyage. I closed the panel and returned to my room.

Five days passed like this, with no change in our situation. Every morning I went up to the platform. The same man spoke the same phrase. But Captain Nemo never appeared.

I had begun to think I would never see him again when, on November 16, as I returned to my room with Ned and Conseil, I found a note on my table addressed to me. I opened it at once. It was written in a bold, clear hand, with rather sharp letters that reminded me of German print. The note read as follows—

November 16, 1867.

TO PROFESSOR ARONNAX, aboard the Nautilus.

Captain Nemo invites Professor Aronnax to join a hunting party, which will take place tomorrow morning in the forests of the island of Crespo. He hopes nothing will prevent the Professor from attending, and he will be pleased to have his companions join him as well.

CAPTAIN NEMO, Commander of the Nautilus.

“A hunt!” Ned exclaimed.

“And in the forests of the island of Crespo!” added Conseil.

“Oh! So the gentleman is going onto terra firma?” Ned Land replied.

“That certainly seems to be what the letter says,” I said, reading it again.

“Well, we must accept,” said the Canadian. “Once we are on dry land again, we’ll know what to do. And I certainly wouldn’t mind eating a piece of fresh venison.”

Without trying to make sense of the contradiction between Captain Nemo’s obvious dislike of islands and continents and his invitation to hunt in a forest, I simply replied—

“First, let us see where the island of Crespo is.”

I consulted the planisphere and found, at 32° 40′ north latitude and 157° 50′ west longitude, a small island discovered in 1801 by Captain Crespo and marked on old Spanish maps as Rocca de la Plata, meaning “The Silver Rock.” We were then about

eighteen hundred miles from our starting point, and the Nautilus, with its course slightly altered, was heading back toward the southeast.

I pointed out this tiny rock, lost in the middle of the North Pacific, to my companions.

“If Captain Nemo does sometimes set foot on dry land,” I said, “he at least chooses deserted islands.”

Ned Land shrugged without saying a word, and he and Conseil left me.

After supper, served by the steward, silent and expressionless, I went to bed, though not without some anxiety.

The next morning, November 17, when I woke, I felt that the Nautilus was completely still. I dressed quickly and went into the saloon.

Captain Nemo was there, waiting for me. He stood, bowed, and asked whether it was convenient for me to accompany him. Since he made no mention of his absence during the last eight days, I did not bring it up either, and simply answered that my companions and I were ready to follow him.

We went into the dining room, where breakfast was served.

“M. Aronnax,” said the Captain, “please join me for breakfast without ceremony; we can talk while we eat. Although I promised you a walk in the forest, I did not promise to find hotels there. So eat like a man who will most likely not dine until very late.”

I ate heartily. The meal consisted of several kinds of fish, slices of holothuridae—excellent zoophytes—and different sorts of seaweed. We drank pure water, to which the Captain added a few drops of a fermented liquor made, by the Kamschatka method, from a seaweed known as Rhodomenia palmata. At first Captain Nemo ate without speaking. Then he began—

“Sir, when I invited you to hunt in my underwater forest of Crespo, you clearly thought I was mad. Sir, you should never judge anyone so quickly.”

“But Captain, believe me—”

“Please listen, and then you will see whether you truly have any reason to accuse me of foolishness and contradiction.”

“I’m listening.”

“You know as well as I do, Professor, that a man can live underwater, provided he carries a sufficient supply of breathable air with him. In underwater work, the laborer wears a waterproof suit and a metal helmet, and air is pumped down to him from above through pressure pumps and regulators.”

“That is a diving apparatus,” I said.

“Exactly, but in those conditions the man is not free; he is tied to the pump that sends him air through a rubber tube, and if we had to remain connected to the Nautilus in that way, we would not be able to go far.”

“And how do you solve that?” I asked.

“By using the Rouquayrol apparatus, invented by two of your countrymen. I have improved it for my own use, and it will allow

you to venture into these new physical conditions without harm to any of your organs. It consists of a reservoir made of thick iron plates, in which I store air at a pressure of fifty atmospheres. The reservoir is fastened to the back with straps, like a soldier's knapsack. Its upper part forms a chamber where the air is held by a bellows, so it cannot escape except at its normal pressure. In the Rouquayrol apparatus as we use it, two rubber tubes leave this chamber and connect to a kind of mask that covers the nose and mouth. One brings in fresh air, and the other lets out the stale air, while the tongue closes one or the other as the wearer needs. But because I must face the great pressure at the bottom of the sea, I had to enclose my head, like a diver's, in a copper helmet. It is into this copper helmet that the two tubes, the inhaling tube and the exhaling tube, open."

"Perfectly clear, Captain Nemo; but the air you carry with you must soon run out. Once it contains only fifteen percent oxygen, it is no longer fit to breathe."

"Exactly. But as I told you, M. Aronnax, the Nautilus pumps let me store air under very high pressure, and under those conditions the reservoir in the apparatus can supply breathable air for nine or ten hours."

"I have no more objections," I replied. "I only want to ask you one thing, Captain—how will you light your way at the bottom of the sea?"

"With the Ruhmkorff apparatus, M. Aronnax. One part is carried on the back, and the other is fastened at the waist. It consists of a Bunsen battery, which I power not with bichromate of potash, but with sodium. A wire collects the electricity it produces and

sends it to a specially made lantern. Inside that lantern is a coiled glass tube containing a small amount of carbonic gas. When the apparatus is working, the gas becomes luminous and gives off a steady white light. So equipped, I can breathe and I can see."

"Captain Nemo, your answers to all my objections are so decisive that I hardly dare doubt you any longer. But even if I must accept the Rouquayrol and Ruhmkorff apparatus, I still have some reservations about the gun I am supposed to carry."

"But it is not a gun that uses powder," the Captain replied.

"Then it is an air-gun."

"Of course. How could I make gunpowder on board without saltpetre, sulphur, or charcoal?"

"Besides," I added, "to fire underwater, in a medium eight hundred and fifty-five times denser than air, we would have to overcome very great resistance."

"That would be no problem. There are guns, according to Fulton, improved in England by Philip Coles and Burley, in France by Furcy, and in Italy by Landi, fitted with a special closing mechanism that allows them to fire under such conditions. But I repeat, since I have no powder, I use highly compressed air, which the pumps of the Nautilus supply in abundance."

"But that air must be used up quickly?"

"Well, do I not have my Rouquayrol reservoir to provide it whenever needed? All it takes is a tap. Besides, M. Aronnax,

you must realize yourself that during our submarine hunt, we can use only a small amount of air and very few bullets."

"But it seems to me that in this dim light, and surrounded by a liquid far denser than air, shots could not travel far or easily be fatal."

"Sir, quite the opposite. With this gun, every shot is deadly; and however lightly the animal is hit, it drops as if struck by lightning."

"Why?"

"Because the bullets fired by this gun are not ordinary bullets, but small glass capsules, invented by Leniebroek, an Austrian chemist, of which I have a large supply. These glass capsules are enclosed in steel and weighted with a lead pellet. They are true Leyden jars, charged with electricity at a very high tension. At the slightest impact, they discharge, and the animal, no matter how strong it is, falls dead. I should add that these capsules are size number four, and that the charge in an ordinary gun would be ten."

"I will argue no further," I replied, rising from the table. "I have nothing left to do but take my gun. In any case, I will go wherever you go."

Captain Nemo then led me aft; and as we passed Ned's and Conseil's cabin, I called to my two companions, who followed at once. We then reached a sort of chamber near the engine room, where we were to put on our walking dress.

CHAPTER XV A WALK ON THE BOTTOM OF THE SEA

This chamber was, properly speaking, the Nautilus's arsenal and wardrobe. A dozen diving suits hung from the wall, ready for us to use.

When Ned Land saw them, he showed a clear reluctance to put one on.

"But, my good Ned, the forests of the Island of Crespo are nothing but underwater forests."

"Wonderful!" said the disappointed harpooner, watching his hopes of fresh meat disappear. "And you, M. Aronnax, are you really going to put on those clothes?"

"There is no other choice, Master Ned."

"As you wish, sir," the harpooner replied with a shrug. "But as for me, unless I am forced, I will never put one on."

"No one will force you, Master Ned," said Captain Nemo.

"Is Conseil going to risk it?" asked Ned.

"I follow my master wherever he goes," replied Conseil.

At the Captain's signal, two crewmen came to help us put on the heavy waterproof suits. They were made of seamless india-rubber and specially designed to withstand great pressure. They looked almost like armor—flexible, yet strong. Each suit included trousers and a vest. The trousers ended in thick boots weighted with heavy lead soles. The vest was

reinforced with copper bands crossing the chest, protecting it from the enormous pressure of the water while leaving the lungs free to work. The sleeves ended in gloves that did not restrict the movement of the hands at all. These finely made suits were vastly superior to the old cork breastplates, jackets, and other devices used in the eighteenth century.

Captain Nemo, one of his companions—a kind of Hercules who must have possessed tremendous strength—Conseil, and I were soon enclosed in these suits. Nothing remained but to seal our heads inside the metal helmet. Before that was done, however, I asked the Captain's permission to examine the guns we were to carry.

One of the Nautilus men handed me a simple gun. Its steel butt, hollow in the center, was fairly large. It served as a reservoir for compressed air, which a spring-operated valve released into a metal tube. A box of ammunition, fitted into a groove in the thickness of the butt, held about twenty of these electric bullets, which were driven into the barrel by means of a spring. As soon as one shot was fired, another was ready.

"Captain Nemo," I said, "this weapon is excellent and easy to handle. I ask only to be allowed to try it. But how are we to reach the bottom of the sea?"

"At this moment, Professor, the Nautilus is resting aground in five fathoms of water, and we have only to set out."

"But how are we to get out?"

"You shall see."

Captain Nemo slipped his head into the helmet, and Conseil and I did the same, though not before hearing the Canadian make the sarcastic remark, “Good sport!” The upper part of our suit ended in a copper collar, onto which the metal helmet was screwed. Three openings, protected by thick glass, let us see in every direction simply by turning our heads inside the helmet. As soon as it was fitted in place, the Rouquayrol apparatus on our backs began to work, and I found that I could breathe easily.

With the Ruhmkorff lamp hanging from my belt and the gun in my hand, I was ready to leave. But, to tell the truth, trapped inside those heavy clothes and pinned to the deck by my lead-soled boots, I could not take a single step.

I was ready to leave.

But they had planned for that difficulty. I felt myself being pushed into a small room next to the wardrobe-room. My companions followed, dragged along in the same way. I heard a watertight door fitted with sealing plates close behind us, and we were plunged into complete darkness.

After a few minutes, I heard a loud hissing sound. I felt the cold rise from my feet to my chest. Clearly, they had opened a valve somewhere in the vessel and let water into the room, which was soon full. Then a second door, cut into the side of the Nautilus, opened. We saw a dim light. A moment later, our feet were on the floor of the sea.

And now, how can I describe the impression that walk beneath the water left on me? Words are powerless to convey such wonders. Captain Nemo walked ahead, with his companion a few steps behind him. Conseil and I stayed close together, as

though it had been possible to exchange words through our metal suits. I no longer felt the weight of my clothes, my shoes, my air tank, or my thick helmet, inside which my head knocked about like an almond in its shell.

The light that reached the seabed thirty feet below the ocean's surface amazed me with its strength. Sunlight passed easily through the mass of water, washing away all color, and I could clearly make out objects a hundred and fifty yards away. Beyond that, the shades deepened into delicate bands of ultramarine and then faded into a dim blur. The water around me truly felt like another kind of air, denser than the atmosphere on land but almost as transparent. Above me lay the calm surface of the sea.

We were walking over fine, level sand, smooth and unmarked, unlike the rippled sand on a flat shore that keeps the imprint of the waves. This dazzling carpet, really a great reflector, threw back the sun's rays with extraordinary force, which explained the shimmering that seemed to run through every particle of water. Will anyone believe me if I say that, at a depth of thirty feet, I could see as clearly as in broad daylight?

For a quarter of an hour I walked over this sand, scattered with the almost weightless dust of shells. The hull of the Nautilus, like a long sandbank, gradually disappeared from view; but when darkness overtook us underwater, its lantern would guide us back on board with its steady beam.

Before long, shapes began to appear in the distance. I recognized magnificent rocks draped with a tapestry of the most beautiful zoophytes, and at first I was struck by the

strange effect of this underwater world.

It was then ten in the morning. The sun's rays struck the surface of the waves at a fairly slanting angle, and when their light, broken up by refraction as if through a prism, touched flowers, rocks, plants, shells, and polypi, each was edged with the seven colors of the spectrum. It was marvelous—a feast for the eyes—this rich interplay of colors, a true kaleidoscope of green, yellow, orange, violet, indigo, and blue; in short, the whole palette of a passionate colorist. Why could I not share with Conseil the vivid feelings surging through my mind and match him in expressions of wonder? For all I knew, Captain Nemo and his companion might have been able to communicate by signs they had agreed on beforehand. So, having no better option, I talked to myself. I delivered speeches inside the copper box that covered my head, wasting more air on useless words than was perhaps wise.

I saw all these wonders within a quarter of a mile, hardly pausing as I followed Captain Nemo, who urged me on with gestures. Before long, the seabed changed. The sandy plain gave way to a stretch of slimy mud, what Americans call "ooze," made up equally of silicious and calcareous shells. Then we crossed a wide meadow of seaweed, growing with wild, rich abundance. The underwater turf was dense and soft underfoot, as comfortable as the finest carpet made by human hands. And while this greenery spread beneath our feet, it also rose above our heads. A delicate web of marine plants, from that inexhaustible family of seaweeds of which more than two thousand kinds are known, floated on the surface of the water. I saw long ribbons of fucus drifting there, some round, others

knotted; laurenciæ and cladostephi with the most delicate foliage; and rhodomeniæ palmatæ, shaped like the fan of a cactus. I noticed that the green plants stayed nearer the top of the sea, while the red ones grew deeper down, leaving the black or brown hydrophytes to form gardens and flowerbeds in the farthest reaches of the ocean floor.

We had left the Nautilus an hour and a half earlier. It was nearly noon, and I could tell by the sun's rays, now falling straight down without refraction. The magical colors gradually faded, and the emerald and sapphire tones disappeared. We walked at a steady pace, and our steps rang against the ground with astonishing force. Even the slightest sound traveled with a speed the ear is not used to on land; indeed, water carries sound better than air, in the ratio of four to one. By this point, the ground was sloping downward, and the light had taken on an even tone. We were at a depth of a hundred and five yards and twenty inches, under a pressure of six atmospheres.

Even at this depth I could still see the sun's rays, though only faintly. Their former brilliance had given way to a reddish twilight, the dimmest stage between day and night. Still, we could see well enough, and there was no need yet to use the Ruhmkorff apparatus. Just then Captain Nemo stopped. He waited for me to come up beside him, then pointed to a dark mass rising through the shadows a short distance away.

"It is the forest of the Island of Crespo," I thought—and I was right.

CHAPTER XVI A SUBMARINE FOREST

At last we reached the edge of this forest, surely one of the finest parts of Captain Nemo’s vast domain. He regarded it as his own, and believed he had as much right to it as the first men did in the earliest days of the world. And really, who could have challenged his claim to this underwater property? What other bold pioneer would come here, axe in hand, to cut down those dark groves?

This forest was made up of large plant-like trees, and the moment we passed beneath its vast arches, I was struck by the strange way their branches were arranged—a feature I had never noticed before.

Not a single herb carpeting the ground, not a branch clothing the trees, was broken or bent, and none of them spread out horizontally. Everything stretched upward toward the surface of the ocean. Not a filament, not a ribbon, however thin, failed to stand as straight as an iron rod. The fuci and lianas rose in stiff vertical lines, shaped that way by the density of the element that had produced them. They were motionless, yet if I pushed them aside with my hand, they immediately returned to their original position. It truly was a world of perfect verticality.

I soon grew used to this strange arrangement, and also to the dim light around us. The forest floor seemed covered with sharp blocks that were hard to avoid. The submarine plant life struck me as remarkably complete, even richer than it would have been in arctic or tropical regions, where such growth is less



abundant. For several minutes, though, I kept confusing one kind with another, mistaking zoophytes for hydrophytes and animals for plants; and who would not have made the same mistake? In this underwater world, fauna and flora are too closely linked.

These plants reproduce on their own, and the source of their life is in the water, which supports and nourishes them. Most of them, instead of leaves, sent out blades of irregular shape in a range of colors—pink, carmine, green, olive, fawn, and brown. I saw pavonari there—not dried out like the specimens from the Nautilus—but spread like fans, as if they were trying to catch a breeze; scarlet ceramies, whose laminaries put out edible shoots; fern-shaped nereocysti, which grow as tall as fifteen feet; clusters of acetabuli, whose stems widen toward the top; and many other marine plants, all entirely without flowers.

“What a strange anomaly, what a fantastic element!” said an ingenious naturalist. “Here the animal kingdom blooms, while the vegetable kingdom does not!”

Beneath these countless shrubs, as large as trees in temperate climates, and under their damp shade, there clustered true bushes of living flowers—hedges of zoophytes—where zebrameandrines bloomed with twisted grooves, along with yellow caryophylliae. To complete the comparison, fish-flies darted from branch to branch like a swarm of hummingbirds, while yellow lepisacanths with bristling jaws, dactylopteri, and monocentrides sprang up at our feet like a flight of snipe.

About an hour later, Captain Nemo signaled that we should stop. I was glad enough of it, and we stretched out beneath an

arbor of alaria, whose long, slender blades stood upright like arrows.

This brief rest felt delightful. Only one thing was missing: the pleasure of conversation. But speaking was impossible, and so was answering. I simply leaned my great copper helmet against Conseil's. I saw the good fellow's eyes shining with delight, and to show how pleased he was, he wriggled about inside his air-filled breastplate in the most comical way imaginable.

After four hours of walking, I was surprised that I did not feel terribly hungry. I could not explain this condition of my stomach. Instead, I felt an overwhelming desire to sleep, as all divers do. My eyes soon closed behind the thick glass, and I sank into a deep slumber, which only movement had kept off until then. Captain Nemo and his sturdy companion, stretched out on the clear crystal floor, had set us the example.

How long I lay buried in that drowsiness, I cannot say. But when I woke, the sun seemed to be sinking toward the horizon. Captain Nemo was already on his feet, and I had just begun to stretch my limbs when an unexpected apparition brought me sharply upright.

A few steps away, a monstrous sea spider, nearly thirty-eight inches high, was watching me with squinting eyes, ready to leap at me. My diving suit was thick enough to protect me from its bite, but I still shuddered in horror. At that moment, Conseil and the sailor from the Nautilus woke up. Captain Nemo pointed out the hideous crustacean, and a blow from the butt of a gun knocked it over. I saw the monster's dreadful claws twist in violent convulsions. The incident reminded me that other, even

more dangerous creatures might lurk in those dark depths, and my diving suit would not protect me from their attacks. I had not thought of that before, but from then on I resolved to stay on my guard. I assumed this pause meant the end of our walk. But I was wrong. Instead of turning back to the Nautilus, Captain Nemo continued his daring expedition. The ground still sloped downward, and the descent seemed to be growing steeper, leading us into still greater depths. It must have been about three o'clock when we reached a narrow valley between high, sheer walls, at a depth of about seventy-five fathoms. Thanks to the excellence of our equipment, we were now forty-five fathoms below the limit that nature seems to have set for human journeys under the sea.

I say seventy-five fathoms, although I had no instrument to measure the depth. But I knew that even in the clearest water, the sun's rays could not reach any farther. And sure enough, the darkness grew deeper. At a distance of ten paces, nothing was visible. I was feeling my way forward when I suddenly saw a brilliant white light. Captain Nemo had just switched on his electric apparatus. His companion did the same, and Conseil and I followed their example. By turning a screw, I connected the wire to the spiral glass, and the sea, lit by our four lanterns, shone clearly in a circle thirty-six yards wide.

Captain Nemo kept descending into the dark depths of the forest, where the trees were becoming sparser with every step. I noticed that plant life disappeared sooner than animal life. The medusae had already left the barren ground, but many other creatures still drew nourishment from it: zoophytes, articulata, molluscs, and fishes.

As we walked, I kept thinking that the light from our Ruhmkorff apparatus was bound to draw some creature out of its dark hiding place. But if any did come near us, they at least kept a respectful distance from the hunters. Several times I saw Captain Nemo stop, raise his gun to his shoulder, then, after waiting a few moments, lower it and continue on. At last, after about four hours, this remarkable excursion came to an end. In front of us rose a wall of magnificent rock, massive and imposing: a pile of gigantic boulders, a huge, steep granite shore, hollowed into dark grottoes but offering no climbable slope. It was the base of the Island of Crespo. It was the earth itself. Captain Nemo stopped at once. A gesture from him brought us all to a halt, and however eager I was to climb the wall, I had to stop. Here Captain Nemo's domain ended, and he would not go beyond it. Beyond lay a part of the globe he could not set foot on.

The return journey began. Captain Nemo went back to the front of his small party and led us without a moment's hesitation. I realized we were not taking the same route back to the Nautilus. This new path was very steep, and as a result the climb was exhausting. We rose quickly toward the surface of the sea. But we did not return to the upper layers so abruptly that the pressure was relieved too fast, which might have caused serious physical harm and internal injuries so often fatal to divers. Before long, the light returned and steadily grew stronger. Since the sun was low on the horizon, refraction outlined the various objects with a ghostly ring. At a depth of about ten and a half yards, we walked through shoals of little fish of every kind, more numerous than the birds of the air and

even more agile. Still, no aquatic game worth shooting had yet appeared, when suddenly I saw the Captain quickly raise his gun and pursue a moving creature into the bushes. He fired. I heard a faint hissing sound, and an animal fell stunned some distance away from us. It was a magnificent sea otter, an enhydrus, the only mammal that lives entirely in the sea. This otter was five feet long and must have been extremely valuable. Its skin, chestnut-brown on top and silvery underneath, would have made one of those beautiful furs so prized in the Russian and Chinese markets. The softness and shine of its coat would certainly have brought £80. I admired this unusual mammal, with its rounded head set with short ears, its round eyes, and its white whiskers like a cat's, along with its webbed feet and claws and its tufted tail. This precious animal, hunted relentlessly by fishermen, has now become very rare and has taken refuge mainly in the northern Pacific; otherwise, its race would probably soon be extinct.

Captain Nemo's companion picked up the animal, threw it over his shoulder, and we went on. For an hour, a sandy plain stretched out before us. At times it rose to within a little more than two yards of the water's surface. Then I could see our reflection clearly, reversed in the water above us. There appeared an identical group mirroring all our movements and actions—in short, exactly like us in every way, except that they walked with their heads downward and their feet in the air.

I noticed another effect as well: thick clouds seemed to drift past, forming and disappearing almost at once. But after thinking about it, I realized these apparent clouds came from the changing density of the reeds on the bottom. I could even see

the fleecy foam their broken tops spread across the water, and the shadows of large birds passing above us, their swift flight visible on the surface of the sea.

On this occasion, I witnessed one of the finest shots ever to stir a hunter's nerves. A large bird with a great spread of wings, plainly visible, came toward us, hovering overhead. Captain Nemo's companion raised his gun and fired when it was only a few yards above the waves. The creature fell stunned, and the force of its fall brought it within reach of the skillful hunter's hand. It was a magnificent albatross.

This incident did not interrupt our march. For two hours we crossed those sandy plains, and then came fields of algæ that were very unpleasant to pass through. To be honest, I could go no farther when I caught sight of a glimmer of light that broke through the darkness of the water for half a mile. It was the Nautilus's lantern. In less than twenty minutes we would be back on board, and I would be able to breathe easily again, for my air reservoir seemed to be supplying oxygen-poor air. But I had not counted on an unexpected encounter, which delayed our return for some time.

I had fallen a few steps behind when I suddenly saw Captain Nemo hurrying toward me. With his powerful hand, he forced me down to the ground, while his companion did the same to Conseil. At first I did not know what to make of this sudden assault, but I was soon reassured when I saw the Captain lie down beside me and remain perfectly still.

I was lying on the ground, sheltered beneath a bush of algæ, when I lifted my head and saw some enormous mass go

blustering past, casting out phosphorescent gleams.

My blood ran cold when I recognized the two formidable sharks threatening us. They were a pair of tintoreas, terrifying creatures with enormous tails and a dull, glassy stare, while phosphorescent matter streamed from holes around their snouts. Monstrous brutes! They could crush a whole man in their iron jaws. I do not know whether Conseil paused to classify them; as for me, I noticed their silver bellies and their huge, tooth-filled mouths from a very unscientific point of view—more as a possible victim than as a naturalist.

Fortunately, these ravenous creatures do not see well. They passed without noticing us, brushing against us with their brownish fins, and by a miracle we escaped a danger even greater than coming face to face with a tiger in the forest. Half an hour later, guided by the electric light, we reached the Nautilus. The outer door had been left open, and Captain Nemo closed it as soon as we had entered the first chamber. Then he pressed a knob. I heard the pumps working inside the vessel. I felt the water dropping around me, and within a few moments the chamber was completely empty. The inner door then opened, and we entered the vestry.

There, our diving suits were removed, not without some difficulty; and, completely worn out from lack of food and sleep, I returned to my room, still marveling at this astonishing excursion to the bottom of the sea.

CHAPTER XVII FOUR THOUSAND LEAGUES UNDER THE PACIFIC

The next morning, November 18, I had fully recovered from the exhaustion of the day before, and I went up to the platform just as the second lieutenant was speaking his usual daily phrase.

I was admiring the ocean's magnificent view when Captain Nemo appeared. He seemed not to notice me and began making a series of astronomical observations. When he had finished, he went over and leaned against the watch-light housing, staring absently out at the sea. Meanwhile, several of the Nautilus's sailors came up onto the platform. They were all strong, healthy men, and they had come to haul in the nets that had been set out overnight. These sailors were clearly from different nations, though all of them showed a European cast of features. I recognized some unmistakable Irishmen, Frenchmen, some Slavs, and a Greek, or perhaps a Candiote. They were polite, and among themselves they spoke only that strange language whose origin I could not guess, nor could I question them about it.

The nets were hauled in. They were a large kind of trawl, like those used on the coasts of Normandy: great pockets held open by the motion of the waves and by a chain fastened through the smaller meshes. Dragged by iron poles, these pockets swept through the water and gathered up everything in their path. That day they brought up some curious specimens from those fertile coasts.



I estimated that the catch came to more than nine hundredweight of fish. It was an excellent haul, though not a surprising one. The nets, after all, were left down for several hours and trapped an endless variety of creatures in their meshes. We never lacked fine food, and the speed of the Nautilus, along with the attraction of its electric light, could always replenish our supply. These products of the sea were immediately lowered through the hatch to the steward's room, some to be eaten fresh and others preserved in brine.

Once the fishing was over and the air supply had been renewed, I thought the Nautilus was about to resume its underwater voyage, and I was getting ready to return to my room when the Captain, without any preamble, turned to me and said:

"Professor, does not this ocean possess a true life of its own? It has its tempers and its gentle moods. Yesterday it slept, as we did, and now it has awakened after a peaceful night. Look!" he continued. "It is waking under the sun's caress. It is about to begin its daily life again. It is fascinating to watch the play of its organism. It has a pulse, arteries, spasms; and I agree with the learned Maury, who discovered in it a circulation as real as the circulation of blood in animals."

"Yes, the ocean truly does circulate, and to support that circulation, the Creator has caused things within it to multiply—heat, salt, and animalcules."

As Captain Nemo spoke, he seemed completely transformed, and I felt a strange, powerful emotion stir within me.

“And more than that,” he added, “real life is there. I can imagine the foundations of seafaring towns, groups of underwater houses that, like the Nautilus, would rise to the surface each morning to breathe—free towns, independent cities. And yet who knows whether some despot—”

Captain Nemo broke off with a violent gesture. Then he turned to me, as if trying to drive away some painful thought:

“M. Aronnax,” he asked, “do you know how deep the ocean is?”

“I know only what the main soundings have taught us, Captain.”

“Could you tell me what they are, so I can use them for my purpose?”

“Here are some of the figures I remember,” I replied. “If I am not mistaken, a depth of 8,000 yards has been found in the North Atlantic, and 2,500 yards in the Mediterranean. The most remarkable soundings were made in the South Atlantic, near the thirty-fifth parallel, and they measured 12,000 yards, 14,000 yards, and 15,000 yards. In short, it is estimated that if the floor of the sea were leveled out, its average depth would be about one and three-quarter leagues.”

“Well, Professor,” the Captain replied, “I hope we shall show you something better than that. As for the average depth of this part of the Pacific, I can tell you it is only 4,000 yards.”

With that, Captain Nemo went to the panel and disappeared down the ladder. I followed him into the large drawing room. The screw was set in motion at once, and the log showed twenty miles an hour.

During the days and weeks that followed, Captain Nemo visited us very rarely. I hardly ever saw him. The lieutenant regularly marked the ship's course on the chart, so I could always tell the Nautilus's exact route.

For quite some time, the drawing-room panels were opened almost every day, and we never grew tired of exploring the mysteries of the underwater world.

The Nautilus was generally heading southeast, staying at a depth of 100 to 150 yards. One day, though, for reasons I never understood, it descended diagonally by means of its inclined planes and touched the seabed. The thermometer showed a temperature of 4.25° centigrade, which at that depth seemed to be the same in every latitude.

At three o'clock in the morning on November 26, the Nautilus crossed the Tropic of Cancer at 172° longitude. On the 27th it came within sight of the Sandwich Islands, where Cook died on February 14, 1779. By then we had traveled 4,860 leagues from our starting point. That morning, when I went up onto the platform, I saw Hawaii two miles to windward, the largest of the seven islands in the group. I could clearly make out the cultivated slopes, the mountain chains running parallel to the coast, and the volcanoes rising above Mouna-Rea, which stands 5,000 yards above sea level. Among the other things the nets brought up were several flabellariae and graceful polypi peculiar to that part of the ocean. The Nautilus continued southeastward. It crossed the equator on December 1 at 142° longitude, and on the 4th of the same month, after a rapid passage with nothing of special note, we sighted the Marquesas

Islands. Three miles away, I saw Martin's Peak on Nouka-Hiva, the largest island in the group belonging to France. I saw only the wooded mountains against the horizon, because Captain Nemo did not wish to bring the ship to the wind. There the nets brought up beautiful fish: some with azure fins and tails like gold, whose flesh is beyond compare; some almost without scales, but of exquisite flavor; and others with bony jaws and yellow-tinged gills, as good as bonitos. All of them would be useful to us. After leaving those charming islands under the protection of the French flag, the Nautilus sailed about 2,000 miles between December 4 and December 11.

During the day on December 11, I was busy reading in the large drawing room. Ned Land and Conseil were watching the luminous water through the half-open panels. The Nautilus was motionless. While its reservoirs were being filled, it remained at a depth of 1,000 yards, a part of the ocean rarely visited and one where large fish were seldom seen.

I was reading a delightful book by Jean Macé, The Slaves of the Stomach, and learning some valuable lessons from it when Conseil interrupted me.

"Would master come here for a moment?" he said in an unusual tone.

"What is it, Conseil?"

"I want master to take a look."

I stood up, went over, leaned on my elbows before the panes, and looked out.

In the full electric light, an enormous black mass hung motionless in the middle of the water. I studied it closely, trying to determine the nature of this gigantic cetacean. But then a sudden thought struck me. “A ship!” I said, half aloud.

“Yes,” replied the Canadian, “a disabled vessel that has sunk straight down.”

Ned Land was right; we were close to a ship whose torn shrouds still hung from their chains. The keel seemed sound, and the wreck could not have been more than a few hours old. Three mast stumps, broken off about two feet above the bridge, showed that the vessel had been forced to sacrifice its masts. But, after falling onto its side, it had filled with water and was listing to port. This skeleton of its former self was a mournful sight as it lay lost beneath the waves, but even sadder was the bridge, where several corpses still lay bound with ropes. I counted five—four men, one of them still standing at the helm, and a woman standing near the poop with an infant in her arms. She was very young. By the brilliant light of the Nautilus, I could make out her features, which the water had not yet disfigured. In one last desperate effort, she had lifted her child above her head—poor little thing!—while its arms were wrapped around its mother’s neck. The posture of the four sailors was horrifying, twisted by their convulsive struggles as they made a final effort to free themselves from the ropes that tied them to the ship. Only the helmsman remained calm. With his grave, clear face, his gray hair plastered to his forehead, and his hand gripping the wheel, he seemed even then to be guiding the three broken masts through the depths of the ocean.

What a scene! We stood speechless; our hearts pounded at the sight of this shipwreck, as if it had been caught alive and preserved in its final moments. And already I saw enormous sharks approaching it with hungry eyes, drawn by human flesh.

However, as the Nautilus turned and circled the sunken ship, I caught the words on the stern in a single glance: “The Florida, Sunderland.”

CHAPTER XVIII VANIKORO

This dreadful sight was only the first in a series of sea disasters the Nautilus was destined to encounter on its voyage. Whenever it passed through busier waters, we often saw the hulls of wrecked ships decaying in the depths. Lower still lay cannons, bullets, anchors, chains, and countless other iron objects consumed by rust. On December 11, we came in sight of the Pomotou Islands, Bougainville's old "dangerous group," which stretches for 500 leagues from E.S.E. to W.N.W., from Ducie Island to Lazareff. The group covers 370 square leagues and is made up of sixty clusters of islands, among which the Gambier group stands out, under French rule. These are coral islands, slowly but steadily rising, built day by day by the work of polypi. In time, this new island landmass will join the neighboring groups, and a fifth continent will one day extend from New Zealand and New Caledonia to the Marquesas.

One day, when I put this theory to Captain Nemo, he answered coldly:

"The earth does not need new continents, but new men."

By chance, the Nautilus had been brought toward Clermont-Tonnere Island, one of the most remarkable in the group, discovered in 1822 by Captain Bell of the Minerva. Here I was able to study the madreporic system to which the islands of this ocean owe their existence.

Madrepores, which should not be confused with corals, have a tissue covered with a calcareous crust, and the variations in their structure led my esteemed teacher, M. Milne Edwards, to

divide them into five sections. The tiny creatures secreted by the marine polypus live by the millions at the bottom of their cells. Their calcareous deposits become rocks, reefs, and islands both large and small. In some places they form a ring around a small inland lake that connects to the sea through openings. Elsewhere they build barrier reefs like those along the coasts of New Caledonia and the various Pomoton islands. In other regions, such as Reunion and Maurice, they raise fringing reefs—high, straight walls beside which the ocean is very deep.

A few cable lengths off the shores of Clermont Island, I admired the immense work done by these microscopic builders. These walls are mainly the work of the madrepores known as milleporas, porites, madrepores, and astraeas. These polyps are found especially in the rough seabeds near the surface, and so they begin their work from the upper layers, gradually burying themselves in the debris of the secretions that support them. At least, that is Darwin's theory. He uses it to explain the formation of atolls, and to my mind it is a better theory than the one that says these madreporic structures are built on the summits of mountains or volcanoes submerged a few feet below sea level.

I was able to examine these remarkable walls closely, for they dropped straight down to a depth of more than 300 yards, and our electric beams lit up the calcareous mass brilliantly. In answer to a question from Conseil about how long it took these colossal barriers to rise, I greatly astonished him by telling him that scholars estimated the growth at only about one-eighth of an inch in a hundred years.

Toward evening, Clermont-Tonnerre faded into the distance, and the Nautilus noticeably changed course. After crossing the Tropic of Capricorn at 135° longitude, it headed W.N.W., making once more for the tropical zone. Although the summer sun was very strong, we did not suffer from the heat, because at fifteen or twenty fathoms below the surface the temperature rose no higher than ten to twelve degrees.

On the 15th of December, we left to the east the enchanting Society group and graceful Tahiti, queen of the Pacific. In the morning I saw, several miles to windward, the island’s high summits. These waters supplied our table with excellent fish: mackerel, bonitos, and several varieties of sea-serpent.

On the 25th of December, the Nautilus sailed into the midst of the New Hebrides, discovered by Quiros in 1606, explored by Bougainville in 1768, and given their present name by Cook in 1773. This group is made up chiefly of nine large islands, forming a chain 120 leagues long from N.N.S. to S.S.W., between 15° and 2° south latitude, and 164° and 168° longitude. We passed fairly close to the Island of Aurou, which at noon looked like a mass of green forest crowned by a very high peak.

Since it was Christmas Day, Ned Land seemed deeply disappointed that there had been no celebration of Christmas, that family holiday Protestants are so fond of. I had not seen Captain Nemo for a week when, on the morning of the 27th, he entered the large drawing-room with his usual air, as though he had seen you only five minutes earlier. I was busy tracing the Nautilus's route on the planisphere. The Captain came over, placed his finger on one point on the chart, and spoke a single

word.

“Vanikoro.”

The effect was electric. It was the name of the islands where La Perouse had been lost. I sprang to my feet.

“The Nautilus has brought us to Vanikoro?” I asked.

“Yes, Professor,” said the Captain.

“And I can visit the famous islands where the Boussole and the Astrolabe were wrecked?”

“If you wish, Professor.”

“When shall we arrive?”

“We are there now.”

With Captain Nemo leading the way, I went up onto the platform and eagerly searched the horizon.

To the northeast, two volcanic islands of unequal size rose from the sea, enclosed by a coral reef forty miles around. We were close to Vanikoro—more precisely, the island to which Dumont d’Urville gave the name Isle de la Recherche—and directly opposite the little harbor of Vanou, at 16° 4′ south latitude and 164° 32′ east longitude. The land seemed covered in greenery from the shore to the inland peaks, which were crowned by Mount Kapogo, 476 feet high. After passing through the outer ring of rocks by a narrow channel, the Nautilus found itself among breakers where the sea was thirty to forty fathoms deep. Beneath the green shade of some mangroves, I noticed some savages who seemed greatly astonished by our approach. In that long black body moving between air and water, did they

see some fearsome whale-like creature they regarded with suspicion?

Just then Captain Nemo asked me what I knew about the wreck of La Perouse.

“Only what everyone knows, Captain,” I replied.

“And could you tell me what everyone knows about it?” he asked ironically.

“Certainly.”

I told him everything that Dumont d’Urville’s latest works had revealed, of which the following is a brief summary.

In 1785, Louis XVI sent La Perouse and his second-in-command, Captain de Langle, on a voyage around the world. They sailed in the corvettes Boussole and Astrolabe, and neither ship was ever heard from again. In 1791, the French Government, rightly anxious about the fate of the two vessels, equipped two large merchant ships, the Recherche and the Esperance. They left Brest on 28 September under the command of Bruni d’Entrecasteaux.

Two months later, they learned from Bowen, commander of the Albemarle, that wreckage had been seen on the coasts of New Georgia. But d’Entrecasteaux set that report aside, since it was somewhat uncertain, and instead steered for the Admiralty Islands, which Captain Hunter’s report had identified as the place where La Perouse was wrecked.

They searched there in vain. The Esperance and the Recherche sailed past Vanikoro without stopping, and the voyage proved

disastrous. It cost d'Entrecasteaux his life, along with those of two of his lieutenants and several members of his crew.

Captain Dillon, a shrewd old sailor of the Pacific, was the first to uncover clear traces of the wrecks. On 15 May 1824, his ship, the St. Patrick, passed close to Tikopia, one of the New Hebrides. There, a Lascar came out to him in a canoe and sold him the silver handle of a sword, marked with characters engraved on the hilt. The Lascar claimed that six years earlier, during a stay at Vanikoro, he had seen two Europeans who belonged to ships that had run aground on the reefs some years before.

Dillon guessed that he was speaking of La Perouse, whose disappearance had troubled the whole world. He tried to reach Vanikoro, where, according to the Lascar, he would find much wreckage from the disaster, but the winds and tides prevented him.

Dillon returned to Calcutta. There he won the interest of the Asiatic Society and the Indian Company in his discovery. A vessel named the Recherche was placed at his disposal, and on 23 January 1827 he set out, accompanied by a French agent.

After stopping at several places in the Pacific, the Recherche dropped anchor off Vanikoro on July 7, 1827, in the same harbor of Vanou where the Nautilus was then lying.

There it gathered many relics from the wreck: iron tools, anchors, pulley-strops, swivel guns, an 18-pound shot, pieces of astronomical instruments, part of a crown piece, and a bronze clock bearing the inscription, "Bazin m'a fait," the mark of the Brest arsenal foundry around 1785. There was no longer

any room for doubt.

After making every inquiry, Dillon remained in that ill-fated place until October. He then left Vanikoro and set course for New Zealand, reached Calcutta on April 7, 1828, and returned to France, where Charles X gave him a warm welcome.

Meanwhile, without knowing anything of Dillon's movements, Dumont d'Urville had already begun searching for the site of the wreck. He had learned from a whaler that some medals and a cross of St. Louis had been found in the hands of natives from Louisiade and New Caledonia. Dumont d'Urville, commander of the Astrolabe, then sailed, and two months after Dillon had left Vanikoro, he arrived at Hobart Town. There he learned the results of Dillon's investigation and discovered that a certain James Hobbs, second lieutenant of the Union of Calcutta, had gone ashore on an island at 8° 18′ south latitude and 156° 30′ east longitude, where he saw iron bars and red cloth being used by the local people. Deeply uncertain, and unsure how much trust to place in reports from minor newspapers, Dumont d'Urville decided to follow Dillon's route.

On February 10, 1828, the Astrolabe appeared off Tikopia and took aboard as guide and interpreter a deserter found on the island. It then made for Vanikoro, sighted it on the 12th of that month, remained among the reefs until the 14th, and did not anchor inside the barrier in the harbor of Vanou until the 20th.

On the 23rd, several officers went around the island and returned with a few unimportant objects. The natives, resorting to denials and evasions, refused to lead them to the ill-fated spot. This uncertain behavior made the officers think the natives

had mistreated the castaways. Indeed, they seemed afraid that Dumont d'Urville had come to avenge La Perouse and his unfortunate crew.

However, on the 26th, after being won over with a few gifts and realizing they had nothing to fear in return, they led M. Jacquireot to the site of the wreck.

There, in three or four fathoms of water between the reefs of Pacou and Vanou, lay anchors, cannons, and pigs of lead and iron, all embedded in lime deposits. The Astrolabe's large boat and whaler were sent to the spot, and, not without difficulty, their crews hauled up an anchor weighing 1,800 pounds, a brass gun, several pigs of iron, and two copper swivel-guns.

By questioning the natives, Dumont d'Urville also learned that after La Perouse had lost both his ships on the reefs of this island, he built a smaller boat, only to be lost a second time. No one knew where.

But the French Government, afraid that Dumont d'Urville might not know about Dillon's movements, had sent the sloop Bayonnaise, commanded by Legoarant de Tromelin, to Vanikoro from its station on the west coast of America. The Bayonnaise dropped anchor off Vanikoro several months after the Astrolabe had left, but found no new document. It did report, however, that the savages had respected the monument to La Perouse. That was the substance of what I told Captain Nemo.

"So," he said, "no one now knows where the third vessel, the one built by the castaways on the island of Vanikoro, was lost?"

"No one knows."

Captain Nemo said nothing, but motioned for me to follow him into the large saloon. The Nautilus sank several yards beneath the waves, and the panels were opened.

I hurried to the opening, and beneath the coral encrustations, covered with fungi, syphonules, alcyons, and madrepores, and among myriads of beautiful fish—girelles, glyphisidri, pompherides, diacopes, and holocentres—I recognized pieces of wreckage that the drags had not been able to pull up: iron stirrups, anchors, cannons, bullets, capstan fittings, the stem of a ship—everything clearly showing the wreck of some vessel, now carpeted with living flowers. As I looked at this desolate scene, Captain Nemo said in a sad voice:

“Commander La Perouse sailed on December 7, 1785, with his ships, the La Boussole and the Astrolabe. He first anchored at Botany Bay, then visited the Friendly Islands and New Caledonia. After that, he headed for Santa Cruz and stopped at Namouka, one of the Hapai group. Then his ships struck the unknown reefs of Vanikoro. The Boussole, which went first, ran aground on the southern coast. The Astrolabe went to help her and ran aground as well. The first ship was destroyed almost at once. The second, stranded to leeward, held out for several days. The natives welcomed the survivors. They settled on the island and built a smaller boat from the wreckage of the two larger ones. Some sailors chose to remain at Vanikoro. The others, weak and sick, set out with La Perouse. They steered toward the Solomon Islands, and there they were lost with everything on the western coast of the chief island of the group, between Cape Deception and Cape Satisfaction.”

“How do you know that?”

“Because I found this at the place where the last wreck lay.”

Captain Nemo showed me a tin box stamped with the French arms and eaten away by salt water. He opened it, and I saw a bundle of papers, yellowed but still readable.

They were the naval minister’s instructions to Commander La Perouse, with notes written in the margins in Louis XVI’s own hand.

“Ah! It is a noble death for a sailor!” Captain Nemo said at last. “A coral tomb makes a peaceful grave, and I hope that my comrades and I will find no other.”

CHAPTER XIX TORRES STRAITS

During the night of December 27 or 28, the Nautilus left the shores of Vanikoro at great speed. Her course was southwest, and in three days she covered the 750 leagues between that island and La Perouse's group and the southeastern point of Papua.

Early on the morning of January 1, 1863, Conseil joined me on the platform.

"Master, will you allow me to wish you a happy New Year?"

"What, Conseil? You speak as if I were back in Paris, in my study at the Jardin des Plantes. Still, I accept your good wishes and thank you for them. But tell me, what do you mean by a 'Happy New Year' in our present situation? Do you mean a year that will bring our imprisonment to an end, or one that will see this strange voyage go on?"

"To tell the truth, master, I do not know how to answer. We are certain to see remarkable things, and for the last two months we have had no time to be bored. The latest marvel is always the most astonishing, and if this continues, I cannot imagine how it will end. I do not think we shall ever see anything like it again. So, with no disrespect to master, I would say that a happy year would be one in which we could see everything."

By 2 January we had traveled 11,340 miles, or 5,250 French leagues, from our starting point in the seas of Japan. Ahead of the vessel lay the dangerous shores of the Coral Sea, off the northeastern coast of Australia. Our boat was passing a few



miles from the formidable reef on which Cook's ship was wrecked on 10 June 1770. The boat carrying Cook struck a rock, and if it did not sink, it was only because a piece of coral, broken off by the impact, lodged itself in the damaged keel.

I had wanted to visit the reef, 360 leagues long, against which the sea, always rough, crashed with tremendous force and a sound like thunder. But at that moment the inclined planes sent the Nautilus down to a great depth, and I could see nothing of the high coral walls. I had to be satisfied with the various fish caught in the nets. Among them I noticed several germons, a kind of mackerel as large as a tunny, with bluish sides marked by crosswise stripes that vanish when the fish dies.

Schools of these fish followed us and provided us with excellent, delicate food. We also caught many gilt-heads, about an inch and a half long, with a flavor like dory, and flying pyrapeds, like underwater swallows, which on dark nights lit up the air and sea by turns with their phosphorescent glow. Among the mollusks and zoophytes, I found in the net several kinds of alcyonarians, echini, hammers, spurs, dials, cerites, and hyalleae. The plant life appeared in the form of beautiful floating seaweeds, laminariae, and macrocystes, soaked with the mucilage that oozes through their pores. Among them I collected a remarkable Nemastoma Geliniarois, which had been classed among the museum's natural curiosities.

Two days after we crossed the Coral Sea, on January 4, we came in sight of the Papuan coast. On that occasion, Captain Nemo told me that he intended to reach the Indian Ocean through the Strait of Torres. That was all he said.

The Torres Straits are nearly thirty-four leagues wide, but countless islands, islets, breakers, and rocks choke them, making navigation almost impossible. Captain Nemo therefore took every necessary precaution in crossing them. The Nautilus, floating between wind and water, moved at a moderate speed. Its screw beat the waves slowly, like the tail of a whale.

Taking advantage of this, my two companions and I went up onto the deserted platform. In front of us stood the steersman's cage, and I assumed Captain Nemo was inside, directing the Nautilus's course. I had the excellent charts of the Torres Straits before me and studied them closely. Around the Nautilus, the sea crashed violently. The waves, running from southeast to northwest at a speed of two and a half miles, broke against the coral that rose here and there above the surface.

"This is a nasty sea," remarked Ned Land.

"Detestable indeed—and not at all suited to a vessel like the Nautilus."

"The Captain must be very sure of his route, because I can see pieces of coral that would tear into her keel if she so much as brushed against them."

The situation was certainly dangerous, but the Nautilus seemed to slip off those rocks as if by magic. It did not follow exactly the same route as the Astrolabe and the Zelee, which had proved disastrous for Dumont d'Urville. Instead, it kept farther north, skirted the Murray Islands, and then turned back to the southwest toward Cumberland Passage. I thought it was going to avoid that passage, but after turning again to the northwest, it made its way through a great number of little-known islands and

islets toward Island Sound and Canal Mauvais.

I wondered whether Captain Nemo, with reckless boldness, meant to steer his vessel into the pass where Dumont d'Urville's two corvettes had struck. But then he changed course again and, cutting straight westward, headed for the Island of Gilboa.

It was then three in the afternoon. The tide, having just reached its height, was beginning to fall. The Nautilus approached the island, which I could still see, edged with its striking fringe of screw-pines. It kept about two miles offshore. Suddenly a jolt threw me down. The Nautilus had just grazed a rock and stopped dead, leaning slightly to port.

When I got up, I saw Captain Nemo and his lieutenant on the platform. They were studying the vessel's position and speaking to each other in their incomprehensible language.

This was our situation: two miles away on the starboard side lay Gilboa, stretching from north to west like a vast arm. To the south and east, coral had emerged with the falling tide. We had run aground, and in one of those seas where the tides are only moderate—a bad circumstance for refloating the Nautilus. Still, the vessel had not been damaged, for her keel was strongly built. But if she could neither slide free nor move, she risked remaining stuck on those rocks forever, and then Captain Nemo's submarine would be finished.

I was thinking this over when the Captain, cool and calm as ever, completely in command of himself, came up to me.

"An accident?" I asked.

"No—an incident."

“But an incident that may perhaps force you to become an inhabitant of this land you are fleeing from?”

Captain Nemo looked at me with curiosity and made a gesture of refusal, as if to say that nothing would ever force him to set foot on solid ground again. Then he said:

“Besides, M. Aronnax, the Nautilus is not lost. It will still carry you into the heart of the ocean’s wonders. Our voyage has only just begun, and I would be sorry to lose the honor of your company so soon.”

“Still, Captain Nemo,” I replied, without noticing the irony in his words, “the Nautilus has run aground in the open sea. The tides are not strong in the Pacific, and if you cannot lighten the Nautilus, I do not see how it can be floated again.”

“The tides are not strong in the Pacific—you are quite right about that, Professor. But in Torres Straits there is still a difference of a yard and a half between high and low water. Today is the 4th of January, and in five days the moon will be full. I shall be very surprised if that satellite does not raise these masses of water enough to do me a service for which I would be grateful to her.”

After saying this, Captain Nemo, followed by his lieutenant, went back down into the interior of the Nautilus. As for the vessel, it did not move. It remained fixed in place, as though the coral polyps had already sealed it in with their indestructible cement.

“Well, sir?” said Ned Land, coming up to me after the Captain had left.

“Well, my friend Ned, we must wait patiently for the tide on the 9th. It seems the moon will be kind enough to set us free again.”

“Really?”

“Really.”

“And the Captain is not going to drop anchor at all, since the tide will be enough?” said Conseil simply.

The Canadian looked at Conseil, then shrugged his shoulders.

“Sir, you may believe me when I tell you that this piece of iron will never sail again, either on the sea or under it. It is fit for nothing now but to be sold for scrap. So I think the time has come to part company with Captain Nemo.”

“My friend Ned, I am not as ready as you are to give up on this sturdy Nautilus. In four days we shall know what to expect from the Pacific tides. Besides, escape might be possible if we were within sight of the English or Provencal coast, but on the Papuan shores it is a very different matter. There will be time enough to take that last step if the Nautilus does not free itself again, though I would consider that a serious event.”

“But do they at least know how to behave with caution? There is an island. On that island are trees. Under those trees are land animals, providers of cutlets and roast beef, and I would gladly give them a try.”

“Ned is right about that,” said Conseil, “and I agree with him. Could master not get permission from his friend Captain Nemo to let us go ashore, if only so that we do not lose the habit of walking on the solid surface of our planet?”

“I can ask him, but he will refuse.”

“Will master take the risk?” asked Conseil. “Then we shall learn how far we can count on the Captain’s amiability.”

To my great surprise, Captain Nemo granted the permission I asked for, and he did so very graciously, without even requiring a promise that we would return to the vessel. But trying to escape across New Guinea would have been extremely dangerous, and I would not have advised Ned Land to attempt it. Better to remain a prisoner aboard the Nautilus than to fall into the hands of the natives.

At eight o’clock, armed with guns and hatchets, we left the Nautilus. The sea was fairly calm, and a light breeze was blowing from the land. Conseil and I rowed, and we moved quickly along, while Ned steered through the narrow channel the breakers left open. The boat was skillfully handled and moved fast.

Ned Land could hardly contain his joy. He was like a prisoner who had broken out of jail and did not realize that he would have to go back.

“Meat! We are going to eat meat—and what meat!” he replied. “Real game! Not bread, certainly.”

“I am not saying fish is bad; we should not speak ill of it. But a piece of fresh venison, grilled over live coals, would be a pleasant change from our usual diet.”

“Glutton!” said Conseil. “He is making my mouth water.”

“We still have to see,” I said, “whether these forests are full of game, and whether the game is not the kind that hunts the hunter.”

“Well said, M. Aronnax,” replied the Canadian, whose teeth seemed as sharp as a hatchet’s edge; “but I will eat tiger—tiger loin—if there is no other four-footed animal on this island.”

“Ned is worried about that,” said Conseil.

"Whatever it is," Ned Land continued, "the first creature I see—whether it has four paws and no feathers, or two paws and no feathers—will get my first shot."

"All right! Master Land is starting his reckless behavior again."

"Don’t worry, M. Aronnax," the Canadian replied. "I won’t need twenty-five minutes to serve you a dish in my style."

At half past eight, the Nautilus boat glided gently onto a stretch of deep sand, after safely passing the coral reef that surrounds the Island of Gilboa.

CHAPTER XX A FEW DAYS ON LAND

I was deeply moved when I set foot on land. Ned Land pressed his feet into the ground as if he were claiming it. And yet only two months earlier, according to Captain Nemo, we had become "passengers on board the Nautilus," though in truth we were prisoners under his command.

Within a few minutes, we were close enough to the shore to be within musket range. The entire horizon was hidden behind a magnificent wall of forest. Huge trees, with trunks rising 200 feet high, were linked together by trailing vines that formed true natural hammocks, gently swaying in the breeze. There were mimosas, fig trees, hibiscus, and palms growing in rich abundance; and beneath their green canopy flourished orchids, leguminous plants, and ferns.

But the Canadian paid no attention to these splendid examples of Papuan plant life. He left beauty aside for usefulness. Spotting a coconut tree, he knocked down several nuts, split them open, and we drank the milk and ate the flesh with a pleasure that showed how tired we were of the Nautilus's usual food.

"Excellent!" said Ned Land.

"Delicious!" replied Conseil.

"And I don’t suppose," said the Canadian, "that he would object if we brought a whole load of coconuts on board."

"I don’t think he would, but he would not eat any of them."

"So much the worse for him," said Conseil.

"And so much the better for us," Ned Land replied. "That will leave more for us."

“Just a word, Master Land,” I said to the harpooner, who was starting to strip another coconut tree. “Coconuts are all very well, but before we load the canoe with them, it would be wise to scout around and see whether the island offers anything just as useful. Fresh vegetables would be very welcome aboard the Nautilus.”

“Master is right,” Conseil replied. “And I suggest we keep three spaces in our vessel: one for fruit, another for vegetables, and a third for venison, of which I have not yet seen the slightest sign.”

“Conseil, we mustn’t give up hope,” said the Canadian.

“Let us go on,” I replied, “and keep watch. Although the island seems uninhabited, it may still shelter some creatures less difficult than we are about the kind of game.”

“Ho! ho!” said Ned Land, working his jaws in a meaningful way.

“Well, Ned?” said Conseil.

“Upon my word!” the Canadian replied, “I’m beginning to see the appeal of cannibalism.”

“Ned! Ned! what are you saying? You, a cannibal? I certainly wouldn’t feel safe with you, especially since I share your cabin. I might wake up one day and find myself half eaten.”

“My dear Conseil, I’m very fond of you, but not enough to eat you unless I absolutely had to.”

“I still wouldn’t trust you,” Conseil replied. “But enough of that. We absolutely must bring down some game to satisfy this cannibal, or one of these fine mornings master will find only pieces of his servant left to wait on him.”

While we talked like this, we moved deeper beneath the dark arches of the forest, and for two hours we searched it in every direction.

Luck rewarded our search for edible plants, and one of the most useful products of the tropical regions gave us the valuable food we had been missing aboard ship. I mean the breadfruit tree, which was very abundant on the island of Gilboa. I noticed especially the seedless variety, known in Malaya as “rima.”

Ned Land knew these fruits well. He had eaten many of them on his numerous voyages, and he knew how to prepare their edible flesh. What is more, the sight of them excited him so much that he could no longer contain himself.

“Master,” he said, “I’ll die if I don’t get to taste a little of this bread-fruit pie.”

“Go ahead, friend Ned—taste as much as you like. We’re here to experiment, so let’s experiment.”

“It won’t take long,” said the Canadian.

Armed with a burning-glass, he lit a fire with dead wood, which crackled cheerfully. Meanwhile, Conseil and I picked out the best bread-fruit. Some were not yet ripe enough; their thick skins covered a white pulp that was still rather fibrous. Others—most of them, yellow and gelatinous—were ready to be picked.

These fruits had no stone inside. Conseil brought a dozen to Ned Land, who cut them into thick slices and laid them on the hot coals, repeating as he worked:

“You’ll see, master, how good this bread is—especially when you’ve gone without it for so long. It isn’t even bread,” he added. “It’s a delicate pastry. You haven’t had any, master?”

“No, Ned.”

“Good. Then get ready for something delicious. If you don’t come back for more, I’m no longer the king of harpooners.”

After a few minutes, the side of the fruit exposed to the fire was fully roasted. Inside, it looked like a white paste, a kind of soft crumb with a flavor like artichoke.

I must admit, this bread was excellent, and I ate it with great pleasure.

“What time is it now?” asked the Canadian.

“At least two o’clock,” replied Conseil.

“How quickly time passes on solid ground!” sighed Ned Land.

“Let’s go,” replied Conseil.

We went back through the forest and finished our gathering by raiding the cabbage-palms. From the tops of the trees we collected them, along with small beans that I recognized as the Malays’ “abrou,” and some especially fine yams.

We were heavily loaded by the time we reached the boat. But Ned Land still did not think our supplies were enough. Fortunately, fate favored us. Just as we were about to push off,

he spotted several trees, twenty-five to thirty feet high, a kind of palm.

At last, at five in the evening, loaded down with our treasures, we left the shore. Half an hour later, we hailed the Nautilus. No one appeared when we arrived. The huge iron-plated cylinder seemed abandoned. Once the supplies were brought aboard, I went down to my cabin and, after supper, slept soundly.

The next day, January 6, there was nothing new on board. Not a sound inside, not a sign of life. The boat still lay alongside, in the same place where we had left it. We decided to return to the island. Ned Land hoped he would have better luck hunting than he had the day before, and he wanted to explore another part of the forest.

At dawn we set out. Carried shoreward by the waves, the boat reached the island within a few minutes.

We landed, and, deciding it was best to give in to the Canadian, we followed Ned Land, whose long legs threatened to leave us behind. He made his way along the coast to the west, then crossed several streams and reached the high plain bordered by magnificent forests. A few kingfishers wandered along the watercourses, but they would not let us come near. Their wariness showed me that these birds knew what to expect from two-legged creatures like us, and I concluded that, even if the island was uninhabited, human beings at least visited it from time to time.

After crossing a fairly large prairie, we came to the edge of a small wood alive with the songs and fluttering flight of many birds.

“There are only birds,” said Conseil.

“But they’re good to eat,” replied the harpooner.

“I don’t agree with you, friend Ned, for all I see there are parrots.”

“Friend Conseil,” said Ned gravely, “a parrot is the same as a pheasant to people who have nothing else.”

“And,” I added, “if it is properly prepared, this bird is well worth eating with knife and fork.”

Beneath the dense canopy of this forest, whole flocks of parrots flew from branch to branch, needing only careful training to speak human language. For now, they chattered among parrots of every color and solemn cockatoos that seemed lost in thought over some philosophical question, while brilliant red lories flashed past like streamers caught by the wind, along with papuans in the richest shades of blue and, altogether, a delightful variety of winged creatures to look at, though few of them were good to eat.

One bird unique to these regions, however, and never found beyond the Arrow and Papuan Islands, was missing from this collection. But fortune soon set it before me.

After passing through a fairly thick grove, we came to an open plain tangled with bushes. There I saw those magnificent birds whose long feathers force them to fly into the wind. Their rolling flight, their graceful curves in the air, and the shifting tones of their colors drew the eye and held it. I recognized them at once.

“Birds of paradise!” I cried.

The Malays, who do a thriving trade in these birds with the Chinese, have several ways of catching them that we could not use. Sometimes they set snares in the tops of the tall trees the birds of paradise like to visit. Sometimes they catch them with sticky birdlime that stops them from moving. They even poison the springs the birds usually drink from. But we had no choice except to shoot at them in flight, which gave us little chance of bringing them down; in fact, we wasted half our ammunition without success.

By about eleven in the morning, we had crossed the first mountain range in the center of the island, and we had killed nothing. Hunger kept us moving. The hunters had counted on the game they expected to find, and they had been mistaken. Fortunately, to Conseil's great surprise, he made a double shot and secured our breakfast. He brought down a white pigeon and a wood-pigeon, and after they were neatly plucked and set on a skewer, they were roasted over a bright fire of dead wood. While these welcome birds were cooking, Ned prepared the fruit of the bread-tree. Then we ate the pigeons to the bone and pronounced them excellent. The nutmeg they usually stuff into their crops flavors the flesh and makes it delicious.

"Now, Ned, what are you missing?"

"Some four-legged game, M. Aronnax. All these pigeons are just side dishes and trifles. I won't be satisfied until I've killed an animal that has cutlets."

"Nor will I, Ned, unless I catch a bird of paradise."

“Let’s keep hunting,” Conseil replied. “Let’s head toward the sea. We’ve reached the first slopes of the mountains, and I think we’d do better to return to the forest region.”

That was sensible advice, and we followed it. After walking for an hour, we reached a forest of sago palms. A few harmless snakes slipped away from us. The birds of paradise flew off as we approached, and I was beginning to despair of ever getting close to one when Conseil, who was walking ahead, suddenly bent down, gave a triumphant cry, and came back to me carrying a magnificent specimen.

“Ah! Bravo, Conseil!”

“Master is very kind.”

“No, my boy; you’ve done excellently. Take one of these live birds and carry it in your hand.”

“If master will examine it, he will see that I do not deserve much credit.”

“Why, Conseil?”

“Because this bird is as drunk as a quail.”

“Drunk!”

“Yes, sir; drunk on the nutmegs it ate under the nutmeg tree where I found it. Look, friend Ned, look at the terrible effects of intemperance!”

“By Jove!” exclaimed the Canadian. “Just because I’ve been drinking gin for two months, you have to throw it in my face!”

Still, I examined the curious bird. Conseil was right. The bird, intoxicated by the juice, was completely helpless. It could not fly; it could barely walk.

This bird was one of the most beautiful of the eight species found in Papua and the neighboring islands. It was the “large emerald bird,” the rarest of them all. It measured three feet long. Its head was relatively small, and its eyes, set close to the base of the beak, were small as well. But its coloring was magnificent: a yellow beak; brown feet and claws; nut-brown wings tipped with purple; pale yellow on the back of the neck and head; emerald at the throat; and chestnut across the breast and belly. Below the tail rose two horn-like, downy plumes, extending into long, light feathers of remarkable delicacy. They completed this marvelous bird, which the natives have poetically named the “bird of the sun.”

But while owning the bird of paradise fulfilled my wishes, the Canadian was still not satisfied. Fortunately, around two o’clock, Ned Land brought down a magnificent wild pig, one of the kind the natives call “bari-outang.” It arrived just in time to provide us with real four-footed meat, and we welcomed it warmly. Ned Land was very proud of his shot. Struck by the electric bullet, the animal dropped dead on the spot. The Canadian skinned and cleaned it expertly, after first cutting off half a dozen cutlets that were meant to give us a grilled supper that evening. Then we resumed the hunt, and Ned and Conseil distinguished themselves even more than before.

In fact, as the two friends beat through the bushes, they flushed out a herd of kangaroos, which fled, bounding away on their

springy legs. But they were not so quick that the electric projectile could not bring them down.

“Ah, Professor!” cried Ned Land, swept away by the excitement of the hunt. “What splendid game—and perfect for stew too! What stores for the Nautilus! Two! Three! Five down! And just think—we’ll eat all that meat, and those fools on board won’t get a single bite!”

I think the Canadian was so overjoyed that, if he had talked less, he might have killed every one of them. As it was, he stopped after taking a mere dozen of these remarkable marsupials. They were small animals, a kind of “kangaroo rabbit” that usually lives in hollow trees and can run with extraordinary speed. Still, they were fairly plump and made, at the very least, excellent food. We were very pleased with the results of the hunt. Delighted, Ned proposed that we return to this charming island the next day, since he wanted to clear it of every edible four-footed creature. But he had not counted on what awaited us.

By six in the evening we were back at the shore, and our boat was tied up in its usual place. The Nautilus, like a long reef, rose from the water two miles off the beach. Without delay, Ned Land turned to the serious business of dinner. He was thoroughly skilled in cooking. Before long, the “bari-outang,” roasting over the coals, filled the air with a delicious smell.

The meal was excellent indeed. Two wood pigeons completed this unusual menu. The sago pastry, the artocarpus bread, several mangoes, half a dozen pineapples, and the fermented liquid drawn from coconuts delighted us. I even suspect that my worthy companions’ thoughts were not quite as sober as they

should have been.

“What if we do not go back to the Nautilus this evening?” said Conseil.

“What if we never go back at all?” added Ned Land.

At that moment, a stone fell at our feet and abruptly cut off the harpooner’s suggestion.

CHAPTER XXI CAPTAIN NEMO'S THUNDERBOLT

Without getting up, we stared toward the edge of the forest. My hand stopped halfway to my mouth, while Ned Land's was in the act of doing its work.

"Stones do not fall from the sky," Conseil observed, "or else they would deserve to be called aerolites."

A second stone, thrown with careful aim, knocked a tasty pigeon leg from Conseil's hand and gave even more force to his remark. All three of us jumped up, seized our guns, and prepared to answer any attack.

"Are they apes?" cried Ned Land.

"Almost—they are savages."

"To the boat!" I said, rushing toward the sea.

We really did have to retreat, because about twenty natives armed with bows and slings appeared at the edge of a copse that hid the horizon to our right, barely a hundred paces away.

Our boat was moored about sixty feet away. The natives came toward us, not at a run, but with clear signs of hostility. Stones and arrows rained down thickly.

Ned Land had been unwilling to leave his supplies behind, and despite the immediate danger, with his pig on one side and kangaroos on the other, he moved fairly quickly. Within two minutes we were back on the shore. Loading the boat with provisions and weapons, pushing it out to sea, and taking up



the oars took only a moment. We had not gone two cable-lengths before a hundred savages, howling and waving their arms, waded into the water up to their waists. I watched to see whether their appearance would draw any men from the Nautilus onto the platform. But no. The huge machine, lying offshore, was completely deserted.

Twenty minutes later we were on board. The panels were open. After securing the boat, we went into the interior of the Nautilus.

I went down to the drawing-room, where I heard a few chords. Captain Nemo was there, bent over his organ and lost in musical rapture.

“Captain!”

He did not hear me.

“Captain!” I said, touching his hand.

He started, then turned around and said, “Ah! It is you, Professor? Well, did you have a good hunt? Did your botanizing go well?”

“Yes, Captain; but unfortunately we have brought back a troop of bipeds whose presence troubles me.”

“What bipeds?”

“Savages.”

“Savages!” he repeated ironically. “So, Professor, you are surprised to set foot on a strange land and find savages there? Savages! Where are there none? And besides, are these people whom you call savages really any worse than others?”

“But Captain——”

“How many did you count?”

“At least a hundred.”

“M. Aronnax,” replied Captain Nemo, resting his fingers on the organ stops, “even if all the natives of Papua gathered on this shore, the Nautilus would have nothing to fear from their attacks.”

The Captain’s fingers moved across the instrument’s keys, and I noticed that he played only the black ones, which gave his music a distinctly Scottish sound. Before long he had forgotten I was there and drifted into a reverie I did not interrupt. I went back up to the platform. Night had already fallen, because in these low latitudes the sun sets quickly and without twilight. I could make out the island only dimly, but the many fires lit along the beach showed that the natives had no intention of leaving. For several hours I was alone, sometimes thinking about the natives—though without any fear of them, since the Captain’s unshakable confidence was contagious—and sometimes forgetting them altogether as I admired the splendor of the tropical night. My thoughts turned to France, following those zodiacal stars that would appear in a few hours. The moon shone among the constellations overhead.

The night passed without incident, the islanders no doubt frightened by the sight of a monster stranded in the bay. The panels were open and would have provided easy access to the interior of the Nautilus.

At six o'clock on the morning of January 8, I went up to the platform. Dawn was breaking. As the fog slowly cleared, the island came into view—first the shore, then the peaks.

The natives were there, in greater numbers than the day before—perhaps five or six hundred of them. Some had taken advantage of the low tide to come out onto the coral, less than two cable-lengths from the Nautilus. I could see them clearly. They were true Papuans, strongly built men of a fine race, with broad, high foreheads, large noses that were neither wide nor flat, and white teeth. Their woolly hair, tinged with red, stood out against their glossy black bodies, like that of the Nubians. From their earlobes, which had been cut and stretched, hung strings of bones. Most of these savages were naked. I also noticed some women, dressed from the hips to the knees in a kind of crinoline made of herbs, held up by a vegetable belt. Some chiefs had decorated their necks with a crescent ornament and collars of red and white glass beads. Nearly all were armed with bows, arrows, and shields, and carried on their shoulders a sort of net filled with the round stones they hurled with great skill from their slings. One of these chiefs, quite close to the Nautilus, studied it carefully. He was perhaps a "mado" of high rank, for he was wrapped in a mat of banana leaves, cut into points around the edges and bright with vivid colors.

I could easily have struck down this native, who was only a short distance away, but I thought it better to wait for a truly hostile move. Between Europeans and savages, Europeans should defend themselves firmly, not attack first.

During low tide, the natives wandered about near the Nautilus, but they caused no trouble. I often heard them repeat the word “Assai,” and from their gestures I understood that they were inviting me to come ashore—an invitation I refused.

As a result, the boat did not set off that day, much to Master Land’s annoyance, since he was unable to finish gathering his provisions.

The clever Canadian spent his time preparing the food and meat he had brought back from the island. As for the savages, they returned to the shore at about eleven in the morning, as soon as the tops of the coral began to disappear beneath the rising tide. But I noticed that their numbers on the beach had increased considerably. They had probably come from the neighboring islands, or perhaps from Papua. Even so, I had not seen a single native canoe. With nothing better to do, I decided to drag those beautiful, clear waters, where I could see an abundance of shells, zoophytes, and marine plants below the surface. Besides, this was the last day the Nautilus would pass through these waters, if it returned to the open sea the next day, as Captain Nemo had promised.

So I called Conseil, who brought me a small light drag, much like the ones used in oyster fishing. Then we set to work. For two hours we fished without stopping, but we brought up nothing rare. The drag filled with midas-ears, harps, melames, and above all the most beautiful hammers I had ever seen. We also hauled up some sea-slugs, pearl-oysters, and a dozen small turtles, which were set aside for the ship’s pantry.

But just when I least expected it, my hand touched a marvel—one might even call it a natural deformity—something very rarely found. Conseil was dragging at that moment, and his net came up full of various ordinary shells, when suddenly he saw me thrust my arm quickly into it, pull out a shell, and cry out.

“What is the matter, sir?” he asked in surprise. “Has master been bitten?”

“No, my boy. But I would gladly have given a finger for this discovery.”

“What discovery?”

“This shell,” I said, holding up the object of my triumph.

“It is simply an olive porphyry, genus olive, order of the pectinibranchidæ, class of gasteropods, sub-class mollusca.”

“Yes, Conseil. But instead of spiraling from right to left, this olive spirals from left to right.”

“Is that possible?”

“Yes, my boy. It is a left-handed shell.”

Shells are almost always right-handed, except in very rare cases. And when one happens by chance to spiral to the left, collectors are willing to pay its weight in gold for it.

Conseil and I were completely absorbed in admiring our treasure, and I was already imagining how I would enrich the museum with it, when a stone thrown by a native struck the precious object in Conseil’s hand and shattered it. I cried out in despair. Conseil snatched up his gun and took aim at a savage

standing ten yards away, just as he was readying his sling. I tried to stop him, but his shot had already landed and smashed the bracelet of amulets around the savage's arm.

Conseil grabbed his gun.

"Conseil!" I cried. "Conseil!"

"Why, sir! Don't you see that the cannibal has started the attack?"

"A shell is not worth a man's life," I said.

"Ah, the wretch!" cried Conseil. "I would rather he had broken my shoulder!"

Conseil meant it seriously, but I did not agree. Still, the situation had changed a few minutes earlier, and we had failed to notice it. About twenty canoes now surrounded the Nautilus. Hollowed from tree trunks, these long, narrow boats were built for speed and steadied by a long bamboo pole floating on the water. They were handled by skilled, half-naked paddlers, and I watched them approach with growing unease. Clearly, these Papuans had already encountered Europeans and were familiar with their ships. But what were they to make of this long iron cylinder anchored in the bay, with neither masts nor smokestacks? Nothing favorable, certainly, since at first they kept a cautious distance. Yet when they saw that it remained motionless, they gradually grew bolder and tried to become familiar with it. That was exactly what had to be prevented. Our weapons, being silent, could have only a limited effect on savages, who respect little except loud and blustering displays. A thunderbolt without the crash of thunder would hardly frighten anyone, even though

the real danger lies in the lightning, not the noise.

At that moment the canoes came up to the Nautilus, and a shower of arrows fell on her.

I went down to the saloon, but found no one there. I dared to knock on the door leading to the Captain's room. "Come in," came the reply.

I entered and found Captain Nemo absorbed in algebraic calculations involving x and other quantities.

"I'm disturbing you," I said, out of politeness.

"That's true, M. Aronnax," the Captain replied, "but I assume you have serious reasons for wanting to see me?"

"Very serious ones. The natives are surrounding us in their canoes, and in a few minutes we'll almost certainly be attacked by several hundred savages."

"Ah!" said Captain Nemo calmly. "They've come in their canoes?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, sir, we must close the hatches."

"Exactly, and I came to tell you——"

"Nothing could be simpler," said Captain Nemo. He pressed an electric button and sent an order to the ship's crew.

"It's all done, sir," he said a few moments later. "The pinnace is ready, and the hatches are closed. Surely you don't fear that these gentlemen could break through walls that even your frigate's cannonballs could not damage?"

“No, Captain, but there is still a danger.”

“What is it, sir?”

“Tomorrow, at about this same hour, we’ll have to open the hatches to renew the air in the Nautilus. If the Papuans are occupying the platform at that moment, I don’t see how you could keep them from getting in.”

“Then, sir, you think they will board us?”

“I’m certain of it.”

“Well, sir, let them come. I see no reason to stop them. After all, these Papuans are poor creatures, and I would not want my visit to the island to cost the life of a single one of these wretches.”

At that, I was about to leave, but Captain Nemo stopped me and asked me to sit beside him. He questioned me with real interest about our excursions ashore and our hunting, and he seemed unable to understand the Canadian’s craving for meat. Then our conversation moved on to various subjects, and though Captain Nemo was no more open than before, he showed himself in a friendlier light.

Among other things, we happened to speak about the position of the Nautilus, grounded in exactly the same spot in this strait where Dumont d’Urville had nearly been lost. On that subject:

“This D’Urville was one of your great seamen,” the Captain said to me, “one of your finest navigators. He is the Captain Cook of you Frenchmen. What a tragic fate for a man of science: after facing the icebergs of the South Pole, the coral reefs of Oceania, and the cannibals of the Pacific, to die miserably in a

railway train! If, in the last moments of his life, this energetic man had been able to reflect, what do you suppose was foremost in his thoughts?"

As he spoke, Captain Nemo seemed deeply affected, and that emotion made me think better of him. Then, with the chart in hand, we went over the French navigator's travels: his voyages around the world, his two periods of detention at the South Pole, which led to the discovery of Adelaide and Louis Philippe, and his determination of the hydrographical positions of the principal islands of Oceania.

"What your D'Urville did on the surface of the seas," said Captain Nemo, "I have done beneath them, and more easily and more completely than he did. The Astrolabe and the Zelee, constantly battered by hurricanes, could never compare with the Nautilus, that calm vessel of labor, truly motionless in the midst of the waters."

"Tomorrow," the Captain added, rising, "tomorrow, at twenty minutes to three in the afternoon, the Nautilus shall float free and leave the Strait of Torres without damage."

After speaking these words curtly, Captain Nemo gave a slight bow. It was his way of dismissing me, and I returned to my room.

There I found Conseil, who wanted to know the outcome of my conversation with the Captain.

"My boy," I said, "when I pretended to believe that his Nautilus was threatened by the natives of Papua, the Captain answered me with heavy sarcasm. I have only one thing to tell you: trust

him, and go to sleep in peace."

"Do you have no need of my services, sir?"

"No, my friend. What is Ned Land doing?"

"If you will excuse me, sir," Conseil answered, "our friend Ned is busy making a kangaroo pie that will be a marvel."

I was left alone and went to bed, but I slept poorly. I could hear the savages stomping on the platform and shouting at the top of their lungs. The night passed that way, without disturbing the crew's usual rest. These cannibals affected them no more than ants crawling over the face of a masked battery would trouble the soldiers inside it.

I got up at six in the morning. The hatches had not been opened. The air inside had not been refreshed, but the reservoirs kept filled for emergencies were now used, releasing several cubic feet of oxygen into the Nautilus's stale atmosphere.

I worked in my room until noon without seeing Captain Nemo even once. There were no signs on board of any preparations for departure.

I waited a little longer, then went into the large saloon. The clock showed half past two. In ten minutes it would be high tide, and if Captain Nemo's promise had not been a reckless one, the Nautilus would soon be freed. Otherwise, many months would pass before she could leave her bed of coral.

Still, warning vibrations began to run through the vessel. I heard the keel scraping against the rough, chalky bottom of the coral reef.

At twenty-five minutes to three, Captain Nemo appeared in the saloon.

“We are about to leave,” he said.

“Ah!” I replied.

“I have given the order to open the hatches.”

“And the Papuans?”

“The Papuans?” Captain Nemo answered, with a slight shrug of his shoulders.

“Won’t they come into the Nautilus?”

“How?”

“Simply by jumping over the hatches you have opened.”

“M. Aronnax,” Captain Nemo answered calmly, “they will not come through the hatches of the Nautilus that way, even if they are open.”

I looked at the Captain.

“You do not understand?” he said.

“Not really.”

“Then come, and you will see.”

I headed for the main staircase. There, Ned Land and Conseil were quietly watching some of the crew open the hatches, while angry shouts and frightened cries rang out from outside.

The port covers were lowered from outside. Twenty terrifying faces appeared. But the first native who put his hand on the

stair rail was struck by some invisible force from behind—I could not tell what it was—and ran off, screaming horribly and twisting in wild convulsions.

Ten of his companions followed him. They met the same fate.

Conseil was beside himself with delight. Ned Land, driven by his impulsive nature, rushed to the staircase. But the instant he grabbed the rail with both hands, he too was thrown down.

“I’ve been struck by lightning!” he cried, with an oath.

That explained everything. It was not an ordinary rail, but a metal cable charged with electricity from the deck and connected to the platform. Anyone who touched it received a powerful shock—and the shock would have been fatal if Captain Nemo had sent the full force of the current through the conductor. It could truly be said that he had stretched a barrier of electricity between himself and his attackers, one that no one could cross without suffering for it.

Meanwhile, the enraged Papuans fell back, paralyzed with terror. As for us, half laughing, we comforted the unfortunate Ned Land and rubbed his arms while he swore like a madman.

But at that moment the Nautilus, lifted by the last waves of the tide, rose from her coral bed at exactly the fortieth minute the Captain had set. Her propeller slowly and majestically churned the water. Her speed gradually increased, and, traveling on the surface of the ocean, she passed safely through the dangerous channels of the Torres Straits.

CHAPTER XXII "ÆGRI SOMNIA"

The next day, January 10, the Nautilus continued on her course between the two seas, moving at such extraordinary speed that I judged it to be no less than thirty-five miles an hour. Her propeller spun so fast that I could neither follow it with my eyes nor count its turns. When I considered that this marvelous electric power, after giving the Nautilus motion, heat, and light, also shielded her from attack and turned her into a secure ark that no irreverent hand could touch without being struck down, my admiration knew no bounds. From the vessel itself, that admiration naturally extended to the engineer who had brought it into being.

We were heading west, and on January 11 we rounded Cape Wessel, located at 135° longitude and 10° north latitude, which forms the eastern point of the Gulf of Carpentaria. Reefs were still plentiful, but they were more evenly distributed and marked on the chart with great precision. The Nautilus easily avoided the Money breakers to port and the Victoria reefs to starboard, located at 130° longitude on the 10th parallel, which we followed exactly.

On January 13, Captain Nemo entered the Sea of Timor and identified the island of that name at 122° longitude.

From that point, the Nautilus turned toward the southwest. Her course was now set for the Indian Ocean. Where would Captain Nemo’s imagination carry us next? Would he return to the coast of Asia, or approach the shores of Europe again? Both ideas seemed unlikely for a man fleeing the inhabited continents.



Then would he head south? Was he planning to round the Cape of Good Hope, then Cape Horn, and finally go as far as the Antarctic Pole? Would he at last return to the Pacific, where his Nautilus could sail freely and independently? Time would tell.

After skirting the sands of Cartier, Hibernia, Seringapatam, and Scott—the last efforts of solid land against the liquid element—we lost sight of land altogether on January 14. The speed of the Nautilus dropped considerably, and on an irregular course she sometimes swam deep in the heart of the waters, sometimes floated on the surface.

During this part of the voyage, Captain Nemo carried out some interesting experiments on how sea temperature varies at different depths. Under normal conditions, people make these observations with fairly complicated instruments, and the results are often uncertain. They use sounding lines fitted with thermometers, whose glass tubes often break under the pressure of the water, or devices based on changes in how metals resist electric currents. The results obtained in those ways cannot be calculated with complete accuracy. Captain Nemo, by contrast, tested the temperature in the ocean depths himself, and his thermometer, connected directly with the different layers of water, gave him the reading at once and with precision.

In this way, either by filling her reservoirs to make her heavier or by descending at an angle with her inclined planes, the Nautilus successively reached depths of three, four, five, seven, nine, and ten thousand yards. The final result of these experiments was that, at a depth of five thousand fathoms, the sea

maintained an average temperature of four and a half degrees in every latitude.

On the 16th of January, the Nautilus seemed to lie becalmed only a few yards below the surface of the waves. Her electric machinery was inactive, and her motionless propeller left her drifting at the mercy of the currents. I assumed the crew was busy with internal repairs made necessary by the violent mechanical strain of the vessel's movements.

My companions and I then witnessed a curious sight. The hatches of the saloon were open, and because the Nautilus's beacon light was not in use, a dim darkness filled the surrounding water. I watched the sea in those conditions, and even the largest fish looked like little more than vague shadows, when suddenly the Nautilus was flooded with bright light. At first I thought the beacon had been lit and was casting its electric glow through the water. I was wrong, and a quick look around showed me my mistake.

In fact, the light came from an immense mass of colored infusoria—true jellylike globules equipped with threadlike tentacles. As many as twenty-five thousand of them have been counted in less than two cubic half-inches of water.

For several hours, the Nautilus floated through those brilliant waves, and our wonder only grew as we watched the sea creatures darting about like salamanders. There, in the middle of that fire that did not burn, I saw swift, graceful porpoises—the tireless clowns of the ocean—and swordfish ten feet long, those supposed heralds of hurricanes, whose terrible swords now and then struck the saloon glass. Then came

smaller fish: balistas, leaping mackerel, wolf-thorn-tails, and a hundred others, streaking through the glowing water as they swam. The spectacle was dazzling and enchanting. Perhaps some condition in the atmosphere made the phenomenon more intense. Perhaps a storm was stirring the surface of the sea. But at this depth, a few yards below, the Nautilus felt none of its violence and rested peacefully in still water.

So we went on, constantly delighted by some new marvel. The days passed quickly, and I stopped keeping track of them. Ned, as usual, tried to add some variety to the food on board. Like snails, we were attached to our shells, and I must admit that it is easy to live a snail's life.

In this way, our life came to seem easy and natural, and we no longer thought about the life we had lived on land. But something happened that reminded us how strange our situation really was.

On January 18, the Nautilus was at 105° longitude and 15° south latitude. The weather looked threatening, and the sea was rough and rolling. A strong east wind was blowing. The barometer had been falling for several days and warned of an approaching storm. I went up to the platform just as the second lieutenant was measuring the horary angles, and, as usual, I waited for the daily phrase to be spoken. But that day it was replaced by another phrase, no less incomprehensible. Almost at once, I saw Captain Nemo appear with a spyglass, gazing toward the horizon.

For several minutes he stood perfectly still, never taking his eyes off the spot he was watching. Then he lowered his glass

and exchanged a few words with his lieutenant. The lieutenant seemed overcome by some feeling he was trying, unsuccessfully, to hide. Captain Nemo, with greater self-control, remained calm. He also seemed to be raising objections, to which the lieutenant replied with formal assurances. At least, that was what I inferred from the difference in their tones and gestures. As for me, I looked carefully in the direction they had indicated, but saw nothing. Sky and sea blended together in the clear line of the horizon.

Meanwhile, Captain Nemo walked from one end of the platform to the other without looking at me, perhaps without even noticing that I was there. His step was firm, though less steady than usual. From time to time he stopped, folded his arms, and stared out at the sea. What could he be searching for across that vast expanse?

The Nautilus was then several hundred miles from the nearest coast.

The lieutenant had taken up the glass and was studying the horizon intently, pacing back and forth, stamping his foot, and showing even more nervous agitation than his commanding officer. This mystery had to be explained, and soon; for at Captain Nemo’s order, the engine increased its power, and the screw began to turn more rapidly.

Just then the lieutenant again called the Captain’s attention to something. Captain Nemo stopped pacing and aimed his glass at the spot indicated. He looked for a long time. Thoroughly puzzled, I went down to the drawing-room and fetched an excellent telescope that I usually used. Then, leaning against

the casing of the watch-light that projected from the front of the platform, I began scanning the whole line where sky and sea met.

But the moment I put my eye to the telescope, it was snatched quickly from my hands.

I turned around. Captain Nemo stood before me, but I scarcely recognized him. His face was transformed. His eyes flashed darkly; his teeth were clenched; and his rigid body, tightened fists, and head drawn down between his shoulders revealed the violent turmoil shaking his whole frame. He did not move. The telescope, which had fallen from his hands, lay rolled to his feet.

Had I somehow provoked this outburst without realizing it? Did this baffling man think I had uncovered some forbidden secret? No. I was not the target of his hatred, because he was not looking at me. His eyes were fixed steadily on some unreadable point on the horizon. At last Captain Nemo regained control of himself. His agitation faded. He said a few words in a foreign language to his lieutenant, then turned to me. “M. Aronnax,” he said in a rather commanding tone, “I require you to obey one of the conditions that bind you to me.”

“What is it, Captain?”

“You and your companions must remain confined until I decide to release you.”

“You are the master,” I replied, meeting his gaze. “But may I ask you one question?”

“No, sir.”

There was no resisting such a command; it would have been useless. I went down to the cabin shared by Ned Land and Conseil and told them what the Captain had decided. You can imagine how the Canadian received the news.

But there was no time for argument. Four crewmen were waiting at the door, and they escorted us to the cell where we had spent our first night aboard the Nautilus.

Ned Land would have protested, but the door was shut in his face.

“Will master tell me what this means?” asked Conseil.

I told my companions what had happened. They were as astonished as I was, and just as unable to explain it.

Meanwhile, I was lost in my own thoughts and could think of nothing but the strange fear written on the Captain’s face. I could not make sense of it at all, when my thoughts were interrupted by Ned Land saying:

“Hallo! Breakfast is ready.”

And in fact the table was set. Clearly Captain Nemo had given that order at the same time he had increased the speed of the Nautilus.

“Will master allow me to make a recommendation?” asked Conseil.

“Yes, my boy.”

“Then I recommend that master eat breakfast. It would be wise, because we do not know what may happen.”

“You are right, Conseil.”

“Unfortunately,” said Ned Land, “they’ve given us nothing but the ship’s fare.”

“My dear Ned,” asked Conseil, “what would you have said if they had forgotten breakfast altogether?”

That argument put an end to the harpooner’s complaints.

We sat down at the table. We ate the meal in silence.

Just then, the glowing globe that lit the cell went out and left us in complete darkness. Ned Land soon fell asleep, and what surprised me was that Conseil sank into a deep sleep as well. I was wondering what could have caused such irresistible drowsiness in him when I felt my own mind growing numb. No matter how hard I tried to keep my eyes open, they closed. A dreadful suspicion came over me. Clearly, they had mixed some sleeping drug into the food we had just eaten. It was not enough, then, to imprison us so Captain Nemo could hide his plans from us; he also needed us asleep. Then I heard the panels close. The motion of the sea, which had been causing a slight rolling, stopped. Had the Nautilus left the surface of the ocean? Had it returned to the still depths below? I tried to fight off sleep, but it was impossible. My breathing grew faint. A deadly cold spread through my stiffening, half-paralyzed limbs. My eyelids, heavy as lead, dropped over my eyes. I could not lift them. A sickly sleep, full of hallucinations, robbed me of all awareness. Then the visions faded, and I sank into complete unconsciousness.

CHAPTER XXIII THE CORAL KINGDOM

The next day I woke with my head remarkably clear. To my great surprise, I was in my own room. No doubt my companions had been taken back to their cabin without noticing it any more than I had. They knew no more than I did about what had happened during the night, and I could only hope that time would eventually reveal the mystery.

I then thought of leaving my room. Was I free again, or still a prisoner? Completely free. I opened the door, crossed the half-deck, and went up the central stairs. The panels that had been closed the night before were now open. I went out onto the platform.

Ned Land and Conseil were waiting there for me. I questioned them, but they knew nothing. They had been plunged into such a deep sleep that they had been completely unaware of everything, and they were astonished to find themselves back in their cabin.

As for the Nautilus, it was as quiet and mysterious as ever. It moved across the surface at a steady pace. Nothing on board seemed to have changed.

Then the second lieutenant came onto the platform and gave the usual order to the men below.

Captain Nemo, however, did not appear.

Of everyone on board, the only person I saw was the impassive steward, who served me with his usual silent precision.

At about two o'clock, I was in the drawing-room, busy arranging my notes, when the Captain opened the door and came in. I bowed. He gave a slight nod in return without speaking. I went back to my work, hoping he might explain the events of the previous night. He said nothing. I looked at him. He seemed tired; his heavy eyes showed no sign of sleep, and his face was deeply sorrowful. He paced back and forth, sat down and rose again, picked up a book at random and set it down, checked his instruments without making his usual notes, and seemed agitated and uneasy. At last he came over to me and said:

"Are you a doctor, M. Aronnax?"

I was so taken aback by the question that I stared at him for a moment without answering.

"Are you a doctor?" he repeated. "Several of your colleagues have studied medicine."

"Yes," I said. "I am a doctor and was a resident surgeon at the hospital. I practiced for several years before joining the museum."

"Very good, sir."

My answer had clearly satisfied the Captain. But since I did not know what he was going to say next, I waited for more questions, keeping my replies in reserve until I understood the situation.

"M. Aronnax, would you agree to treat one of my men?" he asked.

"Is he ill?"

“Yes.”

“I am ready to come with you.”

“Then come.”

I admit that my heart was beating fast, though I did not know why. I sensed some connection between the illness of one of the crew and the events of the day before, and that mystery interested me at least as much as the sick man himself.

Captain Nemo led me to the poop of the Nautilus and took me into a cabin near the sailors’ quarters.

There, on a bed, lay a man of about forty, with a determined face—the very image of an Anglo-Saxon.

I bent over him. He was not just ill; he was wounded. His head rested on a pillow, wrapped in blood-soaked bandages. I removed them, and the wounded man looked at me with his large eyes without showing any sign of pain. It was a terrible wound. His skull had been shattered by some deadly weapon, leaving the brain exposed and badly damaged. Clots of blood had formed in the bruised and broken tissue, dark like the dregs of wine.

There was both bruising and bleeding in the brain. His breathing was slow, and spasms in the muscles made his face twitch. I felt his pulse. It was irregular. His hands and feet were already growing cold, and I could see that death was unavoidable. After tending the poor man’s wounds, I put the bandages back around his head and turned to Captain Nemo.

“What caused this wound?” I asked.

“What does it matter?” he replied evasively. “A blow broke one of the engine’s levers, and it struck him. But what is your opinion of his condition?”

I hesitated before answering.

“You may speak,” said the Captain. “This man does not understand French.”

I gave the wounded man one last look.

“He will be dead in two hours.”

“Can nothing save him?”

“Nothing.”

Captain Nemo’s hand tightened, and tears glistened in his eyes—eyes I had thought incapable of tears.

For a few moments, I kept watching the dying man as his life slowly slipped away. His face grew paler under the electric light shining over his deathbed. I looked at his intelligent forehead, lined with premature wrinkles, probably carved there by suffering and sorrow. I tried to discover the secret of his life in the last words that escaped his lips.

“You may go now, M. Aronnax,” said the Captain.

I left him in the dying man’s cabin and returned to my room deeply shaken by what I had seen. All day long, uneasy suspicions stayed with me. That night I slept badly, and in the gaps between my broken dreams I imagined I heard distant sighs, like the notes of a funeral hymn. Were they the prayers of the dead, whispered in a language I could not understand?

The next morning I went up to the bridge. Captain Nemo was already there. As soon as he saw me, he came over.

“Professor, would it suit you to make a submarine excursion today?”

“With my companions?” I asked.

“If they wish.”

“We are at your command, Captain.”

“Then would you be so kind as to put on your cork jackets?”

This was clearly not a matter of visiting the dead or the dying. I went back to Ned Land and Conseil and told them about Captain Nemo’s proposal. Conseil was quick to accept, and this time the Canadian seemed quite ready to do the same.

It was eight o’clock in the morning. By half past eight, we were ready for this new excursion, equipped with two devices for light and breathing. The double door stood open, and with Captain Nemo leading us, followed by a dozen crewmen, we stepped onto the solid seabed where the Nautilus rested, about thirty feet below the surface.

A gentle slope led down to an uneven bottom at a depth of fifteen fathoms. This seabed was completely different from the one I had seen on my first underwater excursion in the Pacific Ocean. Here there was no fine sand, no underwater meadows, no forest of the sea. I immediately recognized that marvelous region where, on that earlier day, the Captain had acted as our guide. It was the kingdom of coral.

The light created a thousand lovely effects as it played among the brilliantly colored branches. It seemed to me that I could see the thin, tube-like forms trembling with the movement of the water. I wanted to pick those fresh petals, trimmed with delicate tentacles—some newly opened, others still budding—while little fish darted past and brushed them lightly, like birds in flight. But whenever my hand came near these living flowers, these animated, sensitive plants, the whole colony reacted at once. The white petals withdrew into their red coverings, the flowers vanished before my eyes, and the bush became nothing more than a mass of stony knobs.

By chance, I had come upon the most valuable specimens of zoophyte. This coral was worth more than the kind found in the Mediterranean, along the coasts of France, Italy, and Barbary. Its colors fully deserved the poetic trade names “Flower of Blood” and “Froth of Blood,” given to its finest varieties. Coral sells for £20 an ounce, and the underwater beds here could make the fortune of a whole company of coral divers. This precious substance, often mistaken for other polypi, formed the tangled growths known as “macciota,” among which I noticed several beautiful examples of pink coral.

But soon the bushes drew in, and the branching formations grew larger. Before us appeared true petrified thickets, with long beams of fantastic architecture. Captain Nemo moved beneath a dark gallery, and by following a gentle slope we descended to a depth of a hundred yards. The light from our lamps sometimes produced magical effects, tracing the jagged outlines of natural arches and hanging formations arranged like chandeliers, each tipped with points of fire.

At last, after two hours of walking, we reached a depth of about three hundred yards—the furthest limit at which coral begins to form. But here there were no isolated bushes, no small patches of growth at the foot of towering trees. Instead, there stretched an immense forest of great mineral vegetation, enormous petrified trees linked together by garlands of graceful sea-bindweed, all covered with shifting clouds and reflections. We moved freely beneath their high branches, hidden in the shadowy water.

Captain Nemo stopped. My companions and I halted as well, and when I turned, I saw that his men were forming a semicircle around their chief. Looking more closely, I noticed that four of them were carrying an oblong object on their shoulders.

Here, we stood in the middle of a vast clearing, surrounded by the towering foliage of the underwater forest. Our lamps cast a kind of bright twilight over the place, stretching the shadows strangely across the ground. At the far edge of the clearing, the darkness deepened, broken only by tiny sparks reflected from the tips of the coral.

Ned Land and Conseil stood beside me. We watched, and I felt sure I was about to witness something strange. Looking at the ground, I saw that in certain places it rose into small mounds crusted with chalky deposits, arranged with a regularity that clearly showed human hands had made them.

In the middle of the clearing, on a pedestal of roughly piled rocks, stood a coral cross, its long arms looking as though they had been formed from petrified blood. At a signal from Captain Nemo, one of the men stepped forward. A few feet from the

cross, he began to dig a hole with a pickaxe he took from his belt. I understood at once. This clearing was a cemetery, this hole a grave, and that oblong object the body of the man who had died during the night. The Captain and his men had come to bury their companion in this common resting place, at the bottom of the unreachable ocean.

The grave was dug slowly. Fish scattered in every direction as their retreat was disturbed. I heard the blows of the pickaxe, flashing when it struck bits of flint buried on the ocean floor. Before long, the hole was wide and deep enough to receive the body. Then the bearers came forward, and the body, wrapped in white linen, was lowered into the wet grave. Captain Nemo, his arms crossed over his chest, and all those who had been loved by the dead man, knelt in prayer.

All knelt in prayer.

Then they filled the grave with the debris taken from the ground, leaving a slight mound. When that was done, Captain Nemo and his men stood up. Then they moved closer to the grave, knelt once more, and all stretched out their hands in a final farewell. After that, the funeral procession returned to the Nautilus, passing beneath the arches of the forest, through the thickets, along the coral bushes, and still climbing upward. At last the ship's light appeared, and its glowing trail guided us back to the Nautilus. By one o'clock, we had returned.

As soon as I had changed clothes, I went up onto the platform and sat down near the binnacle, torn by conflicting emotions. Captain Nemo joined me. I stood and said to him:

"So, just as I said he would, this man died during the night?"

“Yes, M. Aronnax.”

“And he now rests near his companions, in the coral cemetery?”

“Yes, forgotten by everyone else, but not by us. We dug the grave, and the polyps will seal our dead there for eternity.” Then, quickly covering his face with his hands, he tried in vain to hold back a sob. He added, “Our peaceful cemetery lies there, a hundred feet below the surface of the waves.”

“At least your dead sleep in peace there, Captain, beyond the reach of sharks.”

“Yes, sir, beyond the reach of sharks and men,” the Captain replied gravely.

CHAPTER I: THE INDIAN OCEAN

We now come to the second part of our journey beneath the sea. The first ended with the moving scene in the coral cemetery, which left such a deep impression on me. So Captain Nemo's life was passing in the midst of this vast ocean, all the way to his grave, which he had prepared in one of its deepest abysses. There, none of the sea's monsters could disturb the final sleep of the Nautilus crew, those companions bound to one another in death as in life. "Nor any man either," the Captain had added. It was the same fierce, unyielding defiance of human society.

I could no longer be satisfied with the theory that was enough for Conseil.

That good man kept insisting that the Commander of the Nautilus was one of those unknown scholars who repay humanity's indifference with contempt. In his view, Nemo was a misunderstood genius who, weary of the world's falsehoods, had withdrawn into this unreachable element so he could follow his own nature in complete freedom. To me, that explains only one side of Captain Nemo's character. The mystery of that final night, when we had been locked up; the sleep that overcame us; the Captain's violent precaution in snatching from my eyes the glass I had raised to scan the horizon; the man's mortal wound, caused by some unexplained shock to the Nautilus—all this led me in a new direction. No: Captain Nemo was not content merely to avoid mankind. His formidable vessel served not only his love of freedom, but perhaps also some terrible plan of revenge.



At that moment, nothing was clear to me. I could see only the faintest glimmer of light in all that darkness, and I had to limit myself to recording events as they unfolded.

That day, January 24, 1868, at noon, the second officer came to take the sun's altitude. I climbed onto the platform, lit a cigar, and watched him work. It seemed to me that he did not understand French. Several times I spoke loudly enough that, if he had understood, he must have shown some involuntary sign of attention. But he remained calm and silent.

While he was making his observations with the sextant, one of the Nautilus's sailors—the powerful man who had gone with us on our first underwater excursion to the Island of Crespo—came to clean the lantern's glass. I examined the fittings of the apparatus. Its power was increased a hundredfold by lens-shaped rings, arranged like those of a lighthouse, which threw their brilliance out in a horizontal beam. The electric lamp was designed to produce its strongest possible light. In fact, it operated in a vacuum, which ensured both steadiness and intensity. This vacuum also reduced the consumption of the graphite points between which the luminous arc formed—an important saving for Captain Nemo, who could not easily replace them. Under these conditions, they wore away almost imperceptibly. When the Nautilus was ready to resume its underwater voyage, I went down to the saloon. The panel was closed, and our course was set due west.

We were cutting through the waters of the Indian Ocean, a vast watery plain covering 1,200,000,000 acres. Its water was so clear and transparent that anyone leaning over the side might

grow dizzy. The Nautilus usually traveled at a depth of fifty to a hundred fathoms. We continued like this for several days. To anyone but me, who deeply loved the sea, the hours might have seemed long and monotonous. But my daily walks on the platform, when I soaked in the refreshing ocean air, the view of the teeming waters through the saloon windows, the books in the library, and the writing of my memoirs filled all my time and left me without a moment of boredom or fatigue.

For several days we saw great numbers of water birds, especially sea mews, or gulls. Some were skillfully shot and, prepared in a certain way, made excellent game. Among the large-winged birds, carried far from land and resting on the waves from the weariness of flight, I saw magnificent albatrosses. They gave harsh cries like the braying of an ass, along with birds belonging to the family of the long-wings.

As for the fish, they always filled us with admiration when, through the open panels, we caught glimpses of the hidden details of their life in the water. I saw many kinds that I had never before had the chance to observe.

I shall speak chiefly of the ostracions found in the Red Sea, the Indian Ocean, and the part of the sea that washes the coast of tropical America. These fish, like the tortoise, the armadillo, the sea hedgehog, and the crustacea, are protected by a breastplate that is neither chalky nor stony, but made of real bone. In some, it forms a solid triangle; in others, a solid quadrangle. Among the triangular kinds, I saw some an inch and a half long, with wholesome flesh and a delicious flavor. They were brown at the tail and yellow at the fins, and I recommend

introducing them into fresh water, since a certain number of sea fish easily become accustomed to it. I should also mention quadrangular ostracions with four large tubercles on their backs; some speckled with white spots on the lower part of the body and capable of being tamed like birds; trigons armed with spikes formed by the extension of their bony shell and called “sea pigs” because of their strange grunting; and also dromedaries with large cone-shaped humps, whose flesh is very tough and leathery.

I now turn to the daily notes of Master Conseil. “There were certain fish of the genus petrodon native to those seas, with red backs and white breasts, marked by three rows of lengthwise filaments; and some electric fish, seven inches long, dressed in the brightest colors. Then there were specimens of other kinds: some ovoid fish, shaped like a dark brown egg, striped with white bands and lacking tails; diodons, true sea porcupines, armed with spines and able to swell up until they looked like cushions bristling with darts; hippocampi, found in every ocean; some pegasi with long snouts, whose greatly extended pectoral fins, shaped like wings, let them, if not truly fly, at least dart into the air; pigeon spatulae, with tails covered in many rings of shell; macrognathi with long jaws, an excellent fish, nine inches long and brightly colored in the most pleasing way; pale calliomores with rough heads; and large numbers of chaetodons, with long, tubular snouts, which kill insects by shooting a single drop of water at them, as if from an air gun. These may well be called the flycatchers of the sea.”

“In the eighty-ninth genus of fishes classified by Lacepede, belonging to the second lower class of bony fish, distinguished

by opercula and branchial membranes, I noted the scorpaena, whose head is armed with spines and which has only one dorsal fin. These creatures are either covered with small shells or not, depending on the subclass to which they belong. The second subclass includes specimens of didactyles, fourteen or fifteen inches long, with yellow rays and heads of a most fantastic shape. The first subclass, meanwhile, includes several examples of that strange-looking fish rightly called the 'sea frog,' with a large head that is sometimes pierced with holes, sometimes swollen with lumps, bristling with spines, and covered with tubercles. It has irregular, hideous horns. Its body and tail are covered with callosities. Its sting inflicts a dangerous wound. It is both revolting and horrible to look at."

From January 21 to 23, the Nautilus traveled at a rate of two hundred and fifty leagues every twenty-four hours—that is, five hundred and forty miles, or twenty-two miles an hour. We saw so many different kinds of fish because the electric light drew them toward us, and they tried to keep up. Most of them quickly fell behind because of our speed, though a few stayed alongside the Nautilus for a while. On the morning of the 24th, at latitude 12° 5′ S. and longitude 94° 33′, we sighted Keeling Island, a coral island covered with magnificent coconut palms and previously visited by Mr. Darwin and Captain Fitzroy. The Nautilus followed the shore of this deserted island for some distance. Its nets brought up many specimens of polypi and some remarkable mollusk shells. Several valuable examples of delphinulae were added to Captain Nemo's collection, and I contributed an astraea punctifera, a kind of parasitic polypus often found attached to a shell.

Before long, Keeling Island sank below the horizon, and we turned northwest toward the Indian Peninsula.

After leaving Keeling Island, our progress became slower and less steady, and we often descended into great depths. Several times the crew used the inclined planes, which internal levers set at an angle to the waterline. In this way we went down about two miles, though we never reached the greatest depths of the Indian Sea, where soundings of seven thousand fathoms have still not touched bottom. As for the temperature in the lower layers, the thermometer always showed 4° above zero. I noticed only that in the upper regions the water was consistently colder at higher levels than at the surface of the sea.

On January 25, the ocean was completely empty. The Nautilus spent the day on the surface, churning the waves with its powerful screw and throwing them high into the air. Under those conditions, who would not have mistaken it for a gigantic whale? I spent three quarters of the day on the platform, watching the sea. Nothing appeared on the horizon until about four o'clock, when a steamer heading west came toward us on the opposite course. Its masts were visible for a moment, but it could not see the Nautilus, which rode too low in the water. I supposed the vessel belonged to the P. O. Company, which sails from Ceylon to Sydney, stopping at King George's Point and Melbourne.

At five in the evening, just before the brief twilight that links day and night in tropical regions, Conseil and I were amazed by a strange sight.

It was a shoal of argonauts moving across the surface of the sea. We counted several hundred of them. They were of the tuberculate kind found especially in the Indian seas.

These graceful molluscs moved backward by means of their siphon, through which they expelled the water they had taken in. Of their eight tentacles, six were long and trailed over the water, while the other two, flattened and curled up, spread out like light sails. I could see their spiral, fluted shells, which Cuvier quite rightly compared to an elegant skiff. And a boat it truly is: it carries the creature that secretes it, even though the creature is not attached to it.

For nearly an hour, the Nautilus floated in the middle of this shoal of molluscs. Then, for some sudden reason I could not guess, they seemed to take fright. As if on command, every sail was furled, the arms folded in, the bodies withdrawn, and the shells overturned, shifting their center of gravity. Then the whole fleet vanished beneath the waves. Never had the ships of a squadron maneuvered with greater unity.

At that moment, night fell suddenly, and the waves, barely stirred by the breeze, rested quietly along the sides of the Nautilus.

The next day, January 26, we crossed the equator at the eighty-second meridian and entered the northern hemisphere. During the day, a formidable troop of sharks followed us—terrible creatures that are plentiful in these seas and make them very dangerous. There were cestracio philippi sharks, with brown backs and whitish bellies, armed with eleven rows of teeth—eyed sharks, their throats marked with a large black spot

ringed with white like an eye. There were also some Isabella sharks, with rounded snouts marked by dark spots. These powerful creatures often hurled themselves against the saloon windows with such force that we felt far from safe. At such moments, Ned Land could no longer control himself. He wanted to go up to the surface and harpoon the monsters, especially certain smooth-hound sharks, whose mouths were studded with teeth like a mosaic, and large tiger sharks nearly six yards long. It was the last of these that seemed to excite him most. But the Nautilus, increasing her speed, easily left even the fastest of them behind.

On January 27, at the mouth of the vast Bay of Bengal, we repeatedly came upon a grim sight: dead bodies floating on the surface of the water. They were the dead from Indian villages, carried down the Ganges to sea level, where the vultures—the country's only undertakers—had not been able to consume them. But the sharks were quick to take over that funeral duty.

At about seven in the evening, the Nautilus, half-submerged, was moving through a milky sea. At first glance, the ocean looked as though it had turned to milk. Was it caused by moonlight? No, for the moon, only two days old, was still hidden below the horizon in the sun's fading glow. The whole sky, though lit by the stars, looked black in contrast to the whiteness of the water.

Conseil could hardly believe what he was seeing, and he asked me what could cause such a strange phenomenon. Fortunately, I was able to explain it.

“It is called a milk sea,” I told him. “It is a wide stretch of white rippling water often seen along the coasts of Amboyna and in this part of the sea.”

“But, sir,” said Conseil, “can you tell me what produces such an effect? I assume the water has not literally turned into milk.”

“No, my boy. The whiteness that astonishes you is caused simply by myriads of infusoria—a kind of tiny luminous worm, gelatinous and colorless, as thin as a hair and no more than seven-thousandths of an inch long. These creatures sometimes cling together for several leagues.”

“Several leagues!” cried Conseil.

“Yes, my boy, and there is no use trying to calculate how many of these infusoria there are. You would never manage it, because, if I am not mistaken, ships have drifted across these milk seas for more than forty miles.”

Toward midnight, the sea suddenly returned to its usual color. But behind us, all the way to the horizon, the sky still reflected the whitened waves, and for a long time it seemed filled with the faint shimmer of an aurora borealis.

CHAPTER II A NOVEL PROPOSAL OF CAPTAIN NEMO'S

On February 28, when the Nautilus rose to the surface at noon, at latitude 9° 4′ N., land lay in sight about eight miles to the west. The first thing I saw was a chain of mountains about two thousand feet high, with wildly irregular outlines. After taking our bearings, I realized we were approaching the island of Ceylon, the pearl hanging from the tip of the Indian Peninsula.

At that moment Captain Nemo and his second appeared. The Captain glanced at the map, then turned to me and said:

"The island of Ceylon, famous for its pearl fisheries. Would you like to visit one of them, M. Aronnax?"

"Certainly, Captain."

"Good. That will be easy enough. Though if we see the fisheries, we will not see the fishermen. The annual harvest has not begun yet. No matter—I will give orders to head for the Gulf of Manaar, where we shall arrive during the night."

The Captain said a few words to his second, who went out at once. Soon the Nautilus returned to her natural element, and the manometer showed that she was about thirty feet below the surface.

"Well, sir," said Captain Nemo, "you and your companions shall visit the Bank of Manaar, and if by chance a fisherman is there, we shall see him at work."

“Agreed, Captain!”

“By the way, M. Aronnax, are you afraid of sharks?”

“Sharks!” I exclaimed.

It was a very awkward question.

“Well?” Captain Nemo went on.

“I admit, Captain, that I am not yet very familiar with that kind of fish.”

“We are used to them,” replied Captain Nemo, “and in time you will be too. Besides, we shall be armed, and on the way we may be able to hunt a few of the species. It is an interesting sport. So, until tomorrow, sir—and early.”

Having said this in a casual tone, Captain Nemo left the saloon. Now, if someone invited you to hunt bear in the mountains of Switzerland, what would you say?

“Very well! Tomorrow we shall go bear-hunting.” If you were asked to hunt lion on the plains of Atlas, or tiger in the jungles of India, what would you say?

“Ha! ha! it looks as if we’re going to hunt a tiger or a lion!” But if someone invited you to hunt a shark in its own element, you might think twice before saying yes. As for me, I ran my hand across my forehead, which was covered with large drops of cold sweat. “Let’s think this over,” I said, “and not rush. Hunting otters in underwater forests, as we did near Crespo Island, is one thing; but moving up and down along the bottom of the sea, where you are almost certain to run into sharks, is something else entirely! I know that in some countries, especially the

Andaman Islands, black men do not hesitate to attack them with a dagger in one hand and a slipknot in the other; but I also know that few who face those creatures ever come back alive. In any case, I am not a black man, and even if I were, I think a little hesitation here would be perfectly reasonable."

At that moment Conseil and the Canadian came in, calm and even cheerful. They had no idea what was waiting for them.

"Honestly, sir," said Ned Land, "your Captain Nemo—the devil take him!—has just made us a very pleasant offer."

"Ah!" I said. "So you know?"

"If it suits you, sir," Conseil cut in, "the commander of the Nautilus has invited us to visit the magnificent fisheries of Ceylon tomorrow with you. He did it very graciously and behaved like a true gentleman."

"He said nothing else?"

"Nothing else, sir, except that he had already spoken to you about this little excursion."

"Sir," said Conseil, "would you give us some details about pearl fishing?"

"Do you mean the fishing itself," I asked, "or the dangers that go with it?"

"The fishing," replied the Canadian. "Before we get there, we might as well know something about it."

"Very well. Sit down, my friends, and I'll explain it to you."

Ned and Conseil sat down on an ottoman, and the Canadian's first question was:

"Sir, what is a pearl?"

"My good Ned," I answered, "to a poet, a pearl is a tear from the sea; to people of the East, it is a drop of dew turned solid; to ladies, it is a shining, oval jewel made of mother-of-pearl, worn on the fingers, around the neck, or in the ears; to a chemist, it is a mixture of phosphate and carbonate of lime with a little gelatin; and finally, to naturalists, it is simply an unhealthy secretion from the organ that produces mother-of-pearl in certain bivalves."

"A branch of mollusks," said Conseil.

"Exactly, my learned Conseil; and among these shellfish, the ear-shell, the tridacnae, the turbots—in short, all those that secrete mother-of-pearl, that blue, bluish, violet, or white substance lining the inside of their shells—are capable of producing pearls."

"Mussels too?" asked the Canadian.

"Yes, mussels from certain waters in Scotland, Wales, Ireland, Saxony, Bohemia, and France."

"Good! I'll keep an eye out in the future," replied the Canadian.

"But," I continued, "the particular mollusk that produces the pearl is the pearl oyster, the meleagrina margaritifera, that precious pintadine. A pearl is simply a nacreous formation laid down in a round shape, either attached to the oyster's shell or buried in the folds of the animal. On the shell it is fixed; in the

flesh it is loose. But it always has at its center some small hard substance—perhaps a barren egg, perhaps a grain of sand—around which the pearly material is deposited year after year in thin, successive concentric layers."

"Are many pearls found in the same oyster?" asked Conseil.

"Yes, my boy. Some are real treasure chests. One oyster has even been said—though I admit I doubt it—to have contained no fewer than a hundred and fifty sharks."

"A hundred and fifty sharks!" exclaimed Ned Land.

"Did I say sharks?" I said quickly. "I meant a hundred and fifty pearls. Sharks would make no sense."

"Certainly not," said Conseil; "but will you tell us now how they extract these pearls?"

"They go about it in several ways. When the pearls stick to the shell, the fishermen often remove them with pincers. But the usual method is to spread the oysters on mats made from the seaweed that covers the banks. There they die in the open air, and after ten days they are well into decomposition. Then they are plunged into large tanks of seawater, opened, and washed."

"The price of these pearls varies according to their size?" asked Conseil.

"Not by size alone," I answered, "but also by their shape, their water—that is, their color—and their luster: that bright, shimmering sparkle that makes them so pleasing to the eye. The finest are called virgin pearls, or paragons. They form by themselves in the tissue of the mollusk. They are white, often

opaque, and sometimes as transparent as an opal. They are usually round or oval. The round ones are made into bracelets, the oval ones into pendants, and because they are more valuable, they are sold one by one. Those that cling to the oyster's shell are more irregular in shape and are sold by weight. Finally, in a lower class, come the small pearls known as seed-pearls. They are sold by measure and are used especially in embroidery for church ornaments."

"But," said Conseil, "is pearl-fishing dangerous?"

"No," I answered quickly, "especially if certain precautions are taken."

"What does a man risk in that line of work?" said Ned Land. "Swallowing a few mouthfuls of seawater?"

"Just as you say, Ned. By the way," I said, trying to adopt Captain Nemo's casual tone, "are you afraid of sharks, brave Ned?"

"I am?" replied the Canadian. "A harpooner by trade? It's my business to think little of them."

"But," said I, "this is not a matter of catching them with a harpoon, hauling them aboard, chopping off their tails with one stroke, ripping them open, and throwing their hearts into the sea!"

"Then it is a matter of——"

"Exactly."

"In the water?"

"In the water."

“Well, with a good harpoon! You know, sir, these sharks are awkwardly built creatures. They have to roll onto their backs to seize you, and in that time——”

Ned Land said the word “seize” in a way that sent a chill through me.

“Well then, Conseil, what do you think about sharks?”

“Me!” said Conseil. “I’ll speak frankly, sir.”

“So much the better,” I thought.

“If you intend to face the sharks, sir, I don’t see why your faithful servant shouldn’t face them with you.”

CHAPTER III A PEARL OF TEN MILLIONS

The next morning, at four o’clock, the steward Captain Nemo had assigned to me woke me. I got up quickly, dressed, and went into the saloon.

Captain Nemo was waiting for me.

“M. Aronnax,” he said, “are you ready to leave?”

“I am ready.”

“Then please follow me.”

“And my companions, Captain?”

“They’ve been informed and are waiting.”

“Aren’t we going to put on our diving suits?” I asked.

“Not yet. I have not brought the Nautilus too close to this coast, and we are still some distance from the Manaar Bank. But the boat is ready, and it will take us to the exact place where we are to land, which will save us a long trip. It is carrying our diving equipment, and we will put it on when we begin our underwater journey.”

Captain Nemo led me to the central staircase that opened onto the platform. Ned and Conseil were already there, delighted by the idea of the “pleasure party” being prepared. Five sailors from the Nautilus, with their oars, were waiting in the boat, which was fastened alongside.



The night was still dark. Layers of cloud covered the sky, and only a few stars were visible. I looked toward the land and saw nothing but a dark line stretching across three parts of the horizon, from southwest to northwest. During the night, the Nautilus had gone back up the western coast of Ceylon and now lay west of the bay—or rather the gulf—formed by the mainland and the Island of Manaar. There, beneath the dark water, lay the pintadine bank, an inexhaustible field of pearls more than twenty miles long.

Captain Nemo, Ned Land, Conseil, and I took our places at the stern of the boat. The helmsman took the tiller, his four companions bent to their oars, the painter was cast off, and we pushed away.

The boat headed south, and the rowers did not rush. I noticed that their strokes, powerful in the water, came only once every ten seconds, following the method commonly used in the navy. While the boat moved on under its own momentum, drops of water fell sharply into the dark hollows of the waves like splashes of melted lead. A small swell spread out around us, giving the boat a gentle roll, and a few samphire reeds fluttered in front of it.

We said nothing. What was Captain Nemo thinking about? Perhaps the land we were approaching, which he found too close for comfort, unlike the Canadian, who thought it was still too far away. As for Conseil, he was there simply out of curiosity.

At about half past five, the first colors on the horizon made the outline of the coast easier to see. It was fairly flat to the east and

rose slightly toward the south. We were still five miles away, and the shore remained hazy because of the mist over the water. At six o'clock, daylight came all at once, with the speed typical of tropical regions, where there is hardly any dawn or twilight. The sun's rays pierced the bank of clouds piled along the eastern horizon, and the bright disk rose quickly. I could now see the land clearly, with a few trees scattered here and there. The boat drew near Manaar Island, rounding it to the south. Captain Nemo stood up and began to watch the sea.

At a signal from him, the anchor was dropped, but the chain barely ran out, for the water was little more than a yard deep, and we were at one of the highest points of the bank of pintadines.

"Here we are, M. Aronnax," said Captain Nemo. "Do you see that enclosed bay? In a month, it will be crowded with the fishing boats of the exporters, and these are the waters their divers will search so boldly. Fortunately, the bay is well suited to this kind of fishing. It is protected from the strongest winds, and the sea here is never very rough, which makes the diver's work easier. Now let us put on our suits and begin our walk."

I did not reply. As I watched the suspicious waves, I began, with the sailors' help, to put on my heavy diving suit. Captain Nemo and my companions were dressing as well. None of the Nautilus men would join us on this new excursion.

Soon we were sealed up to the neck in rubber suits, with the air tanks strapped to our backs. We had no need of the Ruhmkorff apparatus. Before I lowered my head into the copper helmet, I put one question to the Captain.

“They would be useless,” he replied. “We are not going very deep, and sunlight will be enough to light our walk. Besides, it would be unwise to carry an electric lamp in these waters. Its brightness might attract some of the dangerous creatures along the coast at exactly the wrong moment.”

As Captain Nemo said this, I turned to Conseil and Ned Land. But my two friends had already shut their heads inside their metal helmets, so they could neither hear me nor answer.

One last question remained for me to ask Captain Nemo.

“And our weapons?” I asked. “Our guns?”

“Guns? What for? Do not mountaineers attack bears with a dagger in hand? And is not steel more reliable than lead? Here is a strong blade. Put it in your belt, and let us go.”

I looked at my companions. They were armed like I was, and Ned Land had even more than that: he was brandishing an enormous harpoon, which he had placed in the boat before we left the Nautilus.

Then, following the Captain’s example, I let them fit the heavy copper helmet over my head, and our air tanks immediately began to work. A moment later we were set down, one after another, in about two yards of water on a level stretch of sand. Captain Nemo signaled with his hand, and we followed him down a gentle slope until we disappeared beneath the waves.

Around our feet, schools of fish rose like flocks of snipe startled from a marsh. They belonged to the genus monoptera and had no fins except their tails. I recognized the Javanese fish, a true serpent of a creature, two and a half feet long, pale underneath,

and easy to mistake for a conger eel if not for the golden stripes along its sides. Among the stromateus, with their very flat, oval bodies, I saw some in the most brilliant colors, carrying their dorsal fin like a scythe. They are excellent eating fish and, when dried and pickled, are known as Karawade. I also saw some tranquebars, belonging to the genus apsiphoroides, whose bodies are covered with a shell-like armor made up of eight lengthwise plates.

As the sun climbed higher, it lit the mass of water more and more brightly. The seabed gradually changed. Fine sand gave way to a solid causeway of boulders, carpeted with molluscs and zoophytes. Among these branching forms I noticed some placenae, with thin, uneven shells, a kind of ostracion found especially in the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean; some orange lucinae with rounded shells; and rockfish three and a half feet long, rising beneath the waves like hands ready to seize you. There were also some panopyres, faintly luminous, and finally some oculines, spread out like magnificent fans and forming one of the richest growths in these seas.

Among these living plants, beneath the bowers of the hydrophytes, lay layers of awkward jointed creatures, especially some raninae, whose shells formed a slightly rounded triangle, and some dreadful-looking parthenopes.

Captain Nemo pointed to the enormous mass of oysters, and I easily understood that this mine was inexhaustible, for Nature’s power to create far exceeds man’s urge to destroy. Ned Land, true to his instincts, quickly began filling the net he carried at his side with some of the finest specimens. But we could not stop.

We had to follow the Captain, who seemed to be finding his way along paths known only to him. The ground was steadily rising, and at times, when I lifted my arm, it was above the surface of the sea. Then the level of the bank would suddenly dip again. We often passed around tall rocks, cut into pyramid-like shapes. In their dark cracks, huge crustaceans stood perched on their great claws like engines of war, watching us with fixed eyes, while different kinds of annelids crawled beneath our feet.

At that moment, a large grotto opened before us, hollowed out in a picturesque mass of rocks and carpeted with the dense growth of undersea plants. At first it seemed very dark. The sun's rays faded little by little until the faint transparency became nothing but submerged light. Captain Nemo went in, and we followed. My eyes soon adjusted to the dimness. I could make out arches rising irregularly from natural pillars, broad at their granite bases like the massive columns of Tuscan architecture. Why had our mysterious guide brought us to the bottom of this underwater crypt? I was about to find out. After going down a fairly steep slope, we reached the bottom of a sort of circular pit. There Captain Nemo stopped and pointed to something I had not yet noticed. It was an oyster of extraordinary size, a gigantic tridacna: a bowl that could have held an entire lake of holy water, a basin more than two and a half yards across, and therefore larger than the one decorating the saloon of the Nautilus. I went up to this remarkable mollusk. Fastened by its filaments to a slab of granite, it lay there alone, growing in the still waters of the grotto. I estimated that this tridacna weighed 600 pounds. Such an oyster would contain 30 pounds of meat, and a man would need the appetite of

Gargantua to devour several dozen of them.

Captain Nemo clearly knew this bivalve existed, and he seemed to have a special reason for checking the condition of this tridacna. Its shells were slightly open. The Captain stepped forward and slipped his dagger between them to keep them from closing. Then he lifted with his hand the fringed membrane that formed a kind of cloak around the creature. There, between the folded layers, I saw a loose pearl as large as a coconut. Its round shape, perfect clarity, and remarkable luster made it a jewel of priceless value. Driven by curiosity, I reached out to take it, weigh it, and feel it. But the Captain stopped me, signaled his refusal, and quickly pulled back his dagger, and the two shells snapped shut at once. Then I understood Captain Nemo's purpose. By leaving the pearl hidden in the mantle of the tridacna, he was letting it grow slowly. Each year, the mollusk's secretions would add new concentric layers. I estimated its value at no less than £500,000.

After ten minutes, Captain Nemo stopped suddenly. I thought he had paused because we were about to turn back. But no. With a gesture, he told us to crouch beside him in a deep crack in the rock. Then he pointed toward one part of the water, and I watched closely.

About five yards away, a shadow appeared and dropped to the bottom. The alarming thought of sharks flashed through my mind, but I was wrong. Once again, we were not dealing with a monster of the sea.

It was a man—a living man—an Indian fisherman, a poor wretch who, I suppose, had come to gather what he could before the

harvest. I could see the bottom of his canoe anchored a few feet above his head. He kept diving down and rising again. A stone, shaped like a sugar loaf and held between his feet, helped him descend faster, while a rope tied him to his boat. That was all his equipment. When he reached the bottom, about five yards down, he knelt and filled his bag with oysters picked up at random. Then he rose, emptied it, pulled up his stone, and began again. Each round lasted thirty seconds.

The diver did not see us. The rock's shadow kept us hidden. And how could this poor Indian ever imagine that men like himself might be down there underwater, watching everything he did and missing none of the details of his fishing? Several times he rose like this and then dived again. He brought up no more than ten oysters with each descent, because he had to tear them from the bank they clung to with their tough byssus. And how many of the oysters for which he risked his life held no pearl at all! I watched him closely. His movements were steady and methodical, and for half an hour no danger seemed to threaten him.

I was just beginning to grow used to the sight of this remarkable fishing when, all at once, as the Indian was on the bottom, I saw him make a gesture of terror, rise, and leap toward the surface of the sea.

I understood his fear at once. A gigantic shadow appeared just above the unfortunate diver. It was an enormous shark, moving diagonally toward him, its eyes blazing and its jaws open. I was frozen with horror, unable to speak or move.

The ravenous creature shot toward the Indian, who flung himself to one side to avoid the shark's fins—but not its tail. The tail struck his chest and knocked him flat to the bottom.

The whole scene lasted only a few seconds. The shark came back and, rolling onto its back, prepared to cut the Indian in two. At that moment I saw Captain Nemo suddenly rise and, dagger in hand, go straight at the monster, ready to fight it face to face. Just as the shark was about to snap the unfortunate fisherman in two, it noticed this new enemy and, turning over, charged straight at him.

I can still see Captain Nemo as he stood there. Keeping himself perfectly composed, he waited for the shark with remarkable calm. When it rushed at him, he sprang aside with astonishing speed, avoided the blow, and drove his dagger deep into its side. But it was not over. A terrible struggle followed.

A terrible struggle began.

The shark seemed almost to roar, if I can put it that way. Blood poured from its wound in torrents. The sea turned red, and through the murky water I could no longer make out anything. Then, in a flash, I saw the fearless Captain clinging to one of the creature's fins, fighting the monster hand to hand and striking blow after blow, yet still unable to land a decisive one.

The shark thrashed so violently that the water surged with such force it nearly overturned me.

I wanted to go to the Captain's aid, but I was frozen in place with horror and could not move.

I saw his wild eye; I saw every stage of the fight. The Captain was thrown to the ground, knocked over by the enormous mass pressing down on him. The shark's jaws opened wide like a pair of factory shears, and the Captain would have been lost; but in an instant, Ned Land rushed at the shark with harpoon in hand and drove the sharp point into it.

The waves were thick with blood. They heaved under the shark's movements as it lashed them with terrible fury. Ned Land had struck true. It was the monster's death rattle. Pierced through the heart, it writhed in dreadful convulsions, and the force of them knocked Conseil down.

But Ned Land had freed the Captain, who rose without a wound, went straight to the Indian, quickly cut the cord that tied him to his stone, took him in his arms, and with a strong kick shot up to the surface.

The three of us followed within seconds, saved as if by a miracle, and reached the fisherman's boat.

Captain Nemo's first concern was to bring the unfortunate man back to life. I did not think he would succeed. I still hoped he might, since the poor man had not been underwater long; but the blow from the shark's tail may have been fatal.

Fortunately, with the Captain and Conseil vigorously rubbing him, I saw him slowly regain consciousness. He opened his eyes. Imagine his surprise—his terror, even—at seeing four large copper heads bent over him! And above all, what must he have thought when Captain Nemo took a bag of pearls from his pocket and placed it in his hand? The poor Cingalese accepted this generous gift from the man of the sea with a trembling

hand. His astonished eyes showed that he had no idea what superhuman beings he owed both his life and his fortune to.

At a sign from the Captain, we returned to the shore and, following the same path we had taken before, reached in about half an hour the anchor that held the Nautilus canoe to the seabed.

Once on board, each of us, with the sailors' help, removed his heavy copper helmet.

Captain Nemo's first words were for the Canadian.

"Thank you, Master Land," he said.

"It was revenge, Captain," Ned Land replied. "I owed you that."

A grim smile passed over the Captain's lips, and he said nothing more.

"To the Nautilus," he said.

The boat sped over the waves. A few minutes later, we came upon the shark's dead body floating on the surface. From the black marking at the tips of its fins, I recognized the terrible melanopteron of the Indian Seas, a shark very rightly given that name. It was more than twenty-five feet long, and its enormous mouth took up a third of its body. It was an adult, as its six rows of teeth in the upper jaw, arranged in an isosceles triangle, made clear.

While I was looking at this motionless mass, a dozen of these ravenous creatures appeared around the boat. Without paying any attention to us, they hurled themselves at the dead body and tore at one another over the pieces.

At half past eight, we were back on board the Nautilus. There I reflected on the events of our excursion to the Manaar Bank.

I could draw only two conclusions from it. One concerned Captain Nemo’s extraordinary courage; the other, his devotion to a fellow human being, one of the very race he had fled beneath the sea to escape. Whatever he might say, this strange man had not yet succeeded in completely hardening his heart.

When I pointed this out to him, he replied in a voice touched with emotion:

“That Indian, sir, comes from an oppressed country; and I am still one of its people, and will remain so until my last breath!”

CHAPTER IV THE RED SEA

During the day on January 29, the island of Ceylon sank below the horizon, and the Nautilus, traveling at twenty miles an hour, slipped into the maze of channels that separate the Maldives from the Laccadives. It even passed along the island of Kiltan, a land of coral origin, discovered by Vasco da Gama in 1499, and one of the nineteen principal islands of the Laccadive Archipelago, lying between 10° and 14° 30′ north latitude and 69° 50′ 72″ east longitude.

We had traveled 16,220 miles, or 7,500 French leagues, from our starting point in the seas of Japan.

The next day, January 30, when the Nautilus rose to the surface, no land was in sight. It was heading N.N.E., toward the Sea of Oman, between Arabia and the Indian peninsula, which opens into the Persian Gulf. This was clearly a dead end, with no possible way out. Where was Captain Nemo taking us? I could not tell. That answer, however, did not satisfy the Canadian, who came to me that day to ask where we were going.

“We are going wherever the Captain’s whim leads us, Master Ned.”

“Then his whim cannot take us very far,” said the Canadian. “The Persian Gulf has no outlet; and if we do enter it, we will not stay there long before coming out again.”

“Very well, then, we shall come out again, Master Land; and if, after the Persian Gulf, the Nautilus wishes to visit the Red Sea,



the Strait of Bab-el-Mandeb is there to let us in."

"I hardly need to tell you, sir," said Ned Land, "that the Red Sea is just as closed as the Gulf, since the Isthmus of Suez has not yet been cut through; and even if it had been, a vessel as mysterious as ours would never risk entering a canal fitted with locks. Besides, the Red Sea is not the route that would take us back to Europe."

"But I never said we were going back to Europe."

"Then what do you think?"

"I suppose that, after visiting the remarkable coasts of Arabia and Egypt, the Nautilus will head down the Indian Ocean again, perhaps cross the Mozambique Channel, perhaps pass by the Mascarenhas, and then make for the Cape of Good Hope."

"And once we reach the Cape of Good Hope?" the Canadian asked, with unusual emphasis.

"Well, we shall enter that Atlantic we still do not know. Ah, my friend Ned, you are growing tired of this voyage beneath the sea; you have had your fill of the endlessly changing spectacle of submarine wonders. As for me, I shall be sorry to see the end of a journey that so few men are ever allowed to make."

For four days, until the 3rd of February, the Nautilus cruised through the Sea of Oman at different speeds and depths. It seemed to move at random, as if unsure which course to take, but it never crossed the Tropic of Cancer.

As we left this sea, we caught a brief sight of Muscat, one of the most important cities in Oman. I admired its striking appearance,

ringed by black rocks against which its white houses and forts stood out sharply. I saw the rounded domes of its mosques, the graceful spires of its minarets, and its green, fertile terraces. But it was only a fleeting vision. The Nautilus soon sank beneath the waves in that part of the sea.

We traveled along the Arabian coast of Mahrah and Hadramaut for six miles, with its rolling mountain line now and then broken by some ancient ruin. On the 5th of February, we finally entered the Gulf of Aden, a true funnel opening into the neck of Bab-el-mandeb, through which the waters of the Indian Ocean flow into the Red Sea.

On the 6th of February, the Nautilus floated within sight of Aden, perched on a promontory connected to the mainland by a narrow isthmus—a kind of inaccessible Gibraltar, whose fortifications the English rebuilt after taking possession in 1839. I caught a glimpse of the town's octagonal minarets. It had once been the richest commercial storehouse on the coast.

I was certain that, once Captain Nemo had reached this point, he would turn back. But I was wrong; to my great surprise, he did nothing of the kind.

The next day, the 7th of February, we entered the Straits of Bab-el-mandeb, whose name in Arabic means the Gate of Tears."

It is only twenty miles wide and thirty-two miles long. For the Nautilus, running at full speed, crossing it took barely an hour. But I saw nothing, not even the Island of Perim, which the British Government had fortified to secure Aden. Too many English and French steamers were passing through this narrow channel on

the Suez-to-Bombay, Calcutta-to-Melbourne, and Bourbon-to-Mauritius routes for the Nautilus to risk showing itself. So it wisely stayed below the surface. At last, around noon, we entered the waters of the Red Sea.

I did not even try to understand the whim that had led Captain Nemo to enter the gulf. Still, I was glad that the Nautilus had done so. Its speed was reduced. At times it stayed on the surface; at others it dived to avoid a ship. In this way, I was able to observe both the upper and lower regions of this remarkable sea.

On the 8th of February, at first light, Mocha came into view. It was now a ruined town, with walls so weak they would crumble under cannon fire, though here and there it still sheltered a few green date trees. Once it had been an important city, with six public markets and twenty-six mosques, and walls defended by fourteen forts that formed a ring two miles around.

The Nautilus then moved closer to the African coast, where the sea was deeper. There, in water as clear as crystal, and through the open panels, we were able to admire beautiful thickets of brilliant coral and great rocks covered in a splendid coat of green algae and fucus. What an extraordinary sight it was, and what a variety of scenes and landscapes stretched along those sandbanks and volcanic islands that border the Libyan coast. But these marine growths appeared in their greatest beauty on the eastern shore, which the Nautilus soon reached. This was the coast of Tehama. There, these displays of zoophytes not only flourished below the sea's surface, but also formed picturesque tangled patterns rising about sixty feet above the

water, more irregular in shape but less vivid in color than those whose freshness was sustained by the living power of the sea.

What delightful hours I spent at the saloon window! Under the glow of our electric lantern, what new specimens of undersea plant and animal life I admired!

On February 9, the Nautilus floated in the widest part of the Red Sea, between Souakin on the west coast and Komfidah on the east coast, a stretch about ninety miles across.

That day at noon, after the bearings had been taken, Captain Nemo came up onto the platform, where I happened to be. I had made up my mind not to let him go below again without at least questioning him about his deeper plans. As soon as he saw me, he came over and politely offered me a cigar.

“Well, sir, does this Red Sea please you? Have you had enough time to observe the wonders hidden beneath it—its fish, its zoophytes, its sponge gardens, and its coral forests? Did you catch sight of the towns along its shores?”

“Yes, Captain Nemo,” I replied, “and the Nautilus is admirably suited to such a study. Ah, it is an intelligent vessel!”

“Yes, sir—intelligent and invulnerable. It fears neither the violent storms of the Red Sea, nor its currents, nor its sandbanks.”

“Certainly,” I said. “This sea is considered one of the worst, and in ancient times, if I remember correctly, it had a terrible reputation.”

“Terrible indeed, M. Aronnax. Greek and Latin historians speak of it unfavorably, and Strabo says it is very dangerous during

the Etesian winds and the rainy season. The Arab Edrisi describes it under the name Gulf of Colzoum and says that large numbers of ships were lost there on the sandbanks, and that no one dared sail there at night. He claims it is a sea subject to dreadful hurricanes, scattered with inhospitable islands, and 'which offers nothing good either on its surface or in its depths.'"

"It is easy to see," I replied, "that those historians never sailed aboard the Nautilus."

"Exactly," the Captain replied with a smile. "And in that respect, the moderns are no further ahead than the ancients. It took many centuries to discover the mechanical power of steam. Who knows whether, in another hundred years, we may not see a second Nautilus? Progress is slow, M. Aronnax."

"That is true," I answered. "Your vessel is at least a century ahead of its time—perhaps an entire age. What a tragedy that the secret of such an invention should die with its inventor!"

Captain Nemo did not answer. After a few minutes of silence, he went on:

"You were talking about what ancient historians thought of the dangers of navigating the Red Sea."

"That is true," I said, "but were their fears not exaggerated?"

"Yes and no, M. Aronnax," Captain Nemo replied, seeming to know the Red Sea thoroughly. "What is no longer dangerous for a modern ship—well equipped, solidly built, and able to control its own course thanks to reliable steam power—presented every kind of danger to ancient vessels. Imagine those first

sailors setting out in ships made of planks stitched together with palm-tree fibers, coated with sea-dog grease, and covered with powdered resin. They did not even have instruments to determine their position, and they navigated by guesswork through currents they barely understood. In such conditions, shipwrecks were bound to be frequent. But in our own time, steamships traveling between Suez and the South Seas have nothing more to fear from the violence of this gulf, despite opposing trade winds. Captains and passengers no longer prepare for departure by offering sacrifices to win divine favor; and when they return, they do not go crowned with wreaths and gilded ribbons to thank the gods in the nearest temple."

"I agree with you," I said. "Steam seems to have driven all gratitude from sailors' hearts. But, Captain, since you seem to have studied this sea so closely, can you tell me where its name comes from?"

"There are several explanations, M. Aronnax. Would you like to hear the view of a fourteenth-century chronicler?"

"Gladly."

"That imaginative writer claims the sea received its name after the Israelites crossed it, when Pharaoh was drowned in the waters that closed again at Moses' command."

"That is a poet's explanation, Captain Nemo," I replied, "but it does not satisfy me. I want your own opinion."

"Very well, M. Aronnax. In my view, the name Red Sea is a translation of the Hebrew word 'Edom'; and if the ancients gave it that name, it was because of the distinctive color of its

waters."

"But so far I've seen nothing except transparent water, with no distinct color."

"Very likely. But as we go farther toward the bottom of the gulf, you'll see this unusual effect. I remember seeing the Bay of Tor completely red, like a sea of blood."

"And you think this color comes from a microscopic seaweed?"

"Yes."

"So, Captain Nemo, this is not the first time you have crossed the Red Sea aboard the Nautilus?"

"No, sir."

"Since you were just speaking of the Israelites' passage and the disaster that overtook the Egyptians, let me ask whether you have found any traces underwater of that great historical event?"

"No, sir, and for a very good reason."

"What reason?"

"Because the place where Moses and his people crossed is now so choked with sand that camels can hardly wet their legs there. You can easily understand that there would not be enough water for my Nautilus."

"And where is that place?" I asked.

"It lies a little above the Isthmus of Suez, in the arm that once formed a deep estuary when the Red Sea extended to the Salt Lakes. Now, whether that crossing was miraculous or not, the

Israelites did cross there on their way to the Promised Land, and Pharaoh's army perished on that very spot. I believe that excavations in the middle of the sand would uncover a great number of weapons and tools of Egyptian origin."

"That is clear enough," I replied. "And for the sake of archaeologists, let us hope those excavations are made sooner or later, when new towns are built on the isthmus after the construction of the Suez Canal—a canal that is, however, quite useless to a vessel like the Nautilus."

"Very likely," said Captain Nemo, "but useful to the whole world. The ancients clearly understood how valuable a link between the Red Sea and the Mediterranean would be for trade. But they never thought of cutting a direct canal, and instead used the Nile as an intermediate route. If tradition is to be believed, the canal that connected the Nile to the Red Sea was first begun by Sesostris. One thing, however, is certain: in the year 615 before Jesus Christ, Necos began work on a canal from the waters of the Nile across the plain of Egypt toward Arabia. It took four days to travel up this canal, and it was wide enough for two triremes to pass side by side. Darius, the son of Hystaspes, continued the work, and Ptolemy II probably completed it. Strabo saw it in use, but the drop from its starting point near Bubastes to the Red Sea was so slight that it could be navigated only a few months of the year. Even so, the canal served all commercial needs until the time of Antonius, when it was abandoned and filled with sand. It was restored by order of the Caliph Omar, then finally destroyed in 761 or 762 by Caliph Al-Mansor, who wanted to stop provisions from reaching Mohammed-ben-Abdallah, who had rebelled against him.

During the expedition into Egypt, your General Bonaparte found traces of these works in the Desert of Suez; and, caught by the tide, he nearly died before he could get back to Hadjaroth, at the very place where Moses had camped three thousand years earlier."

"Well, Captain, what the ancients did not dare attempt—this joining of the two seas, which will shorten the route from Cadiz to India—M. Lesseps has managed to accomplish; and before long he will have turned Africa into one immense island."

"Yes, M. Aronnax, you are right to be proud of your countryman. A man like that brings more honor to a nation than great captains do. He began, like so many others, by meeting resistance and rejection; but he has prevailed, because he has the genius of determination. And it is sad to think that a work like this, which ought to have been an international undertaking, and which would have been enough to make a reign glorious, succeeded only through the energy of one man. All honor to M. Lesseps!"

"Yes! Honor to the great citizen," I replied, surprised by the way Captain Nemo had just spoken.

"Unfortunately," he continued, "I can't take you through the Suez Canal. But the day after tomorrow, when we reach the Mediterranean, you'll be able to see the long jetty at Port Said."

"The Mediterranean!" I cried.

"Yes, sir. Does that surprise you?"

"What surprises me is the thought that we'll be there the day after tomorrow."

“Really?”

“Yes, Captain. Though by now I should be used to being surprised by nothing after being aboard your vessel.”

“And what is the reason for your surprise?”

“Well, it’s the incredible speed the Nautilus will have to make if she is to be in the Mediterranean the day after tomorrow, after going around Africa and past the Cape of Good Hope!”

“Who told you she would go around Africa and past the Cape of Good Hope, sir?”

“Well, unless the Nautilus sails over dry land and crosses above the isthmus——”

“Or beneath it, M. Aronnax.”

“Beneath it?”

“Certainly,” Captain Nemo replied calmly. “Long ago, Nature made beneath this strip of land what man has now made on its surface.”

“What! A passage like that exists?”

“Yes, a subterranean passage, which I have named the Arabian Tunnel. It takes us beneath Suez and opens into the Gulf of Pelusium.”

“But this isthmus is made of nothing but quicksand?”

“Only to a certain depth. At just fifty-five yards, there is a solid layer of rock.”

“Did you discover this passage by chance?” I asked, growing more and more astonished.

“Chance and reasoning, sir—but reasoning even more than chance. Not only does this passage exist, I have made use of it several times. Without that proof, I would never have dared enter the supposedly impassable Red Sea today. I noticed that the Red Sea and the Mediterranean contained a number of fish that were exactly the same species. Certain of that fact, I asked myself whether the two seas could really have no connection. If there was one, then because of the difference in level, the underground current had to run from the Red Sea to the Mediterranean. I caught a large number of fish near Suez, passed a copper ring through their tails, and threw them back into the sea. Some months later, on the coast of Syria, I caught some of those same fish still wearing the ring. That proved the connection between the two seas. Then I searched for it with my Nautilus. I found it, ventured into it, and before long, sir, you too will have passed through my Arabian tunnel!”

CHAPTER V THE ARABIAN TUNNEL

That same evening, at 21° 30′ N. latitude, the Nautilus floated on the surface of the sea as it approached the Arabian coast. I saw Djeddah, the chief trading center for Egypt, Syria, Turkey, and India. I could clearly make out its buildings, the ships anchored at the quays, and those whose deep draught forced them to lie farther out in the roads. The sun, already low on the horizon, shone full on the town's houses and brought out their whiteness. Outside the town, some wooden huts and others made of reeds marked the quarter inhabited by the Bedouins. Soon the shadows of night hid Djeddah from view, and the Nautilus slipped beneath water that glowed faintly with phosphorescence.

The next day, February 10, we spotted several ships beating to windward. The Nautilus went back to its underwater course, but at noon, when its position was taken and the sea was empty, it rose again to the waterline.

With Ned and Conseil beside me, I sat down on the platform. The coast to the east looked like a dim shape blurred through thick mist.

We were leaning against the sides of the pinnace, talking about this and that, when Ned Land stretched out his hand toward a point on the sea and said:

“Do you see anything there, sir?”

“No, Ned,” I replied, “but you know I don’t have your eyesight.”

“Look carefully,” said Ned. “There, off the starboard beam, about level with the lantern. Don’t you see a shape that seems to be moving?”

“Yes,” I said after watching closely. “I can see something like a long black body on the surface of the water.”

And before long, the black object was less than a mile away. It looked like a huge sandbank stranded in the open sea. It was a gigantic dugong!

Ned Land stared eagerly. At the sight of the animal, his eyes gleamed with desire. His hand seemed ready to hurl the harpoon. You would have thought he was only waiting for the moment to throw himself into the sea and attack it in its own element.

At that moment Captain Nemo appeared on the platform. He saw the dugong, understood the Canadian’s mood, and said to him:

“If you were holding a harpoon right now, Master Land, wouldn’t it be burning your hand?”

“Exactly, sir.”

“And you would not mind returning, for one day, to your work as a fisherman and adding this cetacean to the list of those you have already killed?”

“Not at all, sir.”

“Very well, you may try.”

“Thank you, sir,” said Ned Land, his eyes blazing.

“Only,” the Captain continued, “for your own sake, I advise you not to miss the creature.”

“Is the dugong dangerous to attack?” I asked, despite the Canadian’s shrug.

“Yes,” the Captain replied. “Sometimes the animal turns on its attackers and overturns their boat. But Master Land need not fear that danger. His eye is quick, and his arm is steady.”

At that moment, seven men from the crew, as silent and motionless as ever, came up onto the platform. One carried a harpoon and a line like those used in whaling. The pinnace was raised from the bridge, pulled from its place, and lowered into the sea. Six oarsmen took their seats, and the coxswain took the tiller. Ned, Conseil, and I sat in the stern.

“You’re not coming, Captain?” I asked.

“No, sir, but I wish you good hunting.”

The boat pushed off and, driven by the six rowers, sped quickly toward the dugong, which was floating about two miles from the Nautilus.

When we were a few cable-lengths from the cetacean, the boat slowed, and the oars slipped silently into the calm water. Ned Land stood at the bow with harpoon in hand. A whaling harpoon is usually fastened to a very long line that runs out quickly as the wounded animal drags it away. But this line was no more than ten fathoms long, and its end was tied to a small barrel that would float and mark the dugong’s path underwater.

I stood watching the Canadian's opponent closely. This dugong, also called the halicore, looked very much like a manatee: it had an oblong body ending in a long tail, and side fins shaped like distinct fingers. It differed from the manatee in its upper jaw, which carried two long, sharp teeth that formed tusks diverging on either side.

The dugong Ned Land was getting ready to attack was enormous, more than seven yards long. It did not move and seemed to be asleep on the waves, which made it easier to catch.

The boat came within six yards of the animal. The oars rested in the rowlocks. I half rose. Ned Land, leaning slightly back, raised the harpoon in his practiced hand.

Suddenly we heard a hissing sound, and the dugong vanished. The harpoon, though thrown with great force, seemed to have struck only the water.

"Damn it!" the Canadian cried furiously. "I missed it!"

"No," I said. "The creature is wounded—look at the blood. But your weapon did not stay in its body."

"My harpoon! My harpoon!" cried Ned Land.

The sailors rowed on, and the coxswain headed for the floating barrel. Once the harpoon was recovered, we set off again in pursuit of the animal.

The creature came to the surface from time to time to breathe. Its wound had not weakened it, and it sped onward with great speed.

Driven by powerful rowers, the boat sped forward. Several times it came within a few yards of the dugong, and the Canadian stood ready to strike, but each time the animal escaped with a sudden dive, and we could not reach it.

You can imagine how furious and impatient Ned Land was. He shouted the strongest curses in the English language at the unfortunate creature. As for me, I was simply frustrated to see the dugong slip away from every attack.

We chased it relentlessly for an hour, and I was beginning to think it would be hard to catch, when the animal, seized by a stubborn desire for revenge that it soon had reason to regret, turned on the pinnace and attacked us instead.

The Canadian did not miss this move.

“Look out!” he shouted.

The coxswain said a few words in his unfamiliar language, no doubt warning the men to stay on guard.

The dugong came within twenty feet of the boat, stopped, and sniffed the air sharply with its large nostrils, which were set not at the tip but on the upper part of its muzzle. Then it lunged and hurled itself at us.

The pinnace could not avoid the impact. It nearly capsized and took on at least two tons of water, which had to be bailed out. But thanks to the coxswain, we took the blow on the side rather than head-on, so we were not completely overturned. While Ned Land, clinging to the bow, hammered the gigantic animal with his harpoon, the creature sank its teeth into the gunwale and lifted the whole boat out of the water, the way a lion lifts a

roebuck. We were thrown over one another, and I do not know how the adventure would have ended if the Canadian, still raging at the beast, had not struck it through the heart.

I heard its teeth scrape against the iron plating, and the dugong vanished, carrying the harpoon with it. But the barrel soon rose back to the surface, and shortly afterward the animal's body appeared, floating on its back. The boat came up to it, took it in tow, and headed straight for the Nautilus.

It took extremely heavy tackle to hoist the dugong onto the platform. It weighed 10,000 pounds.

The next day, February 11, the Nautilus's larder was stocked with some finer game. A flock of sea swallows settled on the Nautilus. They were a kind of Sterna nilotica found especially in Egypt, with black beaks, gray pointed heads, eyes ringed with white spots, grayish backs, wings, and tails, white bellies and throats, and red claws. They also caught about a dozen Nile ducks, wild birds with excellent flavor, marked by white throats and white upper heads spotted with black.

At about five in the evening, we caught sight to the north of Cape Ras-Mohammed. This cape marks the end of Arabia Petraea, lying between the Gulf of Suez and the Gulf of Acabah.

The Nautilus entered the Straits of Jubal, which lead to the Gulf of Suez. I clearly saw a high mountain rising between the two gulfs of Ras-Mohammed. It was Mount Horeb, that Sinai on whose summit Moses saw God face to face.

At six o'clock, the Nautilus, sometimes on the surface and sometimes submerged, passed some distance from Tor, which

stands at the end of the bay. Its waters seemed tinged with red, just as Captain Nemo had already observed. Then night fell in deep silence, broken now and then by the cries of pelicans and other night birds, by the sound of waves breaking on the shore and scraping against the rocks, or by the panting of some distant steamer churning the waters of the Gulf with its noisy paddles.

From eight to nine o'clock, the Nautilus stayed a few fathoms below the water. By my calculation, we must have been very near Suez. Through the saloon window, I saw the rocky bottom brightly lit by our electric lamp. We seemed to be leaving the Straits farther and farther behind us.

At a quarter past nine, when the vessel rose back to the surface, I climbed onto the platform. I was too eager to pass through Captain Nemo's tunnel to keep still, so I came up to breathe the fresh night air.

Soon, through the darkness, I saw a pale light about a mile away, dimmed somewhat by the fog.

"A floating lighthouse!" someone near me said.

I turned and saw the Captain.

"It is the floating light of Suez," he continued. "It will not be long now before we reach the entrance to the tunnel."

"The entrance can't be easy, can it?"

"No, sir. For that reason, I usually go into the steersman's cabin and direct our course myself. Now, if you will go down, M. Aronnax, the Nautilus will dive beneath the waves and will not

come back to the surface until we have passed through the Arabian Tunnel."

Captain Nemo led me toward the central staircase. Halfway down, he opened a door, crossed the upper deck, and brought me to the pilot's cabin, which, you may remember, stood at the end of the platform. It was a cabin about six feet square, much like the one used by pilots on the steamboats of the Mississippi or the Hudson. In the center was a vertically mounted wheel connected to the tiller-rope, which ran to the stern of the Nautilus. Four windows fitted with lenticular glass, set into grooves in the cabin walls, allowed the man at the wheel to see in every direction.

The cabin was dark, but my eyes soon adjusted to it, and I made out the pilot, a powerfully built man, with his hands resting on the spokes of the wheel. Outside, the sea was brightly lit by the lantern, which cast its rays from the back of the cabin to the far end of the platform.

"Now," said Captain Nemo, "let us try to make our way through."

Electric wires connected the pilot's cabin to the engine room, and from there the Captain could send orders for both direction and speed throughout the Nautilus at the same time. He pressed a metal knob, and the screw immediately slowed.

I silently watched the tall, sheer wall we were passing at that moment, the fixed base of a vast sandy coast. We followed it for an hour, staying only a few yards away.

Captain Nemo never took his eyes off the dial, hanging in the cabin within its two concentric circles. At the slightest gesture from him, the pilot adjusted the Nautilus's course from moment to moment.

I had taken my place at the port window and saw magnificent underwater growths of coral, zoophytes, seaweed, and fucus, waving their huge claw-like forms as they stretched out from the cracks in the rock.

At a quarter past ten, the Captain himself took the helm. Ahead of us opened a vast, dark gallery. The Nautilus went straight into it without hesitation. A strange roaring sounded along its sides. It was the water of the Red Sea, driven violently toward the Mediterranean by the downward slope of the tunnel. The Nautilus was swept along by the torrent, fast as an arrow, despite the efforts of the machinery, which turned the screw in reverse and churned the water to resist the current more effectively.

Along the walls of the narrow passage, I could see nothing but brilliant streaks—straight lines, fiery grooves—drawn by our tremendous speed under the bright electric light. My heart was pounding.

At half past ten, Captain Nemo left the helm and turned to me.

"The Mediterranean!"

In less than twenty minutes, the Nautilus, carried by the torrent, had passed beneath the Isthmus of Suez.

CHAPTER VI THE GRECIAN ARCHIPELAGO

The next day, February 12, at daybreak, the Nautilus rose to the surface. I hurried onto the platform. Three miles to the south, I could make out the faint outline of Pelusium. A current had carried us from one sea to the other. At about seven o'clock, Ned and Conseil joined me.

"Well, Professor," said the Canadian in a slightly cheerful tone, "and the Mediterranean?"

"We are floating on its surface, friend Ned."

"What!" said Conseil. "This very night?"

"Yes, this very night. In just a few minutes, we crossed that impassable isthmus."

"I don't believe it," replied the Canadian.

"Then you are mistaken, Master Land," I went on. "That low coastline curving away to the south is the Egyptian coast. And with your sharp eyes, Ned, you can see the jetty of Port Said stretching out into the sea."

The Canadian looked carefully.

"You are certainly right, sir, and your Captain is a remarkable man. We are in the Mediterranean. Good! Now, if you please, let us talk about our own little matter—but quietly, so no one hears us."



I understood what the Canadian wanted, and in any case I thought it best to let him speak as he wished. So the three of us went and sat near the lantern, where we were less exposed to the spray from the blades.

“Now, Ned, we’re listening. What do you have to tell us?”

“What I have to say is very simple. We are in Europe, and before Captain Nemo’s whims carry us once again to the bottom of the Polar Seas or take us off into Oceania, I want to leave the Nautilus.”

I had no wish to restrict my companions’ freedom, but I certainly had no desire to leave Captain Nemo.

Thanks to him, and to his equipment, I was coming closer every day to completing my studies of the submarine world. I was rewriting my book on the ocean depths in the very place where it belonged. Would I ever again have such a chance to observe the wonders of the sea? Certainly not. And I could not bring myself to leave the Nautilus before this course of investigation was complete.

“My friend Ned, answer me honestly: are you tired of being on board? Do you regret that fate has placed us in Captain Nemo’s hands?”

The Canadian was silent for a few moments. Then he folded his arms and said:

“Honestly, I do not regret this journey beneath the seas. I am glad to have made it; but now that it has been made, let us be done with it. That is how I see it.”

“It will end, Ned.”

“Where, and when?”

“Where, I do not know. When, I cannot say. Or rather, I suppose it will end when these seas have nothing more to teach us.”

“Then what are you hoping for?” the Canadian asked.

“That circumstances may arise six months from now just as easily as they might now, and that we may then have both the chance and the duty to take advantage of them.”

“Oh!” said Ned Land. “And where shall we be in six months, if you please, Mr. Naturalist?”

“Perhaps in China. You know the Nautilus is a swift traveler. It moves through the water as swallows move through the air, or as an express train moves over land. It does not fear busy seas. Who can say that it may not pass along the coasts of France, England, or America, where an escape might be attempted just as well as here?”

“M. Aronnax,” the Canadian replied, “your argument is flawed from the start. You keep talking about the future—‘We shall be there! we shall be here!’ I’m talking about the present: ‘We are here, and we must make the most of it.’”

Ned Land’s logic hit me hard, and I felt defeated on that point. I did not know what argument I could still make in my own defense.

“Sir,” Ned went on, “let us imagine the impossible: if Captain Nemo were to offer you your freedom today, would you accept it?”

“I do not know,” I answered.

“And if,” he added, “the offer he made today would never be made again, would you accept it?”

“My friend Ned, here is my answer. Your reasoning is against me. We cannot count on Captain Nemo’s goodwill. Ordinary caution would keep him from setting us free. On the other hand, that same caution tells us to take the first chance we get to leave the Nautilus.”

“Well, M. Aronnax, that is wisely said.”

“Only one point—just one. The opportunity must be a serious one, and our first attempt must succeed. If it fails, we will never get another chance, and Captain Nemo will never forgive us.”

“That is all true,” the Canadian replied. “But your point applies just as much to an escape attempt two years from now as it does to one two days from now. The question remains the same: if a good opportunity appears, we must take it.”

“Agreed. And now, Ned, will you tell me what you mean by a good opportunity?”

“It would be a dark night, with the Nautilus a short distance from some European coast.”

“And you would try to save yourself by swimming?”

“Yes, if we were close enough to shore, and if the vessel were on the surface at the time. Not if the shore were far away and the boat were underwater.”

“And in that case?”

“In that case, I would try to take control of the pinnace. I know how it works. We would have to get inside, and once the bolts were drawn, we would rise to the surface without even the pilot in the bows noticing our escape.”

“Very well, Ned, watch for the opportunity. But do not forget that one mistake will ruin us.”

“I will not forget, sir.”

“And now, Ned, would you like to hear what I think of your plan?”

“Certainly, M. Aronnax.”

“Well, I think—I do not say I hope—I think this favorable opportunity will never come.”

“Why not?”

“Because Captain Nemo cannot deceive himself into thinking we have given up all hope of winning back our freedom, and he will be especially cautious in these seas and within sight of the European coast.”

“We shall see,” replied Ned Land, shaking his head with determination.

“And now, Ned Land,” I added, “let us leave it there. Not another word on the subject. The day you are ready, come and tell us, and we will follow you. I am relying entirely on you.”

That conversation ended there, though before long it led to very serious consequences. I should say here that events seemed to confirm my prediction, much to the Canadian’s despair. Did Captain Nemo suspect us in these busy seas? Or did he simply

want to keep out of sight of the many ships of every nation crossing the Mediterranean? I could not tell. But more often we stayed submerged and far from shore. And if the Nautilus did rise to the surface, nothing could be seen except the pilot's cage. Sometimes it also descended to great depths, for between the Grecian Archipelago and Asia Minor we could not reach the bottom even with a line of more than a thousand fathoms.

So I knew we were near the Island of Carpathos, one of the Sporades, only because Captain Nemo recited these lines from Virgil:

"Est Carpathio Neptuni gurgite vates, Caeruleus Proteus,"

as he pointed to a spot on the planisphere.

It was indeed the ancient home of Proteus, the old shepherd of Neptune's flocks, now the Island of Scarpanto, lying between Rhodes and Crete. Through the saloon's glass panels, I could see nothing but its granite foundation.

The next day, February 14, I planned to spend a few hours studying the fish of the Archipelago. But for some reason, the panels stayed tightly shut. When I checked the Nautilus's course, I saw that we were heading toward Candia, the ancient island of Crete. At the time I boarded the Abraham Lincoln, the whole island had risen in revolt against Turkish oppression. But I had no idea how the insurgents had fared since then, and Captain Nemo, cut off from all contact with the land, could tell me nothing.

I said nothing about this when I found myself alone with him in the saloon that night. Besides, he seemed withdrawn and preoccupied. Then, unlike his usual habit, he ordered both panels opened and moved from one to the other, watching the mass of water with close attention. I could not guess why, so I spent the time studying the fish passing before my eyes.

Then, in the middle of the water, a man appeared—a diver with a leather pouch fastened to his belt. It was not a corpse abandoned to the waves. It was a living man, swimming powerfully, now and then rising to the surface for breath.

I turned to Captain Nemo and cried out in an agitated voice:

“A shipwrecked man! He must be saved at any cost!”

“A man! A shipwrecked sailor!” I cried.

The Captain did not answer. He came over and leaned against the panel.

The man had come closer and was staring at us with his face pressed flat against the glass.

To my great astonishment, Captain Nemo made a sign to him. The diver answered with a gesture, immediately rose to the surface, and did not appear again.

“Do not be alarmed,” said Captain Nemo. “It is Nicholas of Cape Matapan, called Pesca. He is known throughout the Cyclades. A fearless diver—water is his natural element, and he lives more in it than on land, constantly traveling from one island to another, even as far as Crete.”

“You know him, Captain?”

“Why should I not, M. Aronnax?”

With that, Captain Nemo walked over to a piece of furniture near the left wall of the saloon. Beside it, I saw an iron-bound chest. On its lid was a copper plate bearing the Nautilus's emblem and motto.

At that moment, without noticing that I was there, the Captain opened the piece of furniture—a kind of strongbox—filled with a great number of ingots.

They were gold ingots. Where had this precious metal, worth an enormous fortune, come from? Where had the Captain gathered all this gold? And what was he planning to do with it?

I did not say a word. I simply watched. Captain Nemo took the ingots one by one and arranged them carefully in the chest until it was completely full. I estimated that it held more than 4,000 pounds of gold—nearly £200,000.

Once the chest was securely closed, the Captain wrote an address on the lid in characters that seemed to belong to modern Greek.

When that was done, Captain Nemo pressed a button connected by wire to the crew's quarters. Four men appeared and, with some effort, pushed the chest out of the saloon. Then I heard them hauling it up the iron staircase with pulleys.

At that moment, Captain Nemo turned toward me.

“And what were you saying, sir?” he asked.

“I was saying nothing, Captain.”

“Then, sir, if you will permit me, I wish you good night.”

With that, he turned and left the saloon.

I went back to my room deeply troubled, as you may imagine. I tried in vain to sleep. I kept searching for the connection between the diver I had seen and the chest full of gold. Before long, I felt from the pitching and rolling that the Nautilus was rising from the depths and returning to the surface.

Then I heard footsteps on the platform, and I knew they were unfastening the pinnace and lowering it onto the waves. For a moment it struck against the side of the Nautilus, and then all was silent.

Two hours later, the same sounds and the same coming and going began again. The boat was hoisted back on board, set into its place, and the Nautilus once more plunged beneath the waves.

So those millions had been delivered to their destination. But to what part of the continent? And who was Captain Nemo's contact there?

The next day, I told Conseil and the Canadian about the events of the night, which had stirred my curiosity more than ever. My companions were just as astonished as I was.

"But where does he send his millions?" asked Ned Land.

There was no possible answer to that question. After breakfast, I went back to the saloon and got to work. I spent the day arranging my notes until five o'clock in the evening. Around that time—perhaps because of some personal sensitivity—I began to feel such intense heat that I had to take off my coat. It was strange, because we were in low latitudes, and even so, the

Nautilus, submerged as it was, should not have been affected by any change in air temperature. I looked at the manometer. It showed a depth of sixty feet, where atmospheric heat could never reach.

I kept working, but the temperature rose until it became unbearable.

“Could there be a fire on board?” I wondered.

I was about to leave the saloon when Captain Nemo came in. He walked over to the thermometer, checked it, and then turned to me and said:

“Forty-two degrees.”

“I’ve noticed it, Captain,” I replied. “And if it gets much hotter, we won’t be able to stand it.”

“Oh, sir, it will not get any hotter unless we want it to.”

“Then you can lower it whenever you like?”

“No. But I can move farther away from the furnace that is causing it.”

“Then it’s outside!”

“Certainly. We are floating in a current of boiling water.”

“Is that possible!” I cried.

“Look.”

The panels opened, and I saw that the sea was completely white all around us. Sulfurous smoke curled up among the waves, which were boiling like water in a kettle. I put my hand

on one of the glass panes, but the heat was so intense that I pulled it away at once.

“Where are we?” I asked.

“Near the island of Santorin, sir,” the Captain replied. “I wanted to show you the remarkable sight of an underwater eruption.”

“I thought,” I said, “that the formation of these new islands had come to an end.”

“Nothing ever truly ends in the volcanic regions of the sea,” Captain Nemo replied. “The globe is constantly being shaped by underground fires. As early as the nineteenth year of our era, according to Cassiodorus and Pliny, a new island, Theia—the divine—appeared in the very place where these islets have recently formed. Then it sank beneath the waves, only to rise again in the year 69, when it once more disappeared. From that time until our own day, this Plutonian activity was suspended. But on the 3rd of February, 1866, a new island, named George Island, rose out of the sulphurous vapors near Nea Kamenni, and sank again on the 6th of the same month. Seven days later, on the 13th of February, the island of Aphroessa appeared, leaving a canal ten yards wide between itself and Nea Kamenni. I was in these seas when the event took place, and so I was able to observe every stage of it. Aphroessa, which was round in shape, measured 300 feet across and 30 feet high. It was made of black, glassy lava mixed with fragments of feldspar. More recently, on the 10th of March, a smaller island, called Reka, appeared near Nea Kamenni, and since then the three have joined together to form a single island.”

“And the canal we are in at this moment?” I asked.

“Here it is,” Captain Nemo replied, showing me a map of the Archipelago. “You see, I have marked the new islands.”

I went back to the glass. The Nautilus was no longer moving, and the heat was becoming unbearable. The sea, which until then had been white, had turned red because of the iron salts in it. Although the vessel was hermetically sealed, an overpowering smell of sulphur filled the saloon, and the brightness of the electric light was completely blotted out by vivid scarlet flames. I felt as if I were in a bath. I was choking. I was being roasted.

“We cannot stay any longer in this boiling water,” I said to the Captain.

“That would not be wise,” replied the impassive Captain Nemo.

An order was given, and the Nautilus turned away from the blazing waters it could not face without danger. A quarter of an hour later, we were back on the surface, breathing fresh air. Then it occurred to me that if Ned Land had chosen this part of the sea for our escape, we would never have come out of that sea of fire alive.

The next day, February 16, we left the basin between Rhodes and Alexandria, which is estimated to be about 1,500 fathoms deep. Passing some distance from Cerigo, the Nautilus left the Grecian Archipelago after rounding Cape Matapan.

CHAPTER VII THE MEDITERRANEAN IN FORTY-EIGHT HOURS

The Mediterranean—the blue sea above all others, “the great sea” of the Hebrews, “the sea” of the Greeks, the “mare nostrum” of the Romans—is bordered by orange trees, aloes, cacti, and sea pines. It is scented with myrtle, enclosed by rugged mountains, filled with pure, transparent air, and constantly stirred by underground fires. It is a true battlefield where Neptune and Pluto still seem to contest the rule of the world.

“It is on these shores and these waters,” says Michelet, “that man is renewed in one of the most powerful climates on the globe.” But beautiful as it was, I could give only a quick glance to this basin, whose surface area measures two million square yards. Even Captain Nemo’s knowledge was denied to me, for this mysterious man did not appear once during our swift passage. I estimated that the Nautilus traveled about six hundred leagues beneath the sea, and it did so in forty-eight hours. We left the shores of Greece on the morning of February 16 and had crossed the Straits of Gibraltar by sunrise on the 18th.

It was clear to me that Captain Nemo disliked this Mediterranean, enclosed as it was among the lands he wished to avoid. Its waves and breezes brought back too many memories, if not too many regrets. Here he no longer had the same independence or freedom of movement that he enjoyed

on the open seas, and his Nautilus seemed confined between the nearby shores of Africa and Europe.

We were now traveling at twenty-five miles an hour. It is easy to understand why Ned Land, to his great frustration, had to give up his planned escape. He could not launch the pinnace while we were moving at twelve or thirteen yards a second. Leaving the Nautilus under those conditions would have been like jumping from a train at full speed—reckless, to say the least. Besides, our vessel rose to the surface only at night to renew its supply of air; otherwise, it was guided entirely by the compass and the log.

I saw no more of the Mediterranean's interior than a traveler on an express train sees of the countryside rushing past: the distant horizon, not the nearby objects that vanish in a flash.

We were then passing between Sicily and the coast of Tunis. In the narrow stretch between Cape Bon and the Straits of Messina, the seabed rose almost abruptly. There was a true underwater bank there, with no more than nine fathoms of water above it, while on either side the depth reached ninety fathoms.

The Nautilus had to maneuver with great care to avoid striking this underwater barrier.

On the map of the Mediterranean, I showed Conseil where this reef lay.

"If you please, sir," said Conseil, "it is like a real isthmus joining Europe to Africa."

“Yes, my boy, it forms a complete bar across the Straits of Lybia, and Smith’s soundings have proved that in former times the continents between Cape Boco and Cape Furina were joined.”

“I can easily believe it,” said Conseil.

“I will add,” I continued, “that a similar barrier exists between Gibraltar and Ceuta, which in geological times enclosed the entire Mediterranean.”

“What if some volcanic eruption should one day lift these two barriers above the waves?”

“That is not likely, Conseil.”

“Still, please allow me to finish, sir; if such a thing were to happen, it would be troublesome for M. Lesseps, who has taken so much trouble to cut through the isthmus.”

“I agree with you, but I’ll say it again, Conseil: this phenomenon will never happen. The force inside the earth is constantly weakening. Volcanoes, which were so numerous in the world’s earliest days, are gradually going out. The internal heat is fading, and the temperature of the earth’s lower layers drops by a noticeable amount every century, to the harm of our planet, because its heat is its life.”

“But what about the sun?”

“The sun is not enough, Conseil. Can it warm a dead body?”

“Not that I know of.”

“Well, my friend, one day this earth will be that cold corpse. It will become unfit for life and deserted, like the moon, which long ago lost all its vital heat.”

“How many centuries from now?”

“In a few hundred thousand years, my boy.”

“Then,” said Conseil, “we shall have time to finish our journey—if Ned Land does not interfere.”

And, reassured, Conseil went back to studying the bank that the Nautilus was passing at a moderate speed.

During the night of February 16th and 17th, we entered the second Mediterranean basin, whose greatest depth was 1,450 fathoms. Driven by its screw, the Nautilus glided down the sloping seabed and sank into the deepest parts of the sea.

On February 18, at about three in the morning, we reached the entrance to the Strait of Gibraltar. Two currents exist there: an upper one, long known, that carries Atlantic water into the Mediterranean basin, and a lower countercurrent, whose existence reason has now established. In fact, the Mediterranean constantly receives water from Atlantic waves and from the rivers that flow into it. Each year, that added volume would raise the sea’s level, since evaporation alone is not enough to keep things in balance. Because that does not happen, we must accept that an undercurrent exists, carrying the Mediterranean’s excess water back into the Atlantic through the Strait of Gibraltar. This was indeed true, and it was this countercurrent that the Nautilus used to its advantage. It moved quickly through the narrow passage. For a moment I caught

sight of the beautiful ruins of the temple of Hercules, buried in the earth, according to Pliny, along with the low island that supports it. A few minutes later, we were floating on the Atlantic.

CHAPTER VIII VIGO BAY

The Atlantic! A vast expanse of water covering twenty-five million square miles, stretching nine thousand miles in length, with an average width of two thousand seven hundred. Its long, curving shores enclose an immense circuit, fed by the greatest rivers in the world: the St. Lawrence, the Mississippi, the Amazon, the Plata, the Orinoco, the Niger, the Senegal, the Elbe, the Loire, and the Rhine. These rivers bring water from the most civilized lands as well as the most savage. It is a magnificent sea, constantly crossed by ships of every nation and sheltered beneath every nation's flag. And it ends at those two terrible points so feared by sailors: Cape Horn and the Cape of Tempests.

The Nautilus was cutting through the water with its sharp spur, having already traveled nearly ten thousand leagues in three and a half months—a distance greater than the earth's great circle. Where were we going now, and what did the future hold for us? After leaving the Strait of Gibraltar, the Nautilus had gone far out to sea. It then rose again to the surface, and our daily walks on the platform were given back to us.

I climbed up at once with Ned Land and Conseil. About twelve miles away, Cape St. Vincent could be seen faintly, marking the southwestern tip of the Spanish peninsula. A strong south wind was blowing. The sea was high and heaving, and it made the Nautilus rock violently. It was almost impossible to keep your footing on the platform, as the heavy waves swept over it every moment. So, after taking in a few breaths of fresh air, we went back down.



I went back to my room, and Conseil returned to his cabin. But the Canadian followed me, looking troubled and absorbed in thought. Our swift passage across the Mediterranean had given him no chance to carry out his plan, and he could not hide his disappointment. When the door of my room was closed, he sat down and looked at me in silence.

“My friend Ned,” I said, “I understand you. But you have nothing to blame yourself for. Trying to leave the Nautilus under those conditions would have been madness.”

Ned Land did not answer. His tightly pressed lips and dark frown showed how completely this fixed idea had taken hold of his mind.

“Let us think,” I went on. “We need not give up hope yet. We are sailing up the coast of Portugal again. France and England are not far away, and we could easily find refuge there. If the Nautilus, after leaving the Strait of Gibraltar, had turned south and carried us toward regions with no continents, I would share your anxiety. But we know now that Captain Nemo is not avoiding civilized seas, and I believe that in a few days you will be able to act safely.”

Ned Land still stared at me. At last his tightly set lips opened, and he said, “It will be tonight.”

I straightened up at once. I admit I was not at all prepared for what he had just said. I wanted to answer the Canadian, but no words came.

“We agreed to wait for an opportunity,” Ned Land continued, “and now the opportunity has come. Tonight we shall be only a

few miles from the Spanish coast. The sky is cloudy. The wind is strong. You gave me your word, M. Aronnax, and I am counting on you."

When I still said nothing, the Canadian stepped closer to me.

"Tonight, at nine o'clock," he said. "I've warned Conseil. At that time Captain Nemo will be shut up in his room, probably asleep. Neither the engineers nor the crew will see us. Conseil and I will go to the central staircase, and you, M. Aronnax, will stay in the library, just two steps away, waiting for my signal. The oars, the mast, and the sail are in the canoe. I've even managed to get some provisions. I also got an English wrench to loosen the bolts that fasten it to the hull of the Nautilus. So everything is ready for tonight."

"The sea is rough."

"I admit that," the Canadian replied, "but we have to take the risk. Liberty is worth the price. Besides, the boat is strong, and with a fair wind, a few miles is nothing. Who knows? By tomorrow we may be a hundred leagues away. If circumstances favor us, then by ten or eleven o'clock we'll have reached solid ground somewhere, alive or dead. But goodbye for now—until tonight."

With those words, the Canadian left me, almost speechless. I had imagined that once the earlier chance was gone, I would have time to think and talk the matter over. But my stubborn companion had given me no time. And after all, what could I have said to him? Ned Land was absolutely right. We had an opportunity, and we had to seize it. Could I take back my word and make myself responsible for ruining my companions'

future? By tomorrow, Captain Nemo might have carried us far from any land.

At that moment, a fairly loud hissing sound told me that the reservoirs were filling and that the Nautilus was sinking beneath the waves of the Atlantic.

I spent a miserable day torn between my desire to win back my freedom and my reluctance to leave the marvelous Nautilus and abandon my undersea studies unfinished.

What dreadful hours I went through like that. At one moment I pictured myself and my companions safely ashore; at the next, against all reason, I found myself hoping that some unexpected event would prevent Ned Land's plan from being carried out.

Twice I went to the saloon. I wanted to check the compass. I wanted to see whether the course the Nautilus was following was bringing us closer to the coast or carrying us farther away. But no—the Nautilus remained in Portuguese waters.

So I had to play my part and get ready to flee. My luggage was light: only my notes, nothing else.

As for Captain Nemo, I asked myself what he would think of our escape, what trouble or harm it might cause him, and what he might do if he discovered it or if it failed. I certainly had no reason to complain of him; on the contrary, no hospitality could have been more generous than his. By leaving him, I could not be accused of ingratitude. No oath bound us to him. He depended on circumstances, not on our word, to keep us with him forever.

I had not seen the Captain since our visit to the island of Santorin. Would chance bring me into his presence before we left? I wanted that, and feared it at the same time. I listened for the sound of him walking in the room next to mine. I heard nothing. An unbearable uneasiness came over me. This day of waiting seemed endless. The hours struck far too slowly for my impatience.

My dinner was brought to my room as usual. I ate very little; my mind was too occupied. I left the table at seven o'clock. A hundred and twenty minutes still stood between me and the moment when I was to meet Ned Land—I counted every one of them. My agitation grew worse. My pulse pounded. I could not keep still. I paced back and forth, hoping constant movement would calm my troubled mind. The possibility that our bold plan might fail was the least painful of my worries. What made my heart race was the thought that our scheme might be discovered before we left the Nautilus, and that I might be brought before Captain Nemo—angry, or worse, saddened by my desertion.

I wanted to see the saloon one last time. I went downstairs and entered the museum, where I had spent so many useful and pleasant hours. I looked at all its riches and treasures like a man about to go into eternal exile, leaving and never to return.

These wonders of nature, these masterpieces of art, around which my life had centered for so many days—I was about to leave them forever. I would have liked to take one last look through the saloon windows into the waters of the Atlantic. But the panels were tightly closed, and a sheath of steel cut me off

from that ocean I had not yet explored.

As I crossed the saloon, I came near the door set into the corner that led to the Captain's room. To my great surprise, it was slightly open. I instinctively stepped back. If Captain Nemo was inside, he might see me. But hearing nothing, I moved closer. The room was empty. I pushed the door open and stepped inside. It still had the same severe, monastic look.

Suddenly the clock struck eight. The first blow of the hammer on the bell jolted me out of my thoughts. I shuddered, as if an invisible eye had pierced my most secret reflections, and I hurried out of the room.

Then my eyes fell on the compass. We were still heading north. The log showed a moderate speed, and the manometer indicated a depth of about sixty feet.

I went back to my room and dressed warmly: sea boots, an otterskin cap, and a great coat of byssus lined with sealskin. Then I was ready, and I waited. Only the vibration of the screw broke the deep silence on board. I listened intently. Would a sudden shout tell me that Ned Land had been caught in his planned escape? A deadly fear weighed on me, and I tried in vain to recover my usual calm.

A few minutes before nine, I put my ear to the Captain's door. I heard nothing. I left my room and went back to the saloon, which was half in shadow and completely empty.

I opened the door leading to the library. The same dim light, the same emptiness. I took my place near the door that opened onto the central staircase and waited there for Ned Land's signal.

At that moment, the vibration of the screw noticeably weakened, then stopped altogether. Now the only sound in the silence was the beating of my own heart. Suddenly I felt a slight jolt, and I knew that the Nautilus had come to rest on the ocean floor. My anxiety grew. The Canadian's signal did not come. I felt tempted to go to Ned Land and beg him to delay his attempt. I sensed that we were not traveling under our usual conditions.

Just then the door of the large saloon opened, and Captain Nemo appeared. He saw me and, without any further preface, said in a pleasant voice:

"Ah, sir! I have been looking for you. Do you know the history of Spain?"

I might have known my own country's history by heart. But in the state I was in then, with my mind in turmoil and my head completely confused, I could not have said a word about it.

"Well," Captain Nemo went on, "you heard my question. Do you know the history of Spain?"

"Only a little," I answered.

"Then here are educated men who still have something to learn," said the Captain. "Come, sit down, and I will tell you a curious episode from that history. Listen carefully, sir," he added. "This story will interest you in one respect, because it will answer a question you have no doubt been unable to solve."

"I'm listening, Captain," I said, not knowing what my companion was getting at and wondering whether this incident had anything to do with our planned escape.

“Sir, if you do not mind, let us go back to 1702. You cannot be unaware that your king, Louis XIV, believing that a ruler’s mere gesture was enough to bring the Pyrenees under his control, had forced the Spaniards to accept his grandson, the Duke of Anjou. This prince ruled, more or less badly, under the name Philip V, and he faced strong opposition abroad. In fact, the year before, the royal houses of Holland, Austria, and England had made an alliance at The Hague, intending to take the crown of Spain from Philip V and place it on the head of an archduke whom they had already, and too soon, given the title of Charles III.”

“Spain had to resist this coalition, but she was almost entirely without soldiers or sailors. Still, money would not fail her, provided her galleons, loaded with gold and silver from America, could reach her ports. Toward the end of 1702, they were expecting a rich convoy that France was escorting with a fleet of twenty-three ships under Admiral Chateau-Renaud, since the coalition’s ships were already patrolling the Atlantic. This convoy was supposed to go to Cadiz, but when the Admiral learned that an English fleet was cruising in those waters, he decided to head for a French port instead.”

“The Spanish commanders of the convoy objected. They wanted to be taken to a Spanish port, and if not to Cadiz, then into Vigo Bay on the northwest coast of Spain, which was not blockaded.”

“Admiral Chateau-Renaud rashly agreed to this demand, and the galleons entered Vigo Bay.”

“Unfortunately, it left an open passage that could not be defended at all. So they had to unload the galleons before the combined fleet arrived; and they would have had enough time if a wretched dispute over rivalry had not suddenly broken out.”

“Are you following the sequence of events?” Captain Nemo asked.

“Perfectly,” I said, though I still did not know what point this history lesson was meant to lead to.

“I’ll go on. Here is what happened. The merchants of Cadiz held a privilege that gave them the right to receive all merchandise coming from the West Indies. So unloading these ingots at the port of Vigo would have deprived them of that right. They protested in Madrid and obtained the consent of the weak-minded Philip that the convoy, without unloading its cargo, should remain shut up in the roads of Vigo until the enemy had gone.”

“But while that decision was being made, the English ships arrived in Vigo Bay on the 22nd of October, 1702. Admiral Chateau-Renaud, though he had weaker forces, fought bravely. But when he saw that the treasure was about to fall into enemy hands, he burned and scuttled every galleon, and they sank to the bottom with their immense riches.”

Captain Nemo fell silent. I must admit that I still could not see why this story was supposed to interest me.

“Well?” I asked.

“Well, M. Aronnax,” Captain Nemo replied, “we are in that very Vigo Bay; and whether you will explore its mysteries is entirely

up to you."

The Captain stood and told me to follow him. By then I had had time to recover myself. I obeyed. The saloon was dark, but the waves glittered through the transparent glass. I looked.

For half a mile around the Nautilus, the water seemed flooded with electric light. The sandy bottom was clear and bright. Some of the crew, wearing diving suits, were clearing away half-rotted barrels and empty crates from among the blackened wrecks. From those crates and barrels spilled ingots of gold and silver, streams of piastres, and jewels. The sand lay piled with them. Loaded with their precious haul, the men returned to the Nautilus, unloaded their burden, and then went back to this inexhaustible harvest of gold and silver."

Now I understood. This was the site of the battle of October 22, 1702. Right here, the galleons carrying treasure for the Spanish Government had gone down. This was where Captain Nemo came, whenever he needed to, to gather up the millions with which he loaded the Nautilus. For him, and him alone, America had surrendered its precious metals. He was the sole heir to those treasures taken from the Incas and from the peoples conquered by Ferdinand Cortez.

"Did you know, sir," he asked with a smile, "that the sea held such riches?"

"I knew," I replied, "that the money suspended in these waters was estimated at two millions."

"No doubt; but the cost of recovering that money would be greater than the profit. Here, by contrast, I have only to collect

what man has lost—and not only in Vigo Bay, but in a thousand other ports where shipwrecks have occurred, all marked on my submarine map. Do you understand now where the millions I possess come from?"

"I understand, Captain. But allow me to tell you that, in exploring Vigo Bay, you have only got ahead of a rival company."

"And which one?"

"A company that has received permission from the Spanish Government to search for those buried galleons. Its shareholders are driven on by the lure of an enormous reward, for they estimate these rich wrecks at five hundred millions."

"They were worth five hundred millions," Captain Nemo replied, "but they are not anymore."

"Exactly," I said. "And warning those shareholders would be an act of charity. But who can say whether they would take it well? What gamblers usually regret most is not so much the loss of their money as the loss of their foolish hopes. In any case, I pity them less than the thousands of unfortunate people to whom so much wealth, properly distributed, would have been of real benefit, while for these men it will remain forever useless."

I had barely spoken this regret before I realized that it must have hurt Captain Nemo.

"Barren!" he cried passionately. "Do you really think these riches are wasted because I collect them? Do you imagine I go to all this trouble only for myself? Who told you I do not put them to good use? Do you think I do not know that there are suffering people and oppressed nations in this world, unhappy

souls to comfort, victims to avenge? Do you not understand?”

Captain Nemo stopped at those last words, perhaps regretting that he had said so much. But I had understood that whatever reason had driven him to seek freedom beneath the sea, it had not stripped him of his humanity. His heart still responded to human suffering, and his immense generosity was meant for oppressed peoples as well as for individuals. Then I understood who was meant to receive those millions Captain Nemo had sent away while the Nautilus was cruising in the waters of Crete.

CHAPTER IX A VANISHED CONTINENT

The next morning, February 19, I saw the Canadian come into my room. I had expected the visit. He looked deeply disappointed.

“Well, sir?” he said.

“Well, Ned, luck was against us yesterday.”

“Yes; the Captain had to stop at exactly the hour we meant to leave his vessel.”

“Yes, Ned, he had business with his bankers.”

“His bankers!”

“Or rather his bank; I mean the ocean, where his wealth is safer than in the treasuries of any state.”

I then told the Canadian about the events of the previous night, hoping to persuade him not to give up on the Captain. But my story produced only one result: Ned strongly regretted that he had not been able to take a walk over the battlefield of Vigo on his own.

“Still,” he said, “it is not all over. It is only one lost cast of the harpoon. Next time we must succeed; and tonight, if necessary—”

“Which way is the Nautilus going?” I asked.

“I do not know,” Ned replied.



“Well, at noon we shall find out.”

The Canadian went back to Conseil. As soon as I was dressed, I went into the saloon. The compass gave little comfort. The Nautilus was heading south-southwest. We were turning away from Europe.

I waited impatiently for the ship’s position to be marked on the chart. At about half past eleven, the reservoirs were emptied, and our vessel rose to the surface of the ocean. I hurried to the platform. Ned Land was already there. There was no land in sight anymore—nothing but a vast expanse of sea. A few sails showed on the horizon, no doubt ships bound for San Roque, looking for favorable winds to round the Cape of Good Hope. The sky was overcast. A gale was building. Ned was beside himself and kept trying to see through the cloudy horizon. He still hoped that beyond all that fog lay the land he longed for so desperately.

At noon, the sun appeared for a moment. The second officer used that brief light to take its altitude. Then, as the sea grew rougher, we descended again and the hatch was closed.

An hour later, when I checked the chart, I saw that the Nautilus was marked at 16° 17′ longitude and 33° 22′ latitude, 150 leagues from the nearest coast. Escape was impossible, and you can imagine the Canadian’s fury when I told him where we were.

As for me, I was not especially sorry. I felt relieved of the burden that had been weighing on me, and I was able to return to my usual work with some calm.

That night, at about eleven o'clock, Captain Nemo paid me a most unexpected visit. Very courteously, he asked whether I felt tired from keeping watch the night before. I told him I did not.

"Then, M. Aronnax, I have a curious excursion to propose."

"An excursion, Captain?"

"So far, you have only visited the depths of the sea by daylight, under the sun's brightness. Would you like to see them in the darkness of night?"

"Very gladly."

"I should warn you, the journey will be tiring. We will have a long walk, and we must climb a mountain. The roads are not in very good condition."

"Captain, what you say only makes me more curious. I am ready to follow you."

"Then come, sir. We will put on our diving suits."

When we reached the dressing room, I saw that neither my two companions nor any of the crew would be joining us on this expedition. Captain Nemo had not even suggested that I bring Ned or Conseil with me.

A few moments later, we had put on our diving suits. They strapped air tanks, filled to capacity, onto our backs, but they prepared no electric lamps. I pointed this out to the Captain.

"We won't need them," he replied.

I thought I must have misheard him, but I had no chance to repeat my remark, because the Captain's head had already

disappeared into its metal helmet. I finished getting my gear on. I felt someone place an iron-tipped staff in my hand, and a few minutes later, after the usual procedures, we stepped onto the floor of the Atlantic at a depth of 150 fathoms. It was nearly midnight. The water was utterly dark, but Captain Nemo pointed to a reddish glow in the distance, a kind of large light shining brightly about two miles from the Nautilus. I could not tell what this fire was, what fed it, or how it could cast light through the mass of water. Still, it did illuminate our path, faintly at least, and I soon grew used to this strange darkness. Then I understood why the Ruhmkorff apparatus was unnecessary in such conditions.

As we moved forward, I heard a sort of pattering above my head. The sound grew stronger, at times becoming a steady downpour, and I soon understood what it was. Rain was falling hard and roughening the surface of the sea. Instinctively, the thought flashed through my mind that I was going to get soaked—by water, in the middle of the water! I could not help laughing at the absurd idea. In fact, inside a heavy diving suit, you no longer feel the water around you. It seems only as if you are in an atmosphere somewhat denser than the air on land. Nothing more.

After walking for half an hour, the ground became rocky. Medusae, microscopic crustaceans, and pennatules cast a faint phosphorescent light over it. I caught sight of stones covered with millions of zoophytes and thick masses of seaweed. My feet often slipped on that sticky carpet of weed, and without my iron-tipped staff I would have fallen more than once. When I turned around, I could still see the pale white lantern of the

Nautilus fading in the distance.

But the rosy glow guiding us grew brighter and lit up the horizon. The presence of this fire beneath the water baffled me completely. Was I approaching some natural phenomenon still unknown to the scientists of the world? Or even—for the thought did cross my mind—had human hands somehow caused this blaze? Had someone fed these flames? Was I about to meet companions and friends of Captain Nemo, people he was going to visit, who, like him, lived this strange life? Would I find, down in these depths, a whole colony of exiles who, tired of the miseries of life on land, had sought and found freedom in the deep ocean? All these wild and irrational ideas crowded my mind. In this state—overexcited by the endless wonders unfolding before my eyes—I would hardly have been surprised to find, at the bottom of the sea, one of those underwater cities Captain Nemo dreamed of.

Our path grew brighter and brighter. The white glow streamed in rays from the top of a mountain about 800 feet high. But what I saw was only a reflection, made vivid by the clarity of the water. The source of this unexplained light was a fire on the far side of the mountain.

Through the middle of this rocky maze, which furrowed the floor of the Atlantic, Captain Nemo moved forward without hesitation. He knew this bleak route well. No doubt he had traveled it often and had no fear of losing his way. I followed him with complete confidence. He seemed to me like a spirit of the sea, and as he walked ahead of me, I could not help admiring his figure, outlined in black against the glowing

horizon.

It was one in the morning when we reached the lower slopes of the mountain. But to get to them, we first had to make our way through the difficult paths of a vast thicket.

Yes: it was a grove of dead trees, leafless and drained of sap, turned to stone by the action of the water, with gigantic pines rising above them here and there. It looked like a flooded coal pit still standing, clinging by its roots to the broken ground, while its branches, like delicate black paper cutouts, stood out sharply against the watery ceiling. Imagine a forest in the Hartz clinging to a mountainside—but drowned. The paths were choked with seaweed and fucus, and among them crawled a whole world of crustaceans. I moved on, climbing over rocks, stepping across fallen trunks, tearing through the sea bindweed that hung from tree to tree, and startling fish that darted from branch to branch. As I pressed forward, I felt no weariness. I followed my guide, who never seemed to tire. What a sight it was! How can I describe it? How can I convey the look of those woods and rocks in this strange element—their lower parts dark and savage, their upper parts tinted red by a light made twice as vivid by the reflecting power of the water? We climbed rocks that then dropped away in huge plunges, with the low rumble of an avalanche. To the right and left stretched long, dark galleries where the eye was lost. Elsewhere vast clearings opened up, as if shaped by human hands; and more than once I found myself wondering whether some inhabitant of these submarine regions might suddenly appear before me.

But Captain Nemo kept climbing. I could not remain behind, so I followed him without hesitation. My stick was a great help. One misstep would have been dangerous on those narrow paths sloping down toward the sides of the gulfs, yet I walked steadily, without the slightest dizziness. At one moment I leaped across a crevice whose depth would have made me pause if I had met it among mountain glaciers on land; at another I crossed the shaky trunk of a tree thrown from one abyss to another, without looking below my feet, my eyes fixed only on the wild grandeur of the scene around me.

There, massive rocks, balanced on neatly cut bases, seemed to defy every law of equilibrium. From between their stony knees, trees shot up like jets under great pressure, supporting others that in turn supported them. They formed natural towers and vast cliff faces, cut straight down like a curtain, yet leaning at angles that the laws of gravity would never have allowed on land.

Two hours after leaving the Nautilus, we had crossed the tree line, and the mountain’s summit rose a hundred feet above us, casting its shadow across the brilliant glow of the opposite slope. Here and there, petrified shrubs spread out in strange shapes. Fish darted up beneath our feet like birds startled from tall grass. Huge rocks were split by impassable cracks, deep grottoes, and bottomless-looking holes, from whose depths I could hear formidable creatures moving. My blood ran cold whenever I saw enormous antennae blocking my path, or some dreadful claw snapping shut in the darkness of a hollow. Millions of glowing points shone through the gloom. They were the eyes of giant crustaceans crouching in their dens: enormous

lobsters standing like halberdiers and clacking their claws; titanic crabs, jutting out like cannon on their carriages; and hideous poulps, knotting their tentacles together like a living nest of serpents.

We had now reached the first plateau, where new surprises were waiting for me. Before us lay picturesque ruins that clearly showed the work of human hands, not nature's. There were vast piles of stone, among which I could make out the dim, shadowy shapes of castles and temples, covered in a world of flowering zoophytes. And instead of ivy, seaweed and fucus draped them in a thick vegetal mantle. But what was this part of the earth that cataclysms had swallowed? Who had arranged these rocks and stones like the cromlechs of prehistoric times? Where was I? To what place had Captain Nemo's imagination carried me?

I longed to ask him, but I could not. So I stopped him and seized his arm. He only shook his head and pointed to the mountain's highest peak, as if to say:

"Come. Come on. Higher!"

I followed him, and within a few minutes I had climbed to the summit, where a circle of rock about ten yards wide overlooked the whole mass below.

I looked down the slope we had just climbed. The mountain rose no more than seven or eight hundred feet above the plain, but on the opposite side it dropped to twice that height into the depths of this part of the Atlantic. My eyes swept across a vast area lit by a fierce glare. The mountain was, in fact, a volcano.

Fifty feet above the summit, amid a shower of stones and scoria, a great crater was pouring out torrents of lava that fell in a fiery cascade into the heart of the molten mass below. In that position, the volcano lit up the plain beneath it like an enormous torch, all the way to the farthest edge of the horizon. I said that the submarine crater hurled up lava, but not flames. Flames need the oxygen in the air to feed them, and they cannot form underwater. But streams of lava carry within themselves the source of their own glow, so they can reach a white heat, struggle fiercely against the surrounding water, and turn it to vapor on contact.

Swift currents carried all these diffused gases, while torrents of lava slid down the mountain to its base, like an eruption of Vesuvius on another Terra del Greco.

There before my eyes lay a ruined, shattered town—its roofs open to the sky, its temples collapsed, its arches broken apart, its columns strewn across the ground, still showing the solid character of Tuscan architecture. Beyond it stood the remains of a gigantic aqueduct. Here rose the high foundation of an Acropolis, with the faint outline of a Parthenon above it. There were traces of a quay, as though an ancient port had once met the edge of the ocean and vanished along with its merchant ships and war galleys. Farther on, long lines of sunken walls and broad, empty streets appeared—a true Pompeii preserved beneath the waters. This was the spectacle Captain Nemo had set before me!

Where was I? Where was I? I had to know, whatever the cost. I tried to speak, but Captain Nemo stopped me with a gesture.

Then he picked up a piece of chalk-stone, stepped toward a rock of black basalt, and wrote a single word:

ATLANTIS

What a flash of understanding shot through my mind! Atlantis—the Atlantis of Plato, that continent denied by Origen and Humboldt, who dismissed its disappearance as a legend. And now it was there before my eyes, bearing unmistakable witness to its destruction. This drowned region lay beyond Europe, Asia, and Libya, beyond the Pillars of Hercules, where that powerful people, the Atlantides, had lived, and against whom the earliest wars of the ancient Greeks were fought.

So, by the strangest twist of fate, I found myself walking over the mountains of this continent, touching ruins a thousand generations old, as ancient as the geological ages themselves. I was standing where the companions of the first man had once walked.

While I tried to impress every detail of this magnificent landscape on my memory, Captain Nemo stood perfectly still, as if turned to stone in silent rapture, leaning against a moss-covered rock. Was he dreaming of those generations long vanished? Was he asking them for the secret of human destiny? Was this the place where this strange man came to immerse himself in the past and relive that ancient life—he who wanted no part in the modern one? What would I not have given to know his thoughts, to share them, to understand them! We remained there for an hour, gazing over the vast plains in the glow of the lava, which at times flared with extraordinary brightness. Quick tremors ran through the mountain, caused by

movements deep within it, and profound sounds, carried clearly through the water, echoed with majestic force. At that moment the moon appeared through the mass of waters and cast its pale rays over the buried continent. It was only a glimmer, yet the effect was indescribable. The Captain rose, gave one last look to the immense plain, and then signaled for me to follow him.

We went quickly down the mountain, and once we had passed through the mineral forest, I saw the Nautilus's lantern shining like a star. The Captain headed straight for it, and we were back on board just as the first light of dawn began to whiten the surface of the ocean.

CHAPTER X THE SUBMARINE COAL-MINES

The next day, February 20, I woke very late. The strain of the previous night had kept me asleep until eleven o'clock. I dressed quickly and hurried to find out what course the Nautilus was taking. The instruments showed that it was still heading south, traveling at twenty miles an hour at a depth of fifty fathoms.

The fish species here were not very different from those I had already observed. There were giant rays, five yards long, with enough muscular power to launch themselves above the waves; and sharks of many kinds, including one fifteen feet long, with sharp triangular teeth and such transparency that it was almost invisible in the water.

Among the bony fish, Conseil noticed some nearly three yards long, with a sharp sword projecting from the upper jaw. He also saw other brightly colored creatures, known since Aristotle's time as sea-dragons, which are dangerous to catch because of the spines on their backs.

Around four o'clock, the seabed, which had generally been a thick mud mixed with petrified wood, gradually changed. It became rockier and looked scattered with conglomerate, pieces of basalt, and a dusting of lava. I began to think that a mountainous region was replacing the long plains. Sure enough, after a few maneuvers by the Nautilus, I saw the southern horizon shut off by a high wall that seemed to block every exit. Its summit clearly rose above the level of the ocean. It had to be

a continent, or at least an island—one of the Canaries or the Cape Verde Islands. Since no bearings had yet been taken, perhaps deliberately, I did not know our exact position. In any case, that wall seemed to mark the limits of that Atlantis, of which we had in fact crossed only the smallest part.

I would have stayed much longer at the window, admiring the beauty of sea and sky, but the panels closed. At that moment the Nautilus reached the side of the tall, sheer wall. What it meant to do, I could not guess. I went back to my room. It was no longer moving. I lay down, fully intending to wake after a few hours of sleep, but it was eight o'clock the next morning when I entered the saloon. I looked at the manometer. It showed that the Nautilus was floating on the surface of the ocean. I could also hear footsteps on the platform. I went to the panel. It was open, but instead of the broad daylight I expected, I found myself surrounded by deep darkness. Where were we? Was I mistaken? Was it still night? No—there was not a single star shining, and night does not have that absolute darkness.

The Nautilus was floating near a mountain.

I did not know what to think when a voice beside me said:

"Is that you, Professor?"

"Ah, Captain," I answered, "where are we?"

"Underground, sir."

"Underground!" I cried. "And the Nautilus is still floating?"

"It always floats."

"But I don't understand."

“Wait a few minutes. Our lantern will be lit, and if you prefer bright places, you’ll be pleased.”

I stood on the platform and waited. The darkness was so complete that I could not even see Captain Nemo. But when I looked straight up, I thought I caught a faint, uncertain glow, like twilight filling a circular opening. At that moment the lantern was lit, and its bright beam wiped out the dim light. I shut my dazzled eyes for a moment, then looked again. The Nautilus was motionless, floating beside a mountain that formed a kind of quay. So the lake supporting it was enclosed within a ring of walls, two miles across and six miles around. Its level, as the manometer showed, had to be the same as the sea outside, since there must be some connection between the lake and the ocean. The high walls, slanting inward from their base, rose into a vaulted roof shaped like an enormous upside-down funnel, about five or six hundred yards high. At the top was a circular opening, and through it I had seen that faint gleam of light—clearly daylight.

“Where are we?” I asked.

“In the very heart of an extinct volcano, whose interior was flooded by the sea after some great upheaval of the earth. While you were asleep, Professor, the Nautilus entered this lagoon through a natural canal that opens about ten yards below the surface of the ocean. This is its harbor of refuge—a safe, convenient, and secret one, protected from every gale. Show me, if you can, any harbor on the coasts of your continents or islands that offers such perfect shelter from every storm.”

“Certainly,” I replied, “you are safe here, Captain Nemo. Who could ever reach you in the heart of a volcano? But didn’t I see an opening at the top?”

“Yes—its crater, once filled with lava, vapor, and flames, and now letting in the life-giving air we breathe.”

“But what mountain is this?”

“It belongs to one of the many islands scattered across this sea—nothing more than a sandbank to passing ships, but to us an immense cavern. Chance led me to discover it, and chance served me well.”

“But what use is this refuge, Captain? The Nautilus needs no port.”

“No, sir. But it needs electricity to move, and the means to produce that electricity—sodium to power the cells, coal to obtain the sodium, and a coal mine to provide the coal. And at this very spot, the sea covers whole forests buried in geological ages, now mineralized and turned into coal. To me, they are an inexhaustible mine.”

“So your men work here as miners, Captain?”

“Exactly. These mines stretch beneath the waves like the mines of Newcastle. Here, wearing their diving suits, with pickaxe and shovel in hand, my men extract the coal—coal I do not even need to ask from the mines of the earth. When I burn this fuel to manufacture sodium, the smoke escaping from the mountain’s crater makes it look like a volcano still in activity.”

“And shall we see your men at work?”

“No, not this time at least, for I am in a hurry to continue our submarine tour of the earth. So I must be satisfied with drawing on the reserve of sodium I already have. Loading takes only one day, and then we continue our voyage. So if you wish to explore the cavern and go around the lagoon, you must take advantage of today, M. Aronnax.”

I thanked the Captain and went to find my companions, who had not yet left their cabin. I asked them to come with me without telling them where we were. They climbed onto the platform. Conseil, who was never surprised by anything, seemed to think it perfectly natural to wake beneath a mountain after falling asleep under the waves. But Ned Land cared about only one thing: whether the cavern had any way out. After breakfast, at about ten o’clock, we went down onto the mountain.

“Here we are, on land once again,” said Conseil.

“I would not call this land,” said the Canadian. “Besides, we are not on it, but under it.”

Between the mountain walls and the lake stretched a sandy shore that, at its widest point, was five hundred feet across. You could easily walk all the way around the lake on this ground. But at the base of the steep walls, the terrain turned rocky, scattered with volcanic boulders and huge pumice stones piled in striking heaps. These broken masses, coated like enamel and polished by underground fire, gleamed brilliantly in the light of our electric lantern. Dust of mica rose beneath our feet and drifted through the air like a cloud of sparks. The ground gradually sloped upward, and we soon reached long winding inclines that lifted us little by little. But we had to tread carefully

among these loose masses, held together by no cement at all, while our feet slipped on the glassy crystal, feldspar, and quartz.

Everywhere we looked, the volcanic character of this vast hollow was unmistakable, and I pointed it out to my companions.

"Just imagine," I said, "what this crater must have been like when it was filled with boiling lava, and when the level of that glowing liquid rose to the mouth of the mountain, as if it were metal melting on a hot plate."

"I can imagine it perfectly," said Conseil. "But, sir, can you tell me why the Great Architect stopped His work, and how the furnace came to be replaced by the calm waters of the lake?"

"Most likely, Conseil," I said, "some upheaval beneath the ocean created the very opening that gave the Nautilus a passage. Then the waters of the Atlantic rushed into the heart of the mountain. There must have been a terrible battle between the two elements, a battle that ended with Neptune victorious. But many ages have passed since then, and the submerged volcano is now a peaceful grotto."

"Very well," replied Ned Land. "I accept the explanation, sir. But for our own sake, I only wish the opening you speak of had been made above sea level."

"But, my good Ned," said Conseil, "if the passage had not been under the sea, the Nautilus could never have gone through it."

We kept climbing. The steps grew steeper and narrower. Deep cuts in the rock crossed our path in places, and we had to work

our way around sloping masses. At times we slipped to our knees and had to crawl. But Conseil's agility and the Canadian's strength got us past every obstacle. At about thirty-one feet up, the ground changed, though it did not become any easier to cross. The conglomerate and trachyte gave way to black basalt. One kind spread out in bubble-filled layers; the other formed regular prisms, like a colonnade supporting the curve of the immense vault above us, a magnificent example of natural architecture. Between the basalt blocks ran long streams of lava, cold for ages now and crusted with bituminous streaks. In some places, broad carpets of sulphur lay spread out. A stronger light came down through the upper crater, casting a dim glow over these volcanic hollows, forever buried in the heart of this extinct mountain. But our climb was soon brought to a halt, at a height of about two hundred and fifty feet, by obstacles we could not pass. A complete vaulted arch hung over us, and instead of continuing upward, we had to move in a circle. At this new level, plant life began to contest the ground with the mineral world. Shrubs, and even a few trees, grew out of cracks in the walls. I recognized some euphorbias, with their acrid sap; heliotropes, utterly failing to live up to their name, drooped sadly, their flowers faded in both color and scent. Here and there, a few chrysanthemums grew timidly at the foot of an aloe with long, unhealthy-looking leaves. But between the lava streams I noticed some little violets, still faintly fragrant, and I confess I inhaled their scent with delight. Perfume is the soul of the flower, and the flowers of the sea have no soul.

We had reached the foot of some sturdy dragon trees, whose strong roots had forced the rocks apart, when Ned Land cried

out:

“Ah, sir, a hive! A hive!”

“A hive!” I replied, making a doubtful gesture.

“Yes, a hive,” the Canadian repeated, “and bees are buzzing around it.”

I went closer and had to trust what I was seeing. In a hole drilled into one of the dragon trees, there were several thousand of these remarkable insects, so common throughout the Canary Islands and prized for what they produce. Naturally, the Canadian wanted to collect the honey, and I had no real reason to object. He lit a pile of dry leaves mixed with sulphur with a spark from his flint and began smoking out the bees. The buzzing gradually died away, and at last the hive gave up several pounds of the sweetest honey, which Ned Land packed into his haversack.

"Once I mix this honey with artocarpus paste," he said, "I'll be able to offer you a delicious cake."

"Upon my word," said Conseil, "that will be gingerbread."

"Never mind the gingerbread," I said. "Let us continue our interesting walk."

At every bend in the path, the lake came into view again, stretching out in its full length and width. The lantern lit its calm surface, perfectly still, without the slightest ripple or wave. The Nautilus remained completely motionless. On the platform and along the mountainside, the crew moved about like dark shadows sharply outlined against the glowing air. We were now

circling the highest ridge of the first layers of rock that supported the roof. It was then that I saw bees were not the only animals living inside this volcano. Birds of prey drifted through the shadows or burst from their nests high on the rocks. There were white-breasted sparrow hawks and kestrels, and several large, plump bustards ran down the slopes on their long legs. Anyone can imagine how eagerly the Canadian looked at such tempting game, and how much he regretted not having a gun. Still, he did his best to make up for the lack of bullets with stones. After several failed attempts, he finally managed to wound a magnificent bird. It is no exaggeration to say that he risked his life twenty times before he reached it. But he succeeded, and the bird ended up in his bag beside the honeycombs. We now had to go down toward the shore, because the ridge had become impossible to follow. Above us, the crater opened wide like the mouth of a well. From there we could clearly see the sky, and clouds driven apart by the west wind left behind wisps of mist even on the mountain summit. This was clear proof that they were only moderately high, since the volcano rose no more than eight hundred feet above sea level. Half an hour after the Canadian's latest exploit, we had returned to the inner shore. The plant life there consisted of broad patches of marine crystal, a small umbelliferous plant that is excellent for pickling and is also known as pierce-stone and sea-fennel. Conseil gathered several bundles of it. As for animal life, it was present in the thousands: crustaceans of every kind—lobsters, crabs, spider-crabs, chameleon shrimps—as well as great numbers of shellfish, rockfish, and limpets. Three-quarters of an hour later, we had completed our winding walk and were back on board. The crew had just finished

loading the sodium, and the Nautilus could have departed at once. But Captain Nemo gave no order. Did he want to wait for night and slip out through the submarine passage in secret? Perhaps. In any case, the next day the Nautilus left its harbor and headed out into the Atlantic, keeping a few yards below the waves and well clear of land.

CHAPTER XI THE SARGASSO SEA

That day the Nautilus crossed a remarkable part of the Atlantic Ocean. Everyone knows of the warm-water current called the Gulf Stream. After leaving the Gulf of Florida, it heads toward Spitzbergen. But before it enters the Gulf of Mexico, at about 45° north latitude, the current splits into two branches. The main branch runs toward the coasts of Ireland and Norway. The second turns south near the Azores, then touches the African coast and, tracing a long oval, returns to the Antilles. This second branch—more like a collar than an arm—encircles with its rings of warm water that part of the cold, calm, motionless ocean called the Sargasso Sea, a true lake in the middle of the Atlantic. It takes no less than three years for the great current to make its way around it. This was the region the Nautilus was now exploring: a vast meadow, a dense carpet of seaweed, fucus, and tropical berries, so thick and compact that the hull of a ship could scarcely force its way through it. Captain Nemo, not wanting to tangle his propeller in this mass of vegetation, kept several yards below the surface. The name Sargasso comes from the Spanish word “sargazzo,” which means kelp. This kelp, or berry-plant, forms the main growth of this immense bank. That is why these plants gather in the quiet basin of the Atlantic. The only explanation that can be given, he says, seems to me to come from an experiment familiar to everyone. Put some bits of cork or other floating material into a vase, and set the water in the vase spinning in a circle. The scattered pieces will gather into a group at the center of the surface—that is, at



the point least disturbed. In the case we are considering, the Atlantic is the vase, the Gulf Stream is the circular current, and the Sargasso Sea is the central point where the floating bodies come together.

I agree with Maury, and I had the chance to observe the phenomenon right at its center, where ships rarely reach. Above us drifted every kind of debris, piled up among the brownish plants: tree trunks torn from the Andes or the Rocky Mountains and carried there by the Amazon or the Mississippi; countless wrecks; fragments of keels; and the bottoms of ships, their side planks smashed in and so heavily coated with shells and barnacles that they could never rise to the surface again. One day, time will also prove Maury right in his other belief: that these materials, gathered there over centuries, will be turned to stone by the action of the water and will eventually form inexhaustible coal mines—a precious reserve that far-seeing Nature has prepared for the time when humanity has used up the mines of the continents.

Amid this tangled mass of plants and seaweed, I noticed lovely pink halcyons and actiniae, their long tentacles streaming behind them, as well as medusae in green, red, and blue.

All day on February 22, we traveled through the Sargasso Sea, where fish that feed on sea plants find food in abundance. The next day, the ocean had returned to its usual appearance. For the next nineteen days, from February 23 to March 12, the Nautilus stayed in the middle of the Atlantic, carrying us steadily at a speed of a hundred leagues every twenty-four hours. Captain Nemo clearly meant to carry out his underwater plan,

and I supposed that, after rounding Cape Horn, he intended to return to the Australian waters of the Pacific. Ned Land had good reason to be afraid. In those vast seas, with no islands anywhere, we had no chance to try to leave the vessel. Nor did we have any way to resist Captain Nemo's will. The only thing left was to submit. Still, I hoped that what we could not win by force or cunning, we might gain through persuasion. When this voyage was over, might he not agree to give us back our freedom, if we swore never to reveal his existence? It would be an oath of honor, and we would have kept it faithfully. But we would have to raise that delicate question with the Captain. And was I even free to ask for that liberty? Had he not said from the very beginning, in the clearest terms, that the secret of his life required our permanent imprisonment aboard the Nautilus? And would not my four months of silence seem to him like silent acceptance of our situation? If I brought up the subject again, might it not awaken suspicions that could harm our plans, if some favorable chance to act should arise later?

During the nineteen days mentioned above, nothing happened to mark our voyage. I saw little of the Captain; he was busy with his work. In the library, I often found his books lying open, especially those on natural history. My own work on the depths of the sea, which he had carefully studied, was covered with notes in the margins, often challenging my theories and conclusions. But the Captain was content to correct my work in this way; he very rarely discussed it with me directly. At times I heard the mournful sound of his organ, but only at night, in the deepest darkness, when the Nautilus slept upon the empty ocean. During this part of our journey, we spent entire days on

the surface of the sea. The ocean seemed deserted. A few sailing ships, bound for India, were heading toward the Cape of Good Hope. One day, a whaler's boats pursued us, no doubt mistaking us for some enormous and valuable whale. But Captain Nemo did not want the good men to waste their time and effort, so he ended the chase by diving beneath the water. Our voyage continued in this way until the 13th of March. On that day, the Nautilus was occupied in taking soundings, which interested me greatly. By then we had traveled about 13,000 leagues since leaving the open waters of the Pacific. Our position was 45° 37′ south latitude and 37° 53′ west longitude. It was the same region where Captain Denham of the Herald had sounded to 7,000 fathoms without reaching the bottom. There too Lieutenant Parker, of the American frigate Congress, had failed to touch bottom even with 15,140 fathoms. Captain Nemo meant to reach the ocean floor by descending diagonally, using lateral planes set at an angle of 45° to the Nautilus's waterline. Then the screw began to turn at full speed, its four blades striking the water with indescribable force. Under that tremendous pressure, the hull of the Nautilus trembled like a vibrating string and sank steadily beneath the sea.

At 7,000 fathoms, I saw dark peaks rising out of the water. But those summits might have belonged to mountains as high as the Himalayas or Mont Blanc, or even higher, and the depth of the abyss still could not be measured. The Nautilus kept descending despite the enormous pressure. I felt its steel plates shudder at the bolts. Its bars bent, its partitions groaned, and the saloon windows seemed to bow inward under the weight of the sea. This strong vessel would surely have given way if, as

its Captain had said, it had not been built to resist pressure like a solid block. We reached a depth of 16,000 yards, or four leagues, and at that point the sides of the Nautilus were bearing a pressure of 1,600 atmospheres—that is, 3,200 pounds on every square two-fifths of an inch of its surface.

"What a situation!" I cried. "To pass through these deep regions where no human being has ever set foot! Look, Captain, look at these magnificent rocks, these deserted caves, these deepest chambers of the earth, where life can no longer exist! What unknown wonders are here! Why should we not be able to preserve some memory of them?"

"Would you like to take away more than a memory?" said Captain Nemo.

"What do you mean by that?"

"I mean that nothing could be easier than taking a photograph of this underwater region."

I had no time to express my surprise at this new suggestion, because at Captain Nemo's call, a camera lens was brought into the saloon. Through the wide-open panel, the water outside shone with electric light, spread so evenly that there was not a shadow or any variation in tone in our artificial illumination. The Nautilus remained perfectly still, its propeller's force checked by the angle of its planes. The instrument was set up on the ocean floor, and within a few seconds we had produced a perfect negative.

But when the operation was finished, Captain Nemo said, "Let us go back up. We must not take too much advantage of our

position or leave the Nautilus under such immense pressure for too long."

"Go back up!" I exclaimed.

"Hold on tight."

I had no time to understand why the Captain had warned me in that way before I was thrown forward onto the carpet. At a signal from him, the screw was engaged and its blades were raised vertically. The Nautilus shot up into the air like a balloon, rising with breathtaking speed and slicing through the mass of water with a loud, rushing turbulence. Nothing could be seen, and in four minutes it had crossed the four leagues that separated it from the surface of the ocean. Then, after bursting out like a flying fish, it fell back down, sending the waves leaping to a tremendous height.

CHAPTER XII CACHALOTS AND WHALES

During the nights of the 13th and 14th of March, the Nautilus returned to its southward course. I imagined that, once level with Cape Horn, he would turn west and head across the Pacific, thus completing the voyage around the world. He did nothing of the sort. Instead, he kept going toward the southern regions. Where was he heading? To the pole? It was madness. I began to think that the Captain's boldness justified Ned Land's fears. For some time, the Canadian had said nothing to me about his plans for escape. He had grown less open, almost completely silent. I could see that this prolonged captivity was weighing on him, and I felt the anger burning inside him. Whenever he encountered the Captain, his eyes flashed with restrained fury, and I feared that his natural violence might drive him to some desperate act. That day, the 14th of March, Conseil and Ned came to my room. I asked why they had come.

"Just a simple question for you, sir," replied the Canadian.

"Go on, Ned."

"How many men do you think there are on board the Nautilus?"

"I cannot say, my friend."

"It seems to me that it would not take a large crew to run her."

"Certainly. Under the present conditions, ten men at most should be enough."

"Then why should there be any more?"



“Why?” I replied, looking steadily at Ned Land, whose meaning was easy enough to understand. “Because,” I added, “if my guesses are correct, and if I have understood the Captain’s life properly, the Nautilus is not just a vessel. It is also a refuge for those who, like its commander, have broken every tie with the earth.”

“Perhaps,” said Conseil, “but in any case, the Nautilus can only hold a certain number of men. Couldn’t you, sir, estimate the maximum?”

“How, Conseil?”

“By calculation. You know the size of the vessel, sir, and therefore the amount of air it contains. We also know how much each man uses with every breath. We can compare those figures with the fact that the Nautilus has to come to the surface every twenty-four hours.”

Conseil had not finished speaking before I understood what he meant.

“I see,” I said; “but that calculation, simple as it is, can only give a very uncertain result.”

“Never mind,” said Ned Land impatiently.

“Here it is, then,” I said. “In one hour, each man uses the oxygen contained in twenty gallons of air; in twenty-four hours, that comes to 480 gallons. So we must find out how many times 480 gallons of air the Nautilus contains.”

“Exactly,” said Conseil.

“Or,” I went on, “since the Nautilus is 1,500 tons, and one ton holds 200 gallons, it contains 300,000 gallons of air. Divide that by 480, and you get 625. That means, strictly speaking, that the air inside the Nautilus would be enough for 625 men for twenty-four hours.”

“Six hundred and twenty-five!” Ned repeated.

“But remember, all of us together—passengers, sailors, and officers included—would not make up a tenth of that number.”

“Still far too many for three men,” Conseil murmured.

The Canadian shook his head, ran a hand across his forehead, and left the room without a word.

“Will you allow me to make one observation, sir?” said Conseil. “Poor Ned longs for everything he cannot have. His past life is always with him; he misses everything that is denied to us. His mind is full of old memories, and we must understand him. What does he have to do here? Nothing. He is not a scholar like you, sir, and he does not share our taste for the beauties of the sea. He would risk everything for the chance to sit once more in a tavern in his own country.”

The monotony on board must have seemed unbearable to the Canadian, used as he was to a life of freedom and action. Very little ever happened to stir him. But that day something did occur, and it brought back the harpooner’s better days. At about eleven in the morning, while we were on the surface of the ocean, the Nautilus came upon a group of whales. That did not surprise me, since I knew these creatures, hunted almost to extinction, had taken refuge in the high latitudes.

We were sitting on the platform, and the sea was calm. In those latitudes, October gave us some beautiful autumn days. It was the Canadian—there was no mistaking him—who first pointed out a whale on the eastern horizon. If you looked closely, you could see its black back rising and falling with the waves, five miles from the Nautilus.

"Ah!" cried Ned Land. "If I were aboard a whaler, a sight like that would delight me. It's a big one. Look how powerfully its blowholes send up columns of air and steam! Blast it, why must I be shut in by these steel plates?"

"What, Ned," I said, "you haven't given up your old ideas about whaling?"

"Can a whaler ever forget his old trade, sir? Can he ever grow tired of the thrill of such a chase?"

"You've never hunted in these seas, Ned?"

"Never, sir—only in the northern seas, in Behring as well as in Davis Strait."

"Then the southern whale is still unknown to you. Up to now, it is the Greenland whale you have hunted, and that creature would never risk passing through the warm waters of the equator. Different kinds of whales are confined to certain seas, which they never leave. And if one of these creatures traveled from Behring to Davis Strait, it could only be because there is a passage from one sea to the other, either along the American side or the Asiatic."

"In that case, since I've never hunted in these seas, I don't know what kind of whale lives here!"

“I’ve already told you, Ned.”

“All the more reason to make their acquaintance,” said Conseil.

“Look! Look!” cried the Canadian. “They’re coming closer. They torment me—they know I can’t get at them!”

Ned stamped his feet. His hand shook as he gripped an imaginary harpoon.

“Are these whales as large as the ones in the northern seas?” he asked.

“Almost as large, Ned.”

“Because I’ve seen huge whales, sir—whales a hundred feet long. I’ve even been told that the ones near Hullamoch and Umgallick, in the Aleutian Islands, sometimes reach a hundred and fifty feet.”

“That sounds exaggerated to me. These creatures are only balaeaopterons, with dorsal fins, and like the cachalots, they are generally much smaller than the Greenland whale.”

“Ah!” cried the Canadian, his eyes still fixed on the ocean. “They’re coming closer; they’re in the same water as the Nautilus.”

Then he turned back to the conversation and said:

“You called the cachalot a small creature. But I’ve heard of gigantic ones. They’re intelligent cetacea. People say that some of them cover themselves with seaweed and fucus and are mistaken for islands. People camp on them and settle there; they light a fire—”

“And build houses,” said Conseil.

“Yes, joker,” said Ned Land. “And then one fine day the creature dives, taking all the inhabitants down to the bottom of the sea with it.”

“Something like the voyages of Sinbad the Sailor,” I replied with a laugh.

“Ah!” Ned Land suddenly cried. “It isn’t just one whale; there are ten—twenty—it’s a whole troop! And I can’t do a thing! My hands and feet are tied!”

“But, my friend Ned,” said Conseil, “why not ask Captain Nemo for permission to hunt them?”

Conseil had barely finished speaking when Ned Land dropped through the panel to go find the Captain. A few minutes later, the two of them appeared together on the platform.

Captain Nemo watched the troop of cetacea playing on the water about a mile from the Nautilus.

“They are southern whales,” he said. “There goes the fortune of an entire fleet of whalers.”

“Well, sir,” asked the Canadian, “may I go after them, if only to remind myself of my old trade as a harpooner?”

“And for what purpose?” Captain Nemo replied. “Only to kill them? We have no need of whale oil on board.”

“But, sir,” the Canadian went on, “in the Red Sea you let us hunt the dugong.”

“That was to get fresh meat for my crew. Here, it would be killing simply for the sake of killing. I know that is a right man claims for himself, but I do not approve of such a murderous sport. By destroying the southern whale—like the Greenland whale, a harmless creature—your traders are doing something blameworthy, Master Land. They have already emptied all of Baffin’s Bay, and they are wiping out a whole class of useful animals. Leave these unfortunate cetaceans alone. They already have plenty of natural enemies—cachalots, swordfish, and sawfish—without your adding to them.”

The Captain was right. The brutal, thoughtless greed of these fishermen will one day make the last whale in the ocean disappear. Ned Land whistled “Yankee-doodle” through his teeth, shoved his hands into his pockets, and turned his back on us. But Captain Nemo kept watching the group of cetaceans and said to me:

“I was right when I said that whales have enough natural enemies without counting man among them. Those creatures will soon have plenty to do. Do you see, M. Aronnax, about eight miles to leeward, those dark moving spots?”

“Yes, Captain,” I replied.

“Those are cachalots—terrible animals, which I have seen in groups of two or three hundred. As for them, they are cruel and destructive creatures; it would be no wrong to wipe them out.”

At those last words, the Canadian turned quickly around.

“Well, Captain,” he said, “there is still time, for the whales’ sake.”

“There is no need to risk ourselves, Professor. The Nautilus will scatter them. It is armed with a steel spur, and I imagine it is every bit as good as Master Land’s harpoon.”

The Canadian could hardly be bothered even to shrug. Attack cetaceans by striking them with a spur! Who had ever heard of such a thing?

“Wait, M. Aronnax,” said Captain Nemo. “We are going to show you something you have never seen before. We feel no pity for these savage creatures. They are nothing but mouths and teeth.”

Mouth and teeth! Nothing could better describe the macrocephalous cachalot, which sometimes grows to more than seventy-five feet in length. Its huge head makes up a third of its entire body. Unlike the whale, whose upper jaw is armed only with whalebone, the cachalot has twenty-five great tusks, each about eight inches long, cylindrical and pointed at the tip, and weighing two pounds apiece. In the upper part of that enormous head, inside large cavities divided by cartilage, there are six to eight hundred pounds of the valuable oil known as spermaceti. The cachalot is an unpleasant creature, more tadpole than fish, as Fredol describes it. It is badly made; its whole left side is, if one may put it so, a failure, and it can see only with its right eye. But the formidable troop was drawing near. They had spotted the whales and were getting ready to attack. It was easy to see in advance that the cachalots would win, not only because they were better equipped for attack than their harmless opponents, but also because they could stay underwater longer without needing to surface. There was just

enough time to go to the whales' aid. The Nautilus went below the surface. Conseil, Ned Land, and I took our places at the saloon window, while Captain Nemo joined the pilot in his enclosure to use his apparatus as an engine of destruction. Soon I felt the screw begin to beat faster, and our speed increased. The battle between the cachalots and the whales had already begun when the Nautilus arrived. At first, the cachalots showed no fear at the sight of this new monster entering the fight. But they quickly had to defend themselves against its blows. What a battle it was! The Nautilus was like a terrible harpoon wielded by its Captain's hand. It hurled itself into the animals' fleshy bodies, passing clean through them and leaving behind two quivering halves. It felt neither the tremendous blows of their tails against its sides nor the force of the shocks it delivered itself. As soon as it killed one cachalot, it rushed at the next, turning sharply on the spot so as not to miss its prey, moving forward and backward, obeying the helm, diving when the cetacean plunged into deep water, rising with it when it came back to the surface, striking from the front or the side, slashing and tearing in every direction and at every speed, piercing it with its terrible spur. What slaughter! What noise across the surface of the waves! What shrill hissing and furious snorting from those enraged animals! In waters usually so calm, their tails raised actual billows. For an hour this wholesale massacre went on, and the cachalots could not escape it. Several times, groups of ten or twelve tried together to crush the Nautilus with their weight. From the window we could see their enormous mouths lined with tusks and their dreadful eyes. Ned Land could not contain himself; he shouted threats and curses at them. We could feel them clinging to our vessel like

dogs worrying a wild boar in a thicket. But the Nautilus, driving its screw, dragged them here and there, or up toward the upper levels of the ocean, paying no attention to their immense weight or to the powerful strain they put on the vessel. At last the mass of cachalots scattered, the waves grew calm again, and I felt that we were rising to the surface. The panel opened, and we hurried onto the platform. The sea was covered with mangled bodies. Not even a tremendous explosion could have split and torn that mass of flesh more violently. We floated among gigantic bodies, blue on the back and white underneath, covered with huge protuberances. A few terrified cachalots were fleeing toward the horizon. For miles, the waves were stained red, and the Nautilus floated in a sea of blood. Captain Nemo joined us.

“Well, Master Land?” he said.

“Well, sir,” the Canadian replied, his excitement having cooled somewhat. “It is a terrible sight, certainly. But I am not a butcher. I am a hunter, and I call this butchery.”

“It is the slaughter of harmful creatures,” the Captain replied, “and the Nautilus is not a butcher’s knife.”

“I prefer my harpoon,” said the Canadian.

“Each to his own,” the Captain answered, looking steadily at Ned Land.

I feared he might commit some violent act that would lead to tragic consequences. But his anger was diverted by the sight of a whale the Nautilus had just come upon. The creature had not quite escaped the cachalot’s teeth. I recognized it as a southern

whale by its flat head, which is entirely black. Anatomically, it differs from the white whale and the North Cape whale in having seven cervical vertebrae, and it also has two more ribs than its related species. The unfortunate cetacean lay on its side, pierced with bite marks and quite dead. A young whale still hung from its mangled fin, which it had been unable to save from the slaughter. Its open mouth let the water flow in and out with a murmur like waves breaking on the shore. Captain Nemo steered close to the creature's corpse. Two of his men climbed onto its side, and I saw, to my surprise, that they were drawing all the milk from its breasts, amounting to two or three tons. The Captain offered me a cup of the milk, still warm. I could not hide my disgust at the drink, but he assured me that it was excellent and impossible to distinguish from cow's milk. I tasted it and found that he was right. It was a useful supply for us, since made into salted butter or cheese it would provide a pleasant change from our usual food. From that day on, I noticed with growing unease that Ned Land's hostility toward Captain Nemo was increasing, and I resolved to watch the Canadian's movements closely.

CHAPTER XIII THE ICEBERG

The Nautilus was moving steadily south, following the fiftieth meridian at considerable speed. Was Captain Nemo trying to reach the pole? I did not think so, because every attempt to get there had failed up to that time. Besides, the season was already far advanced. In the Antarctic, March 13 corresponds to September 13 in the Northern Hemisphere, the beginning of the equinoctial season. On March 14, at latitude 55°, I saw floating ice—pale fragments twenty to twenty-five feet long, forming banks over which the sea broke in curling waves. The Nautilus stayed on the surface. Ned Land, who had hunted in the Arctic seas, knew icebergs well, but Conseil and I were seeing them with true wonder for the first time. Along the southern horizon, a dazzling white band stretched across the sky. English whalers call it “ice blink.” No matter how thick the clouds are, it can always be seen, and it signals the presence of a pack or bank of ice. Before long, larger masses appeared, their brilliance shifting with the changing fog. Some were streaked with green, as though long wavering lines had been drawn across them in copper sulphate. Others looked like enormous amethysts lit from within. Some threw back the daylight from a thousand crystal faces. Others, glowing with vivid chalk-white reflections, looked like a city built entirely of marble. The farther south we went, the more numerous and imposing these floating islands became.

At 60° latitude, every passage had vanished. But after a careful search, Captain Nemo soon found a narrow opening and boldly steered through it, knowing all the while that it would close

behind him. Guided by his skillful hand, the Nautilus passed through the ice with a precision that completely delighted Conseil: icebergs and mountains, ice-fields and smooth plains that seemed endless, drift ice and floating packs, broken stretches called palchs when they were circular, and streams when they were formed of long bands. The temperature was extremely low. A thermometer exposed to the air showed 2 or 3 degrees below zero, but we were warmly dressed in furs taken from sea-bears and seals. Inside the Nautilus, the steady heat from its electric equipment kept out even the harshest cold. Besides, we would only have had to descend a few yards below the waves to find a milder temperature. Two months earlier, these latitudes would have had constant daylight. But already we were getting three or four hours of night, and before long these circumpolar regions would sink into six months of darkness. On the 15th of March, we were at the latitude of New Shetland and South Orkney. The Captain told me that these islands had once been home to countless tribes of seals. But English and American whalers, driven by a frenzy for destruction, had slaughtered both old and young alike. So where there had once been life and movement, they had left only silence and death.

At about eight o'clock on the morning of March 16, the Nautilus, following the fifty-fifth meridian, crossed the Antarctic Circle. Ice surrounded us on every side and shut in the horizon. But Captain Nemo moved from one opening to another, still pressing farther south. I cannot describe how astonished I was by the beauty of these new regions. The ice took on the most extraordinary shapes. In one place, the formations looked like

an Eastern city, with countless mosques and minarets. In another, they resembled a ruined city cast down by some convulsion of nature. The whole scene changed constantly under the slanting rays of the sun, or disappeared into gray fog amid storms of snow. On every side we heard crashes and thunderous falls, as huge icebergs collapsed and transformed the landscape like a diorama. Often, when I could see no way through, I thought we were trapped for good. But Captain Nemo, guided by instinct at the slightest sign, always found a new passage. He never made a mistake when he noticed the thin streaks of bluish water running along the ice fields, and I had no doubt that he had already ventured into these Antarctic seas before. On March 16, however, the ice fields completely blocked our way. It was not yet the iceberg itself, but vast plains of ice bound together by the cold. Even so, this obstacle could not stop Captain Nemo. He drove straight at it with terrifying force. The Nautilus entered the brittle mass like a wedge and split it apart with dreadful cracking sounds. It was like an ancient battering ram driven by limitless power. Ice shot high into the air and fell around us like hail. By the force of its own momentum, our vessel cut a channel for itself. Sometimes, carried forward by its speed, it rode up onto the ice field and crushed it under its weight. At other times, it buried itself beneath the ice and split it with a simple pitching motion, tearing great rents in it. At this time violent gales struck us, along with thick fogs through which we could see nothing from one end of the platform to the other. The wind blew fiercely from every direction, and the snow hardened into such dense heaps that we had to break it apart with pickaxe blows. The temperature stayed at 5 degrees below zero, and every exposed part of the

Nautilus was coated in ice. A sailing ship would have been hopelessly caught in those blocked passages. Only a vessel without sails, driven by electricity and needing no coal, could dare such high latitudes. At last, on March 18, after many useless attacks, the Nautilus was completely stopped. Before us was no longer a matter of channels, packs, or ice fields, but an endless, immovable barrier formed by mountains of ice fused together.

“An iceberg!” the Canadian said to me.

I knew that for Ned Land, as for every navigator who had gone before us, this was an unavoidable obstacle. When the sun appeared for a moment at noon, Captain Nemo took the best observation he could and fixed our position at 51° 30′ longitude and 67° 39′ south latitude. We had advanced one degree farther into the Antarctic region. Not a trace of open water was left in sight. In front of the Nautilus stretched a vast plain of ice, tangled with broken masses. Here and there rose sharp peaks and slender spires two hundred feet high. Farther on lay a steep coast, as if cut with an axe and tinted gray. Huge mirror-like surfaces caught a few rays of sunlight through the fog. Over this desolate landscape hung a harsh silence, broken only now and then by the beating wings of petrels and puffins. Everything was frozen—even sound. The Nautilus was forced to stop in the middle of these ice fields on its daring course. Despite all our efforts, despite the powerful means used to break the ice, the Nautilus remained motionless. Usually, when we can go no farther, we can still turn back. But here retreat was just as impossible as advance, because every passage behind us had closed. If we remained still even for a short time, we risked

being completely trapped. That was exactly what happened around two o'clock in the afternoon, when fresh ice formed along the vessel's sides with astonishing speed. I had to admit that Captain Nemo had gone beyond boldness into recklessness. I was on the platform at that moment. The Captain had been studying our situation for some time when he said to me:

"Well, sir, what do you think of this?"

"I think we are trapped, Captain."

The Nautilus was completely blocked in.

"So, M. Aronnax, you really think the Nautilus cannot free itself?"

"Only with difficulty, Captain, for the season is already too far advanced for you to count on the ice breaking up."

"Ah, sir," said Captain Nemo in an ironic tone, "you are always the same. You see nothing but difficulties and obstacles. I tell you that the Nautilus can not only free itself, but can go farther still."

"Farther south?" I asked, looking at the Captain.

"Yes, sir; it will go to the pole."

"To the pole!" I cried, unable to hide my disbelief.

"Yes," the Captain replied coldly, "to the Antarctic pole—to that unknown point from which every meridian of the globe begins. You know whether I can do as I please with the Nautilus!"

Yes, I knew that. I knew this man was daring, even reckless. But to overcome the obstacles crowding around the South Pole, making it even more unreachable than the North Pole, which the boldest navigators had still not reached—was that not madness, a scheme only a lunatic could have imagined? Then it occurred to me to ask Captain Nemo whether he had already discovered that pole where no human being had ever set foot.

“No, sir,” he replied, “but we will discover it together. Where others have failed, I will not fail. I have never yet taken my Nautilus so far into southern seas; but I repeat, it will go farther still.”

“I can easily believe you, Captain,” I said in a slightly ironic tone. “I believe you! Let us press on! There are no obstacles for us! Let us smash this iceberg! Let us blow it up; and if it resists, let us give the Nautilus wings and fly over it!”

“Over it, sir!” said Captain Nemo quietly. “No—not over it, but under it!”

“Under it!” I exclaimed, as a sudden idea of the Captain’s plan flashed through my mind. I understood: the extraordinary qualities of the Nautilus were about to be used in this superhuman undertaking.

“I see we are beginning to understand each other, sir,” said the Captain with a faint smile. “You are beginning to see that this attempt is possible—I should say, that it will succeed. What is impossible for an ordinary vessel is easy for the Nautilus. If a continent lies before the pole, it must stop at the continent; but if, on the contrary, the pole is surrounded by open sea, it will go all the way to the pole.”

“Certainly,” I said, carried along by the Captain’s reasoning. “If the surface of the sea has frozen into ice, the deeper waters remain free by the Providential law that places the maximum density of ocean water one degree above the freezing point; and, unless I am mistaken, the part of this iceberg above the water is to the part below as one is to four.”

“Almost, sir. For every foot of an iceberg above the sea, there are three below it. So if these mountains of ice rise no more than 300 feet above the surface, they can extend no more than 900 feet beneath it. And what is 900 feet to the Nautilus?”

“Nothing, sir.”

“It could even go deeper, where the sea water keeps a constant temperature, and there withstand without danger the thirty or forty degrees of cold at the surface.”

“Exactly, sir—exactly,” I replied, growing excited.

“The only difficulty,” Captain Nemo continued, “is staying underwater for several days without renewing our supply of air.”

“Is that all? The Nautilus has enormous reservoirs. We can fill them, and they will provide all the oxygen we need.”

“A good thought, M. Aronnax,” the Captain replied with a smile. “But since I do not want you to accuse me of recklessness, I will first lay out all my objections.”

“Do you have any others?”

“Only one. If there is a sea at the South Pole, it may be covered with ice, and as a result we may be unable to reach the

surface."

"True, sir! But have you forgotten that the Nautilus is fitted with a powerful spur? Could we not drive it diagonally into those fields of ice and split them open with the impact?"

"Ah, sir, you are full of ideas today."

"Besides, Captain," I added eagerly, "why should we not find the sea open at the South Pole just as it is at the North? The earth's frozen poles do not coincide, whether in the southern or northern regions. And until the opposite is proved, we may suppose that at those two points of the globe there is either a continent or an ocean free of ice."

"I think so too, M. Aronnax," Captain Nemo replied. "I only want you to notice that after raising so many objections to my plan, you are now overwhelming me with arguments in its favor!"

Preparations for this bold attempt began at once. The Nautilus's powerful pumps forced air into the reservoirs and stored it under high pressure. At about four o'clock, Captain Nemo announced that the platform panels would be closed. I took one last look at the huge iceberg we were about to pass beneath. The weather was clear, and the air was pure enough, though the cold was intense at 12° below zero. Still, because the wind had died down, it was not as unbearable as it might have been. About ten men climbed onto the sides of the Nautilus, carrying pickaxes to break the ice around the vessel, and it was soon freed. The work went quickly, since the new ice was still very thin. We all went below. The usual reservoirs were filled with the newly released water, and the Nautilus soon descended. I took my place with Conseil in the saloon. Through the open window,

we could see the lower layers of the Southern Ocean. The thermometer rose, and the compass needle shifted on the dial. At about 900 feet, just as Captain Nemo had predicted, we were floating beneath the uneven underside of the iceberg. But the Nautilus went lower still, descending to a depth of four hundred fathoms. At the surface, the water temperature had been twelve degrees; now it was only ten. We had gained two degrees. Needless to say, the heating apparatus kept the temperature inside the Nautilus much higher, and every maneuver was carried out with remarkable precision.

“We shall get through it, if you please, sir,” said Conseil.

“I believe we shall,” I said with firm conviction.

In this open sea, the Nautilus had set a direct course for the pole, staying on the fifty-second meridian the whole way. From 67° 30′ to 90°, there were still twenty-two and a half degrees of latitude to cover—that is, about five hundred leagues. The Nautilus maintained an average speed of twenty-six miles an hour, the speed of an express train. If it kept that pace, we would reach the pole in forty hours.

For part of the night, the strangeness of our situation kept us at the window. The sea was illuminated by the electric lantern, but it was empty. Fish did not linger in these confined waters; they only passed through them on their way from the Antarctic Ocean to the open polar sea. We were moving quickly, and we could feel it in the trembling of the long steel hull. Around two in the morning, I got a few hours of rest, and Conseil did the same. As I crossed the central passage, I did not see Captain Nemo. I assumed he was in the pilot house. The next morning, March 19,

I returned to my place in the saloon. The electric log showed that the Nautilus had slowed down. It was rising toward the surface, but cautiously, emptying its ballast tanks very slowly. My heart pounded. Were we about to break through and breathe the open polar air again? No. A shock told me that the Nautilus had struck the underside of the iceberg, which was still very thick, judging by the muffled sound. We had indeed "struck," to use a nautical term, but in the opposite sense, and at a depth of a thousand feet. That meant there were three thousand feet of ice above us, since one thousand feet stood above the waterline. So the iceberg was taller in the middle than at its edges, which was not at all reassuring. Several times that day, the Nautilus tried again, and each time it hit the icy barrier overhead, like a ceiling above us. At times the depth was only 900 yards, with just 200 of those rising above the surface. That made it twice as high as it had been when the Nautilus first went beneath the waves. I carefully recorded the different depths and was thus able to trace a submarine profile of the chain as it extended underwater. That night, our situation had not changed. There was still ice above us, four to five hundred yards thick. It was clearly thinning, but even so, what an enormous mass still lay between us and the surface of the sea. It was now eight o'clock. According to the Nautilus's daily routine, the air should have been renewed four hours earlier. Yet I was not suffering much, although Captain Nemo had still not drawn on his oxygen reserve. I slept badly that night. Hope and fear took turns tormenting me, and I got up several times. The Nautilus kept feeling its way onward. Around three in the morning, I noticed that the lower surface of the iceberg was now only about fifty feet below us. Only a hundred and fifty feet

separated us from the surface of the water. Little by little, the iceberg was becoming an ice field; the mountain was flattening into a plain. My eyes never left the manometer. We were still rising diagonally toward the surface, which glittered under the electric light. The iceberg stretched out above and below us in long, sloping lines. Mile by mile, it was growing thinner. At last, at six in the morning on that memorable day, March 19, the saloon door opened, and Captain Nemo appeared.

“The sea is open!” was all he said.

CHAPTER XIV THE SOUTH POLE

I rushed onto the platform. Yes—the sea lay open before us, broken only by a few scattered pieces of ice and drifting icebergs. It stretched out for a long distance. Birds filled the air, and countless fish swam beneath waters that shifted from deep blue to olive green, depending on the seafloor below. The thermometer read 3° C above zero. Compared with what we had known, it felt almost like spring, enclosed as we were behind this iceberg, whose long mass showed dimly on the northern horizon.

“Are we at the pole?” I asked the Captain, my heart pounding.

“I do not know,” he replied. “At noon I will take our bearings.”

“But will the sun appear through this fog?” I asked, looking up at the lead-colored sky.

“Even the slightest appearance will be enough,” the Captain replied.

About ten miles to the south, a solitary island rose to a height of one hundred and four yards. We headed toward it, but cautiously, since the sea might be filled with shoals. An hour later we reached it, and two hours after that we had gone all the way around it. It measured four or five miles in circumference. A narrow channel separated it from a broad stretch of land—perhaps a continent, since we could not see where it ended. The presence of this land seemed to support Maury’s theory. That brilliant American had pointed out that, between



the South Pole and the sixtieth parallel, the sea is covered with enormous floating masses of ice, unlike anything found in the North Atlantic. From this he concluded that the Antarctic Circle contains large continents, because icebergs cannot form in the open sea, only along coasts. According to his calculations, the mass of ice surrounding the southern pole forms a vast cap with a circumference of at least 2,500 miles. But the Nautilus, wary of running aground, had stopped about three cable-lengths from a shore above which rose a magnificent pile of rocks. The boat was launched. The Captain, two of his men carrying instruments, Conseil, and I got in. It was ten in the morning. I had not seen Ned Land. No doubt the Canadian did not care to acknowledge the presence of the South Pole. A few strokes of the oars brought us to the sand, where we landed. Conseil was about to jump ashore when I held him back.

“Sir,” I said to Captain Nemo, “the honor of being the first to set foot on this land belongs to you.”

“Yes, sir,” the Captain replied, “and if I do not hesitate to step onto this South Pole, it is because no human being has yet left any trace there.”

With those words, he sprang lightly onto the sand. His heart was pounding with emotion. He climbed a sloping rock that led to a small promontory, and there he stood with his arms crossed, silent and motionless, his face alive with eagerness, as if he were taking possession of these southern regions. After five minutes in this rapture, he turned back to us.

“Whenever you wish, sir.”

I went ashore, followed by Conseil, while the two men remained in the boat. For a long stretch, the ground was made up of a reddish sandy stone, like crushed brick, along with scoria, lava flows, and pumice. Its volcanic origin was unmistakable. In some places, thin wisps of smoke gave off a sulphurous smell, showing that the fires below had lost none of their force. Yet when I climbed a steep rise, I could see no volcano anywhere within several miles. We know that in those Antarctic regions James Ross found two craters, Erebus and Terror, in full activity, on the 167th meridian at latitude 77° 32′. The vegetation of this desolate continent seemed extremely limited. A few lichens clung to the black rocks. There were also microscopic plants, primitive diatoms, a kind of cell enclosed between two quartz shells, and long purple and scarlet seaweed held up by small floating bladders, which the breaking waves cast onto the shore. This was the meagre flora of the region. The beach was strewn with shellfish, small mussels, and limpets. I also saw myriads of northern clios, about an inch and a quarter long, enough that a whale could swallow a whole world of them in one mouthful, as well as delicate sea-butterflies that brought life to the waters along the edge of the shore.

On the high banks we saw coral-like shrubs, the kind that, according to James Ross, live in Antarctic seas at depths of more than 1,000 yards. There were also little kingfishers and starfish scattered across the ground. But the air was where life was richest. Thousands of birds of every kind wheeled and darted about, their cries almost deafening us. Others crowded the rocks and watched us pass without any fear, pressing familiarly around our feet. There were penguins—so graceful in

the water, yet so heavy and clumsy on land. They let out harsh cries, a great gathering of them, solemn in their movements but wildly noisy. Albatrosses sailed overhead, with wingspans of at least four and a half yards, rightly called the vultures of the ocean. There were giant petrels, and damiers, a kind of small duck with black-and-white underparts. Then came a whole series of petrels: some whitish, with brown-edged wings; others blue, found only in Antarctic seas; and some so oily that, as I told Conseil, the people of the Faroe Islands needed only to put in a wick before lighting them.

"A little more," said Conseil, "and they would make perfect lamps! After that, we cannot expect Nature to have supplied them with wicks in advance!"

About half a mile farther on, the ground was full of ruffs' nests, a kind of breeding place from which many birds were emerging. Captain Nemo had several hundred of them hunted. Their cry sounded like a donkey's bray. They were about the size of geese, slate-colored on top, white underneath, with a yellow line around their throats. They let themselves be killed with a stone, never even trying to escape. But the fog still did not clear, and by eleven o'clock the sun had still not appeared. Its absence made me uneasy. Without it, no observations were possible. How, then, could we tell whether we had reached the pole? When I rejoined Captain Nemo, I found him leaning against a rock, silently watching the sky. He seemed impatient and annoyed. But what could be done? Bold and powerful as he was, this man could command the sea, but not the sun. Noon came, and the sun did not show itself for a single instant. We could not even guess where it was behind the curtain of fog,

and soon the fog turned to snow.

“Until tomorrow,” said the Captain quietly, and we returned to the Nautilus through the worsening weather.

The snowstorm went on until the next day. It was impossible to stay out on the platform. From the saloon, where I was writing down the events of this journey to the polar continent, I could hear the cries of petrels and albatrosses playing in the middle of the raging storm. The Nautilus did not stay still. It followed the coast, moving another ten miles south through the dim light left by the sun as it skimmed the edge of the horizon. The next day, March 20, the snow had stopped. The cold was slightly sharper, and the thermometer read 2° below zero. The fog was lifting, and I hoped we would be able to make our observations that day. As Captain Nemo had still not appeared, the boat took Conseil and me ashore. The ground was still volcanic in character. Everywhere there were signs of lava, scoriae, and basalt, but I could not see the crater that had thrown them out. Here, as farther below, the continent swarmed with countless birds. But they now shared their dominion with large groups of sea mammals, which watched us with gentle eyes. There were several kinds of seals, some lying on the ground, others on sheets of ice, and many moving in and out of the sea. They did not run from us, having never had any dealings with man, and I estimated that there were enough provisions there for hundreds of ships.

“Sir,” said Conseil, “will you tell me the names of these creatures?”

“They are seals and walruses.”

It was now eight in the morning. We still had four hours before the sun would be in a good position for observation. I led us toward a vast bay carved into the steep granite shore. There, I can truly say, the sheer number of sea mammals covering the land and ice almost hid both from view, and I found myself thinking of old Proteus, the shepherd of mythology who watched over Neptune's immense flocks. There were seals everywhere, more than any other animal, arranged in distinct groups of males and females. The father kept watch over his family, while the mother nursed her young, some of which were already strong enough to take a few steps. When they wanted to move, they did so in little hops, drawing their bodies together and awkwardly using their imperfect fins, which, like those of their cousins the lamantins, form a true forearm. I should add that in the water, which is their natural element, these creatures are wonderfully suited to movement. Their spines are flexible, their skin smooth and close, and their feet webbed; they swim admirably. When resting on land, they strike the most graceful poses. It was this, no doubt, that led the ancients—seeing their gentle, expressive faces, more beautiful than the loveliest look a woman can give, their clear and languid eyes, their charming attitudes, and the poetry of their behavior—to transform them in myth, the male into a triton and the female into a mermaid. I pointed out to Conseil the remarkable development of the lobes of the brain in these interesting cetaceans. No mammal except man possesses so much brain matter. They can also be trained to a certain degree and are easily domesticated. I agree with other naturalists that, if properly taught, they could be extremely useful as fishing dogs. Most of them were asleep on the rocks or the sand. Among these true seals, which have no external

ears and in that respect differ from the otter, whose ears stand out, I noticed several varieties about three yards long, with white coats, bulldog-like heads, teeth in both jaws, four incisors above and four below, and two large canine teeth shaped like a fleur-de-lis. Among them moved sea elephants, a kind of seal with short, flexible trunks. The giants of this species measured twenty feet around and ten and a half yards in length, yet they did not stir as we approached.

“These creatures aren’t dangerous?” asked Conseil.

“No—not unless you attack them. If they have to defend their young, their fury is terrible, and they will often smash fishing boats to pieces.”

“They are perfectly right,” said Conseil.

“I am not saying they are wrong.”

Two miles farther on, we were stopped by the promontory that shelters the bay from the southern winds. Beyond it, we heard loud bellowing, like the sound a herd of ruminants might make.

“Excellent!” said Conseil. “A concert of bulls!”

“No—a concert of walruses.”

“They are fighting!”

“They are either fighting or playing.”

We now began climbing the dark rocks, stumbling unexpectedly and slipping over stones glazed with ice. More than once I fell hard on my hips. Conseil, more cautious or perhaps steadier on his feet, did not stumble. He helped me up and said:

“Sir, if you would be kind enough to take longer steps, you would keep your balance better.”

When I reached the top ridge of the promontory, I saw a vast white plain covered with walruses. They were playing among themselves, and the sounds we had heard were cries of pleasure, not anger.”

As I passed these strange animals, I had plenty of time to study them, because they did not move. Their hides were thick and rough, yellowish with a reddish cast, and their hair was short and sparse. Some of them were four and a quarter yards long. They were calmer and less fearful than their northern relatives, and unlike them, they did not post sentries around the edges of their camp. After looking over this city of walruses, I began to think about going back. It was eleven o’clock, and if Captain Nemo found the conditions suitable for his observations, I wanted to be there when he made them. We followed a narrow path along the top of the steep shore. By half past eleven we had reached the place where we had landed. The boat had come ashore, bringing the Captain. I saw him standing on a block of basalt, his instruments beside him, his eyes fixed on the northern horizon, where the sun was then tracing a long curve. I took my place next to him and waited in silence. Noon came, and once again the sun did not appear. It was disastrous. The observation still had not been made. If it could not be completed the next day, we would have to abandon any hope of fixing our position. It was, in fact, exactly the 20th of March. The next day, the 21st, would be the equinox. The sun would sink below the horizon for six months, and with its disappearance the long polar night would begin. Since the September equinox,

it had risen above the northern horizon, climbing in long spirals until the 21st of December. At that time, the summer solstice in the northern regions, it had begun to descend, and tomorrow it was to cast its last rays on them. I shared my fears and conclusions with Captain Nemo.

“You are right, M. Aronnax,” he said. “If I cannot measure the sun’s altitude tomorrow, I will not be able to do so for six months. But because chance has brought me into these seas on the 21st of March, it will be easy for me to determine my position, if we can see the sun at twelve o’clock.”

“Why, Captain?”

“Because when the sun traces such long curves, it is difficult to measure its height above the horizon exactly, and instruments can produce serious errors.”

“What will you do then?”

“I shall use only my chronometer,” Captain Nemo replied. “If tomorrow, the 21st of March, the sun’s disc, allowing for refraction, is cut exactly by the northern horizon, that will prove that I am at the South Pole.”

“Exactly,” I said. “But that statement is not mathematically accurate, because the equinox does not necessarily begin at noon.”

“Very likely, sir; but the error will not amount to a hundred yards, and we need no greater precision. Until tomorrow, then!”

Captain Nemo went back on board. Conseil and I stayed behind to look over the shore, observing and studying it until five

o’clock. Then I went to bed, though not before calling on the radiant orb for favor, as the Indian does. The next day, March 21, at five in the morning, I climbed onto the platform. I found Captain Nemo there.

“The weather is clearing a little,” he said. “I have some hope. After breakfast, we will go ashore and choose a place for observation.”

Once that was settled, I went to find Ned Land. I wanted to take him with me. But the stubborn Canadian refused, and I could see that his silence and bad temper were growing worse by the day. Under the circumstances, I was not altogether sorry for his stubbornness. There were too many seals on shore, and we ought not to put such a temptation in the path of this impulsive fisherman. After breakfast, we went ashore. During the night, the Nautilus had moved several miles farther up. It lay a full league from the coast, above which rose a sharp peak about five hundred yards high. In the boat with me were Captain Nemo, two crewmen, and the instruments: a chronometer, a telescope, and a barometer. As we crossed, I saw many whales of the three kinds peculiar to the southern seas: the whale, or English “right whale,” which has no dorsal fin; the humpback, with a ridged chest and large whitish fins that, despite the name, do not form wings; and the fin-back, yellowish brown and the liveliest of all the cetaceans. This powerful creature can be heard from far away when it sends high columns of air and vapor into the sky, like whirlwinds of smoke. These different mammals were sporting in groups in the calm waters, and I could see that this basin of the Antarctic Pole also serves as a refuge for cetaceans too closely pursued by hunters. I also

noticed large medusae floating among the reeds.

We landed at nine. The sky was growing brighter, clouds were racing south, and the fog seemed to be lifting from the cold surface of the water. Captain Nemo headed for the peak, which he clearly intended to use as his lookout point. The climb was difficult, over sharp lava and pumice, in air often tainted by the sulfurous smell rising from smoking fissures. Though he was not used to walking on land, the Captain went up the steep slopes with a quickness and ease I had never seen matched, and that any hunter would have envied. It took us two hours to reach the summit, a peak made half of porphyry and half of basalt. From there we looked out over a vast sea that, to the north, drew a clear line against the sky. At our feet stretched fields of dazzling whiteness. Above us was a pale blue sky, free of fog. To the north, the sun's disc looked like a ball of fire, already notched by the edge of the horizon. From the water below, hundreds of liquid jets rose in sheaves. In the distance, the Nautilus lay on the water like a sleeping whale. Behind us, to the south and east, spread an immense land and a chaotic mass of rock and ice whose limits could not be seen. When we reached the top, Captain Nemo carefully noted the barometer's average height, since he would need to account for it in making his observations. At a quarter to twelve, the sun, visible then only through refraction, appeared as a golden disc casting its last rays over this deserted continent and over seas no man had yet crossed. Captain Nemo, equipped with a lens that corrected refraction by means of a mirror, watched the sun sink little by little below the horizon, following a long diagonal line. I held the chronometer. My heart was pounding. If the moment when half

the sun disappeared matched exactly with twelve o'clock on the chronometer, then we were at the Pole itself.

"Twelve!" I cried.

"The South Pole!" Captain Nemo replied gravely, handing me the glass, through which I saw the sun cut into two exactly equal halves by the horizon.

I watched the last rays crown the peak while the shadows slowly climbed its slopes. At that moment, Captain Nemo rested a hand on my shoulder and said:

"I, Captain Nemo, on this 21st day of March, 1868, have reached the South Pole at the ninetieth degree, and I take possession of this part of the globe, equal to one-sixth of the known continents."

"In whose name, Captain?"

"In my own name, sir!"

With those words, Captain Nemo unfurled a black flag marked with a gold "N" divided across its folds. Then he turned toward the sun, whose last rays brushed the sea's horizon, and cried out:

"Farewell, sun! Sink from sight, radiant orb! Rest beneath this open sea, and let a six-month night spread its shadows over my new dominions!"

CHAPTER XV ACCIDENT OR INCIDENT?

The next day, March 22, preparations for departure began at six in the morning. The last traces of twilight were fading into night. The cold was intense, and the constellations shone with extraordinary brilliance. At the zenith glittered the marvelous Southern Cross—the polar bear of the Antarctic regions. The thermometer read 12 degrees below zero, and whenever the wind picked up, it became sharply biting. Flakes of ice were spreading across the open water. The sea looked the same in every direction. Numerous dark patches appeared on the surface, showing that new ice was forming. Clearly, the southern basin, frozen over during the six winter months, was completely inaccessible. What happened to the whales during that time? No doubt they passed beneath the icebergs in search of more navigable seas. As for the seals and morses, used to living in a harsh climate, they stayed on these icy shores. These creatures know instinctively how to break holes in the ice-field and keep them open. They return to these openings to breathe. When the birds, driven away by the cold, migrate north, these sea mammals remain the only masters of the polar continent. Meanwhile, the reservoirs were filling with water, and the Nautilus was slowly descending. At a depth of 1,000 feet it stopped; its screw drove it onward, and it headed straight north at a speed of fifteen miles an hour. By nightfall it was already moving beneath the immense mass of the iceberg. At three in the morning I was awakened by a violent shock. I sat up in bed and listened in the darkness, when I was suddenly thrown into

the middle of the room. After striking something, the Nautilus had rebounded with great force. I felt my way along the partition and climbed the staircase to the saloon, which was lit by its luminous ceiling. The furniture had been overturned. Fortunately, the windows were firmly fixed and had held. The pictures on the starboard side, no longer upright, were pressed flat against the wall, while those on the port side hung at least a foot away from it. The Nautilus lay on its starboard side, completely motionless. I heard footsteps and confused voices, but Captain Nemo did not appear. As I was leaving the saloon, Ned Land and Conseil came in.

“What is the matter?” I asked at once.

“I came to ask you that, sir,” Conseil replied.

“Damn it!” the Canadian exclaimed. “I know perfectly well what’s happened! The Nautilus has run aground, and from the way she’s lying, I don’t think she’ll right herself the way she did the first time in Torres Straits.”

“But,” I asked, “has she at least risen to the surface?”

“We don’t know,” said Conseil.

“That’s easy enough to find out,” I replied. I checked the manometer. To my great surprise, it showed a depth of more than 180 fathoms. “What can that mean?” I cried.

“We’ll have to ask Captain Nemo,” said Conseil.

“But where are we supposed to find him?” said Ned Land.

“Follow me,” I said to my companions.

We left the saloon. No one was in the library. At the central staircase, near the crew's berths, there was no one either. I thought Captain Nemo must be in the pilot's cage. The best thing was to wait. So we all went back to the saloon. For twenty minutes we stayed there, listening for the faintest sound anywhere aboard the Nautilus. Then Captain Nemo came in. He did not seem to notice us. His face, usually so impassive, showed clear signs of unease. In silence, he studied the compass, then the manometer. Then he went to the planisphere and placed his finger on a point in the southern seas. I did not want to interrupt him. But a few minutes later, when he turned toward me, I said, borrowing one of his own expressions from the Torres Straits:

"An incident, Captain?"

"No, sir. An accident this time."

"Serious?"

"Perhaps."

"Is the danger immediate?"

"No."

"*The Nautilus* has run aground?"

"Yes."

"And how did this happen?"

"Because of a whim of nature, not because of human ignorance. No mistake was made in operating the vessel. But we cannot stop the laws of balance from taking effect. We may defy human laws, but we cannot resist the laws of nature."

Captain Nemo had chosen a strange moment for that philosophical remark. In any case, his answer told me very little.

"May I ask, sir, what caused this accident?"

"A huge mass of ice—an entire mountain—has overturned," he replied. "When warmer water eats away at the base of an iceberg, or repeated shocks weaken it, its center of gravity rises and the whole mass flips over. That is what has happened here. As one of these blocks fell, it struck the Nautilus, then slid beneath the hull and lifted it with irresistible force, carrying it into layers where the ice is thinner, and there it now lies on its side."

"But can we not free the Nautilus by emptying its reservoirs, so that it can regain its balance?"

"That is being done now, sir. You can hear the pump at work. Look at the manometer needle. It shows that the Nautilus is rising, but the block of ice is rising with it. Until something stops its upward movement, our situation cannot change."

The Nautilus was still leaning at the same angle to starboard. No doubt it would right itself once the block stopped. But at that moment, who could say whether we might not be horribly crushed between the two glassy surfaces? I thought through all the consequences of our situation. Captain Nemo never took his eyes from the manometer. Since the iceberg had fallen, the Nautilus had risen about a hundred and fifty feet, but it still kept the same angle from the vertical. Suddenly we felt a slight movement in the hull. It was clearly beginning to right itself. Objects hanging in the saloon were noticeably returning to their usual position. The partitions were moving back toward upright.

No one spoke. Our hearts pounding, we watched and felt the vessel straighten. The floorboards became level beneath our feet. Ten minutes passed.

“At last, we are upright again!” I cried.

“Yes,” said Captain Nemo, moving toward the saloon door.

“But are we afloat?” I asked.

“Certainly,” he replied. “The reservoirs are not empty, and once they are, the Nautilus will rise to the surface of the sea.”

We were out in the open sea, but about ten yards from the Nautilus on both sides rose a dazzling wall of ice. The same wall stretched above us and below us. Above, the underside of the iceberg spread over us like a vast ceiling. Below, the overturned mass had gradually slipped down and come to rest against the side walls, which held it in place. The Nautilus was truly trapped inside a perfect tunnel of ice, more than twenty yards wide and filled with still water. We could easily leave it by moving either forward or backward, then pass freely beneath the iceberg several hundred yards deeper down. The glowing ceiling had gone dark, but the saloon still blazed with intense light. It came from the powerful reflection off the glass partition, thrown sharply back by the lantern's beams. I cannot describe the effect of the electric rays on those huge blocks, carved in such fantastic shapes. Every angle, ridge, and facet caught a different light, depending on the veins running through the ice. It looked like a dazzling mine of jewels, especially sapphires, with blue rays crossing the green of emeralds. Here and there were opal tones of extraordinary softness, flowing through bright points like fiery diamonds whose brilliance the eye could

hardly endure. The lantern seemed a hundred times stronger, like a lamp shining through the lens plates of a first-rate lighthouse.

"How beautiful! How beautiful!" cried Conseil.

"Yes," I said, "it is a wonderful sight. Isn't it, Ned?"

"Yes, confound it, yes," answered Ned Land. "It is superb. I am furious that I have to admit it. No one has ever seen anything like it. But this sight may cost us dearly. And, to say it all, I think we are seeing things here that God never meant man to see."

Ned was right. It was too beautiful. Suddenly, a cry from Conseil made me turn around.

"What is it?" I asked.

"Shut your eyes, sir! Don't look, sir!" As he spoke, Conseil covered his eyes with his hands.

"But what is the matter, my boy?"

"I am dazzled—blinded."

My eyes were drawn to the glass, but I couldn’t bear the blaze that seemed to burn them. I understood at once what had happened. The Nautilus had gone to full speed. The soft glow of the ice walls instantly turned into flashes like lightning. The light from those countless diamonds was blinding. It took us some time to steady our dazzled eyes. At last, the shutters were lowered.

“Honestly, I would never have believed it,” said Conseil.

It was five in the morning when we felt a jolt at the bow of the Nautilus. I knew its spur had struck a block of ice. It must have been a mistake in handling, because this underwater tunnel, clogged with ice blocks, was not easy to navigate. I assumed Captain Nemo would change course, either pushing past the obstacles or following the tunnel's twists and turns. In any case, the way ahead could not be completely blocked. But, to my surprise, the Nautilus began moving steadily backward.

"We're going backward?" said Conseil.

"Yes," I replied. "There's no exit at this end of the tunnel."

"And then?"

"Then," I said, "the solution is simple. We have to go back and leave by the southern opening. That's all."

As I said this, I was trying to sound more confident than I felt. But the Nautilus was picking up speed as it moved backward, and with the screw reversed, it carried us along rapidly.

"That will slow us down," said Ned.

"What does a few more hours matter, as long as we get out in the end?"

"Yes," repeated Ned Land, "as long as we do get out in the end!"

For a while I walked back and forth between the saloon and the library. My companions said nothing. Before long I dropped onto an ottoman and picked up a book, letting my eyes pass over the pages without really reading. A quarter of an hour later, Conseil came up to me and said, "Is what you're reading very

interesting, sir?”

“Very interesting!” I replied.

“I should think so, sir. You’re reading your own book.”

“My book?”

And in fact, I was holding the book on the Great Submarine Depths in my hand. I had not even realized it. I closed the book and went back to pacing. Ned and Conseil stood up to leave.

“Stay here, my friends,” I said, stopping them. “Let us remain together until we are out of this trap.”

“As you wish, sir,” Conseil replied.

Several hours passed. I kept glancing at the instruments hanging on the partition. The manometer showed that the Nautilus was holding steady at a depth of more than three hundred yards. The compass still pointed south. The log showed a speed of twenty miles an hour, which was extremely fast in such a confined space. But Captain Nemo knew he could not go too quickly, and that to us, minutes were as precious as ages. At twenty-five minutes past eight, a second shock came, this time from behind. I turned pale. My companions stood close beside me. I grasped Conseil’s hand. Our faces said more than words could. At that moment the Captain entered the saloon. I went up to him.

“Our way south is blocked?” I asked.

“Yes, sir. The iceberg has shifted and sealed every outlet.”

“Then we are trapped?”

“Yes.”

CHAPTER XVI LACK OF AIR

So the Nautilus was surrounded by an unbroken wall of ice, above and below. We were prisoners inside the iceberg. I watched the Captain. His face had returned to its usual calm, unreadable expression.

“Gentlemen,” he said calmly, “in the situation we are in, there are two ways to die.” This baffling man spoke like a mathematics professor giving a lecture to his students. “The first is to be crushed. The second is to suffocate. I am not speaking of the possibility of starving, because the Nautilus’s food supplies will certainly last longer than we shall. So let us calculate our chances.”

“As for suffocation, Captain,” I replied, “we need not fear that, since our reservoirs are full.”

“Quite so; but they will provide only two days’ supply of air. We have already been hidden underwater for thirty-six hours, and the heavy air inside the Nautilus already needs to be renewed. In forty-eight hours, our reserve will be exhausted.”

“Well, Captain, can we get free in less than forty-eight hours?”

“We will at least try, by breaking through the wall around us.”

“On which side?”

“Sound will tell us. I am going to run the Nautilus aground on the lower bank, and my men will attack the iceberg where it is thinnest.”



Captain Nemo went out. Soon I heard a hissing sound and realized that water was flowing into the reservoirs. The Nautilus sank slowly and came to rest on the ice at a depth of 350 yards, the depth to which the lower bank was submerged.

“My friends,” I said, “our situation is serious, but I trust in your courage and strength.”

“Sir,” the Canadian replied, “I am ready to do whatever is needed for everyone’s safety.”

“Good, Ned,” I said, holding out my hand to the Canadian.

“I will add,” he continued, “that I am as skilled with a pickaxe as I am with a harpoon, and if I can be of any use to the Captain, he has only to ask.”

“He will not refuse your help. Come, Ned!”

I led him to the room where the crew of the Nautilus were putting on their cork jackets. I told the Captain about Ned’s plan, and he agreed to it. The Canadian put on his diving suit and was ready as quickly as the others. Once Ned was dressed, I went back to the drawing room, where the glass panels stood open. Stationed beside Conseil, I examined the surrounding layers of ice that held the Nautilus in place. A few moments later, we saw a dozen crewmen step onto the ice bank, with Ned Land easy to recognize by his height. Captain Nemo was with them. Before they began cutting through the wall, he took soundings to make sure they were working in the right direction. Long sounding lines were lowered along the side walls, but after fifteen yards they were stopped again by the solid barrier. There was no point attacking the ceiling-like surface above us, since the

iceberg itself rose more than 400 yards high. Captain Nemo then sounded the lower surface. There, ten yards of ice still separated us from the water; the ice field was that thick. So they had to cut away a section as wide as the Nautilus at the waterline. About 6,000 cubic yards had to be removed to open a passage through which we could descend below the ice field. The work began at once and continued with tireless energy. Instead of digging directly around the Nautilus, which would have been more difficult, Captain Nemo ordered a huge trench to be cut eight yards from the port quarter. Then the men worked at several points around its edge at the same time with their screws. Soon the pickaxes were striking the dense ice hard, and large blocks broke free from the mass. By a curious effect of specific gravity, these blocks, being lighter than water, rose, so to speak, to the roof of the tunnel. As a result, the tunnel grew thicker at the top as it grew thinner at the bottom. But that mattered little, as long as the lower part kept thinning. After two hours of hard labor, Ned Land came back exhausted. He and his companions were replaced by fresh workers, and Conseil and I joined them. The second lieutenant of the Nautilus directed our efforts. The water felt remarkably cold, but I soon warmed up from swinging the pickaxe. I could move freely enough, even under a pressure of thirty atmospheres. When I came back in after two hours of work to eat and rest, I noticed a clear difference between the pure air supplied by the Rouquayrol apparatus and the atmosphere inside the Nautilus, which was already heavy with carbonic acid. The air had not been renewed for forty-eight hours, and its life-giving quality had greatly weakened. Yet after twelve hours, we had managed to remove only a layer of ice one yard thick from the marked

area, which measured about 600 cubic yards. At that rate, if twelve hours produced only this much, it would take five nights and four days to finish the task. Five nights and four days! And the reservoirs held only enough air for two days! “Not to mention,” said Ned, “that even if we get out of this infernal prison, we’ll still be trapped under the iceberg, cut off from any possible contact with the atmosphere.” That was only too true. Who could predict the shortest time our rescue might take? We might suffocate before the Nautilus could reach the surface of the sea again. Was it doomed to perish in this tomb of ice, along with everyone inside it? The situation was dreadful. But everyone had faced the danger squarely, and each man was resolved to do his duty to the end.

As I had expected, during the night another block, a yard square, had been carried away, and the vast hollow had sunk even deeper. But in the morning, when I put on my cork jacket and crossed the slushy mass in a temperature six or seven degrees below zero, I noticed that the side walls were slowly closing in. The pools of water farthest from the trench, which the men’s labor did not warm, were beginning to freeze. Faced with this new and immediate danger, what would become of our chances of survival? And how could we prevent this liquid medium from freezing solid and shattering the Nautilus’s partitions like glass?

I said nothing to my companions about this new danger. What was the use of weakening the resolve they showed in the painful work of escape? But when I went back on board, I told Captain Nemo about this serious complication.

“I know,” he said in that calm tone that could quiet the worst fears. “It is one danger more. But I see no way to avoid it. Our only chance of safety is to move faster than the freezing. We must get ahead of it, that is all.”

“M. Aronnax, we must try some desperate measure, or we shall be sealed into this frozen water as if in cement.”

“Yes, but what can be done?”

“Ah! If only my Nautilus were strong enough to withstand this pressure without being crushed!”

“Well?” I asked, not understanding the Captain’s idea.

“Do you not see,” he replied, “that this freezing of the water may help us? Do you not understand that, as it solidifies, it could split apart the field of ice that imprisons us, just as freezing water can crack the hardest stones? Do you not see that it could become a means of safety instead of destruction?”

“Yes, Captain, perhaps. But no matter how well the Nautilus can resist being crushed, it could not endure such terrible pressure. It would be flattened like an iron plate.”

“I know, sir. That is why we must rely not on nature’s help, but on our own efforts. We must stop this freezing. The side walls will not only be forced together, but there is not even ten feet of water in front of or behind the Nautilus. The freezing is closing in on us from every side.”

“How long will the air in the reservoirs last for us to breathe on board?”

The Captain looked me in the face. “After tomorrow, they’ll be empty!”

A cold sweat broke over me. But should I really have been surprised by his answer? On March 22, the Nautilus was in the open polar sea. We were at 26°. For five days, we had been living on the ship’s reserve supply. And whatever breathable air remained had to be saved for the workers. Even now, as I write, the memory is so vivid that sudden terror grips me, and my lungs seem to empty of air. Meanwhile, Captain Nemo stood in silent thought. Clearly, an idea had come to him, though he seemed at first to dismiss it. At last, he let these words slip out:

“Boiling water!” he muttered.

“Boiling water?” I cried.

“Yes, sir. We are trapped in a relatively confined space. If the pumps kept forcing in jets of boiling water, would that not raise the temperature here and stop the freezing?”

“Let us try it,” I said firmly.

“Let us try it, Professor.”

At that moment, the thermometer outside stood at 7°. Captain Nemo took me to the galleys, where the large distilling machines stood that supplied drinking water by evaporation. They filled them with water, and directed all the electric heat from the piles through the coils immersed in the liquid. Within a few minutes, the water reached 100°. It was then sent to the pumps, while fresh water replaced it as needed. The heat generated by the apparatus was so great that cold water drawn from the sea, after passing only once through the machines,

entered the pump already boiling. The injection began, and three hours later the thermometer outside read 6° below zero. We had gained one degree. Two hours later, the thermometer showed only 4° below zero.

“We shall succeed,” I said to the Captain, after anxiously watching the results of the operation.

“I think,” he replied, “that we shall not be crushed. We no longer need fear suffocation.”

During the night, the temperature of the water rose to 1° below zero. The injections could not raise it any higher. But since seawater freezes only at least at 2° below zero, I felt at least reassured that we were in no immediate danger of it turning solid.

The next day, March 27, six yards of ice had been cleared away, and only twelve feet remained. There were still forty-eight hours of work ahead. The air inside the Nautilus could no longer be refreshed, and that day only made things worse. A crushing heaviness weighed on me. Around three in the afternoon, the feeling became intense. I yawned until my jaws ached. My lungs heaved as they drew in that burning air, which was growing thinner and thinner. A numbness of mind came over me. I was helpless, almost unconscious. Brave Conseil, though suffering in exactly the same way, never left my side. He took my hand and tried to encourage me, and I heard him whisper, "Oh, if only I could stop breathing, so there would be more air left for my master!"

Tears filled my eyes when I heard him say that. Our situation inside was unbearable for everyone, so we put on our cork jackets with eager haste whenever it was our turn to work. The pickaxes rang against the frozen bed of ice. Our arms ached, and the skin was torn from our hands. But what did that exhaustion matter? What did the wounds matter? Living air reached our lungs. We breathed—we breathed!

All this time, no one kept up his voluntary labor longer than the allotted period. As soon as a man finished, he passed the apparatus that kept him alive to one of his gasping companions. Captain Nemo set the example and was the first to submit to this harsh discipline. When his time was up, he gave his apparatus to another man and went back to the stale air on board, calm, steady, and without a word of complaint.

That day, the usual work was completed with extraordinary energy. Only two yards still had to be cut away from the surface. Just two yards separated us from the open sea. But the air reservoirs were almost empty. What little remained had to be saved for the workers; not a single breath could be spared for the Nautilus. When I returned on board, I was half suffocated. What a night it was! I do not know how to describe it. The next day, breathing was painful. Dizziness came with the pounding in my head and left me reeling like a drunken man. My companions showed the same symptoms. Some of the crew had a rattling in their throats.

That day, the sixth of our imprisonment, Captain Nemo saw that the pickaxes were working too slowly and decided to crush the bed of ice that still separated us from the open water. This

man's calm and energy never failed him. He mastered physical suffering through sheer force of will.

On his orders, the vessel was lightened—in other words, its specific gravity was changed so it lifted off the ice bed. Once it was afloat, they towed it until it was positioned over the vast trench cut at water level. Then, after filling the ballast tanks with water, he took the vessel down and enclosed himself in the cavity.

At that moment the entire crew came aboard, and the inner double door was closed. The Nautilus then settled onto the ice bed, which was less than a yard thick and had been pierced in a thousand places by the sounding leads. The valves of the ballast tanks were opened, and a hundred cubic yards of water were admitted, increasing the Nautilus's weight to 1,800 tons. We waited and listened, our hope making us forget our suffering. Our safety depended on this final chance. Despite the buzzing in my head, I soon heard a humming sound beneath the hull of the Nautilus. The ice cracked with a strange noise, like paper tearing, and the Nautilus sank.

"We're free!" Conseil murmured in my ear.

I could not answer him. I grabbed his hand and squeezed it convulsively. Then, all at once, driven down by its terrible excess weight, the Nautilus dropped like a bullet through the water—as if it were falling through a vacuum. At once, all the electric power was directed to the pumps, which soon began forcing the water out of the ballast tanks. After a few minutes, our descent stopped. Soon the manometer showed that we were rising. The propeller, turning at full speed, made the iron

hull tremble to its very bolts and pulled us northward. But if we must go on drifting beneath this iceberg for another day before reaching the open sea, I shall be dead first.

Half sprawled on a divan in the library, I was suffocating. My face had turned purple, my lips were blue, and my senses had shut down. I could neither see nor hear. I had completely lost track of time. My muscles would not respond. I do not know how many hours passed like that, but I was aware of the agony overtaking me. I felt as though I were dying. Suddenly I came back to myself. A few breaths of air reached my lungs. Had we risen to the surface? Were we free of the iceberg? No. Ned and Conseil, my two brave friends, were sacrificing themselves to save me. A little air still remained at the bottom of one apparatus. Instead of using it themselves, they had saved it for me, and while they were suffocating, they gave me life, breath by breath. I tried to push the apparatus away, but they held my hands, and for a few moments I breathed freely. I looked at the clock. It was eleven in the morning. It must have been the 28th of March. The Nautilus was racing along at a terrible speed, forty miles an hour. It was literally tearing through the water. Where was Captain Nemo? Had he perished? Had his companions died with him? At that moment the manometer showed that we were no more than twenty feet from the surface. Only a sheet of ice separated us from the air. Could we break through it? Perhaps. In any case, the Nautilus was about to try. I could feel that it was tilted at an angle, with the stern sinking and the bow rising. The water taken in had upset its balance. Then, driven by its powerful screw, it hurled itself against the ice-field from below like a massive battering ram. It

struck by backing away and then charging forward again, and the ice gradually gave way. At last, with one sudden dash, it shot up onto the ice-field, which cracked beneath its weight. The panel was opened—one might almost say torn away—and pure air poured in abundance through every part of the Nautilus.

CHAPTER XVII FROM CAPE HORN TO THE AMAZON

How I got onto the platform, I have no idea; perhaps the Canadian carried me there. But I was breathing again, drawing in the life-giving sea air. My two companions were almost intoxicated by the fresh air. The other unfortunate men had gone so long without food that they could not safely eat even the simplest nourishment given to them. We, by contrast, had no such need to hold back. We could fill our lungs freely, and it was the breeze, the breeze alone, that gave us this intense delight.

“Ah!” said Conseil. “How wonderful this oxygen is! Master needn’t worry about breathing it. There’s plenty for everyone.”

Ned Land said nothing, but he opened his mouth wide enough to scare a shark. Our strength quickly came back, and when I looked around, I saw that we were alone on the platform. The foreign sailors aboard the Nautilus were satisfied with the air circulating inside; none of them had come out to breathe the open air.

The first words I spoke were words of gratitude to my two companions. During the last hours of that long agony, Ned and Conseil had kept me alive. No amount of thanks could repay such devotion.

“My friends,” I said, “we are bound to one another forever, and I owe you more than I can express.”

“And I intend to make use of that,” the Canadian exclaimed.



“What do you mean?” said Conseil.

“I mean that when I leave this infernal Nautilus, I’ll take you with me.”

“Well,” said Conseil, “after all this, are we heading in the right direction?”

“Yes,” I replied, “because we are traveling in the direction of the sun, and here the sun is in the north.”

“No doubt,” said Ned Land, “but we still have to see whether he means to take the ship into the Pacific or the Atlantic—that is, into busy seas or deserted ones.”

I could not answer that question, and I feared Captain Nemo meant to take us into the vast ocean that washes the coasts of both Asia and America. In that way, he would complete his journey around the underwater world and return to the waters where the Nautilus could move freely. Before long, we had to know the truth about this important matter. The Nautilus was moving at great speed. We soon crossed the polar circle and set our course for Cape Horn. By seven o’clock in the evening on March 31st, we were off the tip of America. At that moment, all our past suffering seemed to vanish. The memory of our imprisonment in the ice faded from our minds. We thought only of what lay ahead. Captain Nemo did not appear again, either in the drawing-room or on the platform. Each day, the point marked on the planisphere by the lieutenant showed me the Nautilus’s exact course. That evening, to my great satisfaction, it was clear that we were heading north again through the Atlantic. The next day, April 1st, when the Nautilus rose to the surface a few minutes before noon, we saw land to the west. It

was Terra del Fuego, so named by the first navigators because of the great quantity of smoke rising from the natives' huts. The coast looked low to me, but high mountains rose in the distance. I thought I even caught sight of Mount Sarmiento, which rises 2,070 yards above sea level and ends in a very sharp peak. According to whether that summit appears clear or misty, it is said to foretell fair or rainy weather. At that moment, it stood out sharply against the sky. The Nautilus then dived again and moved closer to the coast, which was only a few miles away. Through the drawing-room windows, I saw long seaweeds and enormous fuci and varech, such as the open polar sea contains in great abundance, with their smooth, pointed filaments. They were about 300 yards long—true cables, thicker than a man's thumb—and so tough that they are often used as ropes for ships. Another plant, known as velp, with leaves four feet long and rooted in coral formations, hung along the bottom. It provided both shelter and food for countless crustaceans and molluscs, as well as crabs and cuttlefish. There, seals and otters enjoyed magnificent feasts, eating fish flesh with sea-vegetables, in the English manner. The Nautilus sped quickly over this rich and luxuriant ground. Toward evening it came near the Falkland group, whose rugged peaks I recognized the next day. The sea there was of moderate depth. Along the shores, our nets brought in beautiful specimens of seaweed, especially a certain fucus whose roots held the finest mussels in the world. Geese and ducks fell by the dozen onto the platform and were soon carried off to the ship's pantry.

When the last peaks of the Falklands disappeared beyond the horizon, the Nautilus sank to a depth of twenty to twenty-five

yards and followed the American coast. Captain Nemo did not appear. Until the 3rd of April, we stayed along the shores of Patagonia, sometimes beneath the sea and sometimes on the surface. The Nautilus passed beyond the vast estuary formed by the Plata and, on the 4th of April, was fifty-six miles off Uruguay. It was heading north, tracing the long curves of the South American coast. By then, we had traveled 1,600 miles since embarking in the seas of Japan. At about eleven o'clock in the morning, we crossed the Tropic of Capricorn on the thirty-seventh meridian and passed Cape Frio well out at sea. Much to Ned Land's annoyance, Captain Nemo wanted nothing to do with the inhabited coasts of Brazil, so we sped past at a dizzying pace. Not a fish, not even the swiftest bird, could keep up with us, and the natural wonders of these seas escaped our notice.

We kept up this speed for several days, and on the evening of the 9th of April we sighted Cape San Roque, the easternmost point of South America. But then the Nautilus turned again and descended into the deepest part of a submarine valley lying between that cape and Sierra Leone on the African coast. This valley branches off toward the latitude of the Antilles and ends in the north in an enormous depression 9,000 yards deep. There, the ocean's geological basin forms, as far as the Lesser Antilles, a cliff rising sheer for three and a half miles, and at the latitude of the Cape Verde Islands another wall no less immense, enclosing in this way the whole sunken continent of the Atlantic. The floor of this vast valley is scattered with mountains that give these underwater regions a striking beauty. I speak, moreover, from the manuscript charts in the library of

the Nautilus—charts clearly drawn by Captain Nemo himself from his own observations. For two days we explored those deserted, profound waters by means of the vessel's inclined planes. The Nautilus was equipped with long diagonal surfaces that carried it to every depth. But on the 11th of April it suddenly rose, and land came into view at the mouth of the Amazon River, a vast estuary whose outlet is so immense that it freshens the seawater for several leagues.

We crossed the equator. Twenty miles to the west lay the Guianas, a French territory where we could easily have found refuge. But a strong wind was blowing, and the violent waves would not have let a single boat make the attempt. Ned Land clearly understood that, for he said nothing about it. As for me, I did not mention his escape plans, because I had no wish to encourage an attempt that was certain to fail. I passed the time pleasantly with studies that interested me. On April 11th and 12th, the Nautilus stayed on the surface of the sea, and the nets brought in a remarkable catch of zoophytes, fish, and reptiles. Some zoophytes had been taken up in the net chains. Most were beautiful phyctallines of the actinidian family, including, among other species, the phyctalis protexta, found only in that part of the ocean. It had a small cylindrical body marked with vertical lines and dotted with red spots, topped by a splendid crown of tentacles. As for the molluscs, they included several I had already observed: turritellas; olive porphyras, crossed with regular lines and marked with red spots that stood out clearly against their flesh; strange pteroceras, like petrified scorpions; transparent hyaleas; argonauts; cuttlefish, which are excellent eating; and certain kinds of squid that the naturalists of antiquity

placed among the flying fish, and that are used mainly as bait in cod fishing. I also had the chance to study several species of fish found along these shores. Among the cartilaginous kinds were petromyzons-pricka, a sort of eel fifteen inches long, with a greenish head, violet fins, a grey-blue back, a brown belly, and a silvery body scattered with bright spots, with the pupil of the eye ringed in gold. It was a curious creature, carried out to sea by the current of the Amazon, since it normally lives in fresh water. There were also tuberculated rays, with pointed snouts and long, slender tails armed with a long jagged sting; little sharks about a yard long, with grey and whitish skin and several rows of backward-curving teeth, generally known as pantouffles; vespertilios, a kind of red isosceles triangle about half a yard long, whose pectoral fins were joined by fleshy extensions that made them look like bats, while a horny appendage near the nostrils had earned them the name of sea-unicorns; and finally several species of balistae, including the curassavian, whose spots shone with brilliant gold, and the capriscus, clear violet with shifting shades like a pigeon's throat.

I will end this catalogue here. It may be a little dry, but it is very precise. I will close with a series of bony fish that I noticed in passing: apteronotes, with snouts as white as snow and beautifully black bodies marked by a long, loose, fleshy strip; odontognathes, armed with spines; sardines nine inches long, shining with a bright silver glow; a kind of mackerel equipped with two anal fins; blackish centronotes, which are caught by torchlight; long fish, two yards in length, with rich, white, firm flesh that tastes like eel when fresh and like smoked salmon

when dried; labres, half red, with scales only at the base of the dorsal and anal fins; chrysoptera, in which gold and silver shine alongside the colors of ruby and topaz; golden-tailed spares, whose flesh is extremely delicate and whose phosphorescence gives them away in the water; orange-colored spares with long tongues; maigres with golden tail fins; dark thorn-tails; anableps of Surinam; and others.

Even so, I must not let that “and others” keep me from mentioning a fish that Conseil would remember for a long time, and with good reason. One of our nets had brought up a kind of very flat ray which, with its tail cut off, formed a perfect disc and weighed twenty ounces. It was white underneath and red above, with large round dark-blue spots ringed with black. Its skin was very glossy and ended in a two-lobed fin. Once it had been laid out on the platform, it struggled and tried to twist itself over with violent jerks. It fought so hard that one final movement nearly threw it back into the sea. But Conseil, unwilling to let the fish escape, rushed at it and, before I could stop him, grabbed it with both hands. Instantly he was knocked down, with his legs in the air and half his body paralyzed, crying—

“Oh, master, master! Help me!”

It was the first time the poor boy had spoken to me in such a familiar way. The Canadian and I lifted him up and rubbed his stiffened arms until he came to his senses. Poor Conseil had touched a cramp-fish of the most dangerous kind, the cumana. In a conducting medium like water, this strange creature can strike fish from several yards away, so powerful is its electric organ, whose two main surfaces measure no less than

twenty-seven square feet. The next day, April 12th, the Nautilus approached the Dutch coast near the mouth of the Maroni. There, several groups of sea-cows were gathered together. They were manatees, which, like the dugong and the stellera, belong to the order of sirenians. These beautiful animals are gentle and harmless. At eighteen to twenty-one feet long, they weigh at least sixteen hundredweight. I told Ned Land and Conseil that provident nature had given these mammals an important role. Like seals, they are meant to graze on the underwater prairies and so prevent the buildup of weeds that clog the tropical rivers.

"And do you know," I added, "what has happened since men have almost wiped out this useful race? The rotting weeds have poisoned the air, and that poisoned air causes the yellow fever that devastates these beautiful countries. Vast growths spread beneath the tropical seas, and the harm develops irresistibly from the mouth of the Rio de la Plata to Florida. If we are to believe Toussenel, this plague is nothing compared with what it would be if the seas were stripped of whales and seals. Then, overrun with poulps, medusæ, and cuttlefish, they would become immense centers of infection, since their waves would no longer possess 'those vast stomachs with which God had charged the surface of the seas.'"

CHAPTER XVIII THE POULPS

“Well,” I said, “these are exactly the kind of caves poulps would inhabit, and I would not be surprised to see some of those monsters.”

“What!” said Conseil. “Cuttlefish—real cuttlefish of the cephalopod class?”

“No,” I said, “poulps of enormous size.”

“Well, I’ll never believe such creatures exist,” said Ned.

“Well,” said Conseil, with the gravest expression in the world, “I distinctly remember seeing a large vessel dragged beneath the waves by the arm of an octopus.”

“You saw that?” the Canadian said.

“Yes, Ned.”

“With your own eyes?”

“With my own eyes.”

“Where exactly was that?”

“At St. Malo,” Conseil answered.

“In the harbor?” Ned said sarcastically.

“No, in a church,” Conseil replied.

“In a church!” the Canadian cried.

“Yes, my friend Ned. In a painting that showed the poulp in question.”

“Excellent!” said Ned Land, bursting into laughter.

“He is quite right,” I said. “I have heard of that painting. But its subject comes from a legend, and you know how much trust to place in legends when it comes to natural history. Besides, whenever monsters are involved, the imagination tends to go too far. People have claimed not only that these poulps can drag ships under, but also that a certain Olaus Magnus described an octopus a mile long, more like an island than an animal. It is also said that the Bishop of Nidros was building an altar on an enormous rock. When the Mass was over, the rock began to move and went back into the sea. The rock was a poulp. Another bishop, Pontoppidan, also speaks of a poulp large enough for a regiment of cavalry to maneuver on. Finally, the ancient naturalists wrote of monsters with mouths like gulfs, too large to pass through the Straits of Gibraltar.”

“But how much of those stories is true?” Conseil asked.

“Nothing, my friends—or at least nothing that goes beyond the bounds of truth into fable and legend. Still, there must be some real basis behind the storytellers’ inventions. No one can deny that large species of poulps and cuttlefish exist, though they are smaller than the cetaceans. Aristotle gave the size of a cuttlefish as five cubits, or nine feet two inches. Our fishermen often see some more than four feet long. Some poulp skeletons kept in the museums of Trieste and Montpelier measure two yards in length. And according to the calculations of some naturalists, one of these animals, only six feet long, would have tentacles twenty-seven feet long. That would be enough to make it a formidable monster.”

“Do people still fish for them nowadays?” Ned asked.

“Even if sailors do not catch them, they at least see them. One of my friends, Captain Paul Bos of Havre, has often insisted that he encountered one of these enormous monsters in the Indian Ocean. But the most remarkable incident—one that makes it impossible to deny the existence of these gigantic creatures—took place a few years ago, in 1861.”

“What happened?” asked Ned Land.

“Here it is. In 1861, northeast of Teneriffe, almost at the same latitude we are in now, the crew of the dispatch boat Alector spotted a monstrous cuttlefish swimming in the water. Captain Bouguer brought the vessel close to the animal and attacked it with harpoons and guns, but with little success, since the bullets and harpoons slid off its soft flesh. After several failed attempts, the crew tried to slip a noose around the mollusk’s body. The loop slid down as far as the tail fins and stopped there. They then tried to haul it aboard, but it was so heavy that the strain on the rope tore the tail from the body, and, deprived of that appendage, it vanished beneath the water.”

“Really? Did that actually happen?”

“It certainly did, my good Ned. They even proposed naming this poulpe ‘Bouguer’s cuttlefish.’”

“How long was it?” asked the Canadian.

“Wasn’t it about six yards long?” said Conseil, who was standing at the window, once again studying the uneven curves of the cliff.

“Exactly,” I replied.

“And its head,” Conseil went on, “wasn’t it crowned with eight tentacles, beating the water like a nest of serpents?”

“Exactly.”

“And weren’t its eyes, set at the back of its head, unusually large?”

“Yes, Conseil.”

“And wasn’t its mouth shaped like a parrot’s beak?”

“Exactly, Conseil.”

“Very well! No offense to master,” he replied calmly; “if this is not Bouguer’s cuttlefish, it is at least one of its brothers.”

I looked at Conseil. Ned Land rushed to the window.

“What a horrible creature!” he cried.

I looked in my turn and could not hold back a gesture of disgust. Before me was a hideous creature fit for the strangest legends. It was a gigantic cuttlefish, about eight yards long. It swam sideways toward the Nautilus at great speed, watching us with its huge, fixed green eyes. Its eight arms—or rather feet—attached to its head, which is why these animals are called cephalopods, were twice as long as its body and writhed like the hair of the Furies. On the inner side of the tentacles, you could see 250 suckers. The monster’s mouth, a horny beak like a parrot’s, opened and closed vertically. Its tongue, a hard, horn-like substance lined with several rows of sharp teeth, quivered as it thrust out from what looked like a pair of shears. What a bizarre creature of nature: a bird’s beak on a mollusc! Its

spindle-shaped body was a mass of flesh that must have weighed 4,000 to 5,000 pounds. Its color changed with astonishing speed, shifting with the animal's agitation from a deathly gray to reddish brown. What was disturbing this mollusc? No doubt the presence of the Nautilus, more formidable than itself, and one its suckers and jaws could not grip. And yet, what monsters these poulps are! What vitality the Creator has given them, what power in their movements! They even possess three hearts. Chance had brought us face to face with this cuttlefish, and I did not want to miss the chance to study this specimen of the cephalopods closely. I mastered my horror and, taking out a pencil, began to draw it.

"Perhaps this is the same one the Alector saw," said Conseil.

"No," replied the Canadian. "This one is whole, and the other had lost its tail."

"That proves nothing," I replied. "The arms and tails of these animals grow back; and in seven years, Bouguer's cuttlefish has no doubt had time to regrow its tail."

By then, other poulps had appeared at the window. I counted seven. They followed the Nautilus in a kind of procession, and I could hear their beaks grinding against the iron hull. I kept working. These monsters held themselves in the water so exactly that they seemed motionless. Then suddenly the Nautilus stopped. A jolt made every plate in it tremble.

"Have we struck something?" I asked.

"In any case," replied the Canadian, "we should soon be free, since we are floating."

The Nautilus was floating, certainly, but it wasn't moving. A minute passed. Captain Nemo came into the drawing room with his lieutenant behind him. I had not seen him for some time. He looked gloomy. Without noticing us or speaking to us, he went to the panel, studied the poulps, and said something to his lieutenant. The lieutenant went out. A moment later, the panels were closed. The ceiling lights came on. I walked over to the Captain.

"A strange collection of poulps?" I said.

"Yes indeed, Mr. Naturalist," he replied. "And we are going to fight them—man against beast."

I stared at him. I thought I must have heard him wrong.

"Man against beast?" I repeated.

"Yes, sir. The propeller has stopped. I believe the horny jaws of one of the cuttlefish have become tangled in the blades. That is what is keeping us from moving."

"What are you going to do?"

"Go up to the surface and slaughter this vermin."

"That will be a difficult undertaking."

"Yes, certainly. Electric bullets are useless against soft flesh, because they do not meet enough resistance to discharge. So we will attack them with hatchets."

"And with the harpoon, sir," said the Canadian, "if you will allow me to help."

"I will accept it, Master Land."

“We will go with you,” I said, and we followed Captain Nemo toward the central staircase.

There, about ten men stood ready for the attack, each armed with a boarding hatchet. Conseil and I took two hatchets, and Ned Land grabbed a harpoon. By then the Nautilus had risen to the surface. One of the sailors, stationed on the top step of the ladder, unscrewed the bolts of the panels. But the moment the screws were loosened, the panel flew up violently, clearly pulled by the suckers of a poulp’s arm. At once one of those arms slid down through the opening like a serpent, while twenty more writhed above it. With a single blow of his axe, Captain Nemo cut off that terrible tentacle, and it went twisting down the ladder. Just as we were crowding forward to reach the platform, two more arms came lashing through the air, seized the sailor standing in front of Captain Nemo, and lifted him up with irresistible force. Captain Nemo cried out and rushed outside. We hurried after him.

One of those long arms slid through the opening

What a scene! The unfortunate man had been seized by a tentacle and pinned to its suckers, hanging in the air at the whim of that enormous limb. He choked and gasped, then cried out, “Help! help!” Hearing those words in French shocked me. I had a fellow countryman on board—perhaps several. That heartbreaking cry! I will hear it for the rest of my life. The poor man was doomed. Who could free him from such crushing force? Captain Nemo, however, rushed at the poulpe and, with a single blow of his axe, cut through one arm. His lieutenant fought fiercely against the other monsters creeping along the

sides of the Nautilus. The crew struck with their axes. The Canadian, Conseil, and I drove our weapons into the fleshy masses. A strong musky smell filled the air. It was horrible!

For a moment, I thought the unfortunate man, trapped in the poulpe's grip, would be ripped away by its terrible suction. Seven of its eight arms had been cut off. Only one still twisted in the air, waving the victim around like a feather. But just as Captain Nemo and his lieutenant hurled themselves at it, the creature shot out a stream of black liquid. It blinded us. When the cloud cleared, the cuttlefish was gone—and my unfortunate countryman with it. Ten or twelve more poulps now swarmed over the platform and sides of the Nautilus. We tumbled headlong into the middle of that nest of serpents, writhing across the platform in waves of blood and ink. Those slimy tentacles seemed to spring up like the heads of the hydra. With every thrust, Ned Land drove his harpoon into the cuttlefish's staring eyes. But my brave companion was suddenly knocked down by the tentacles of a monster he had not been able to avoid.

Ah, how my heart pounded with horror and emotion! The terrible beak of a cuttlefish gaped open above Ned Land. The unfortunate man was about to be cut in two. I rushed to help him. But Captain Nemo reached him first. His axe vanished between the creature's two enormous jaws, and the Canadian, saved as if by a miracle, sprang up and drove his harpoon deep into the poulpe's triple heart.

"I owed myself that revenge!" the Captain said to the Canadian.

Ned bowed without a word. The fight had lasted fifteen minutes. At last the monsters, beaten and horribly mangled, withdrew and vanished beneath the waves. Captain Nemo, covered in blood and almost exhausted, stared at the sea that had swallowed one of his companions, and tears welled up in his eyes.

CHAPTER XIX THE GULF STREAM

None of us will ever forget that terrible scene of April 20. I wrote it down while still shaken by intense emotion. Since then, I have revised the account and read it to Conseil and the Canadian. They found it accurate in its facts, but lacking in force. To paint such a scene properly, one would need the pen of our greatest poets, the author of The Toilers of the Deep.

I have said that Captain Nemo wept as he watched the waves; his grief was profound. It was the second companion he had lost since we came aboard, and what a death it was. That friend, crushed, suffocated, battered by the dreadful arms of a poulp, torn by its iron jaws, would not lie beside his comrades in the peaceful coral cemetery. In the middle of the struggle, it was the desperate cry of that unfortunate man that pierced my heart. The poor Frenchman, forgetting the language he usually spoke, had turned back to his native tongue to utter one last appeal. Among the crew of the Nautilus, bound body and soul to the Captain and, like him, shrinking from all contact with mankind, I had found a fellow countryman. Was he the only Frenchman in this mysterious company, which was clearly made up of men of many different nationalities? It was one of those insoluble questions that kept rising in my mind.

Captain Nemo went into his room, and for some time I did not see him again. But I could tell he was grieving and uncertain by the state of the vessel, whose very life seemed bound up with his own and which reflected every change in his mood. The



Nautilus no longer held to its steady course. It drifted like a corpse at the mercy of the waves. It moved without direction. He could not pull himself away from the scene of that final struggle, from the sea that had swallowed one of his men. Ten days passed like this. It was not until the 1st of May that the Nautilus resumed its northward course, after coming within sight of the Bahamas at the entrance to the Bahama Canal. We were then following the current that is like the greatest river flowing into the sea, complete with its own banks, its own fish, and its own temperatures. I mean the Gulf Stream. It is truly a river, flowing freely through the middle of the Atlantic, and its waters do not mix with those of the ocean around it. It is a salt river, saltier than the surrounding sea. Its average depth is 1,500 fathoms, and its average width is ten miles. In some places, the current runs at two and a half miles an hour. The mass of its waters is greater than that of all the rivers on earth combined. It was on this river of the ocean that the Nautilus was then sailing.

“Master,” he said to me that day, “this has to end. I must speak plainly. This Nemo is leaving the land behind and heading north. But I tell you, I have had enough of the South Pole, and I will not follow him to the North.”

“What can be done, Ned, if escape is impossible just now?”

“We must speak to the Captain,” he said. “You said nothing when we were in your native seas. I will speak now that we are in mine. When I think that before long the Nautilus will be off Nova Scotia, and that near Newfoundland there is a great bay, and that the St. Lawrence flows into that bay, and that the St. Lawrence is my river, the river by Quebec, my native

town—when I think of that, I go mad. It makes my hair stand on end. Sir, I would rather throw myself into the sea! I will not stay here! I am suffocating!”

The Canadian was clearly running out of patience. His energetic nature could not bear such a long confinement. His face changed from day to day, and his temper grew darker and more sullen. I knew what he must be suffering, because I too was heartsick for home. Nearly seven months had passed without any news from land. Captain Nemo’s isolation, his changed mood, especially since the fight with the poulps, and his silence all made me see our situation differently.

"Well, sir?" said Ned, when he saw that I did not answer.

"Well, Ned, do you want me to ask Captain Nemo what he intends to do with us?"

"Yes, sir."

"Even though he has already told us?"

"Yes. I want it settled once and for all. Speak for me, and in my name alone, if you wish."

"But I hardly ever see him. He avoids me."

"All the more reason for you to go to him."

I went to my room. From there I intended to go to Captain Nemo’s. I could not let this chance to meet him pass. I knocked at the door. There was no answer. I knocked again, then turned the handle. The door opened, and I went in. The Captain was there. Bent over his worktable, he had not heard me. Determined not to leave without speaking to him, I stepped

closer. He quickly raised his head, frowned, and said harshly, "You here! What do you want?"

"I want to speak to you, Captain."

"But I am busy, sir. I am working. I leave you free to shut yourself away; can I not be allowed the same?"

This was not an encouraging welcome, but I was determined to hear whatever he said and answer it.

"Sir," I said coldly, "I need to speak to you about a matter that cannot wait."

"And what is that, sir?" he replied ironically. "Have you discovered something that escaped me, or has the sea given up some new secret?"

We had been talking at cross-purposes. But before I could answer, he showed me an open manuscript on his table and said in a more serious voice, “Here, M. Aronnax, is a manuscript written in several languages. It contains the full result of my studies of the sea, and, if God wills it, it will not die with me. This manuscript, signed with my name and completed with the story of my life, will be sealed in a small floating case. The last survivor among us aboard the Nautilus will cast this case into the sea, and the waves will carry it wherever they may.”

This man’s name! His life story written by his own hand! One day, then, his mystery would be revealed.

“Captain,” I said, “I can only approve of the idea that has led you to do this. The results of your studies must not be lost. But the method you propose seems too crude to me. Who can say

where the winds will carry this case, or into whose hands it will fall? Could you not use some other means? Could not you, or one of your men—"

"Never, sir!" he said, cutting me off sharply.

"But my companions and I are ready to keep this manuscript safe; and if you would set us free—"

"Set you free?" said the Captain, rising.

"Yes, sir. That is the matter I want to ask you about. We have been here on board for seven months, and today I ask you, in the name of my companions as well as my own, whether you intend to keep us here forever."

"M. Aronnax, I will answer you today exactly as I did seven months ago: whoever enters the Nautilus must never leave it."

"You are forcing actual slavery on us!"

"Call it whatever you like."

"But everywhere, a slave has the right to win back his freedom."

"Who is denying you that right? Have I ever tried to bind you with an oath?"

He looked at me with his arms crossed.

"Sir," I said, "going back to this subject a second time will please neither you nor me. But since we have begun, let us finish it. I repeat: it does not concern me alone. Study is a comfort to me, a distraction, a passion that could make me forget everything. Like you, I am willing to live in obscurity, sustained by the faint hope of leaving to future generations the

results of my work. But it is different for Ned Land. Every man worthy of the name deserves some consideration. Have you considered that a love of liberty and a hatred of slavery could stir thoughts of revenge in a nature like the Canadian's—that he might think, plan, and attempt——"

I fell silent; Captain Nemo stood up.

"Whatever Ned Land may think, plan, or attempt, what is that to me? I did not seek him out! I do not keep him on board for my own pleasure! As for you, M. Aronnax, you are one of those who can understand everything, even silence. I have nothing more to say to you. Let this first time you have come to speak to me about this subject be the last, because I will not listen to you a second time."

I withdrew. Our situation was serious. I told my two companions about my conversation.

"Now we know," said Ned, "that we can expect nothing from this man. The Nautilus is approaching Long Island. We will escape, whatever the weather."

But the sky grew more and more threatening. The signs of a hurricane became unmistakable. The air turned pale and misty. Along the horizon, thin streaks of cirrus clouds gave way to heavy masses of cumulus. Other low clouds raced past. The swollen sea heaved into enormous billows. The birds vanished, except for the petrels, those companions of the storm. The barometer dropped noticeably and showed extreme pressure in the vapors. The liquid in the storm glass separated under the influence of the electricity filling the air. The tempest broke on May 18, just as the Nautilus was drifting off Long Island, a few

miles from the port of New York. I can describe that battle of the elements, because instead of escaping into the depths of the sea, Captain Nemo, by some unexplainable whim, chose to face it on the surface. At first the wind blew from the southwest. During the squalls, Captain Nemo took his place on the platform. He lashed himself down so the monstrous waves would not wash him overboard. I climbed up as well and secured myself, torn between my awe of the storm and my amazement at this extraordinary man confronting it. The furious sea was swept by huge drifts of cloud that seemed soaked with spray. The Nautilus, now thrown onto its side, now rearing upright like a mast, rolled and pitched violently. Around five o'clock, rain came down in torrents, but it calmed neither sea nor wind. The hurricane was blowing at nearly forty leagues an hour. In such conditions it overturns houses, tears apart iron gates, and shifts twenty-four-pound cannon. Yet in the middle of the storm, the Nautilus proved the truth of a clever engineer's words: "There is no well-constructed hull that cannot defy the sea." It was not a rigid rock resisting the waves. It was a steel spindle, supple and responsive, with no rigging or masts, and it faced the storm's fury unharmed. Still, I watched those raging waves closely. They were fifteen feet high, 150 to 175 yards long, and moved at thirty feet per second. Their mass and force increased with the depth of the water. Waves like these, in the Hebrides, have shifted a weight of 8,400 pounds. They were the same kind that, in the storm of December 23, 1864, after destroying the town of Yeddo in Japan, struck the shores of America that very same day. As night fell, the storm grew even more violent. The barometer, as it had at Réunion during the cyclone of 1860, dropped seven-tenths by the end of the day. I saw a large ship

on the horizon struggling desperately. It was trying to hold its position under half steam to stay above the waves. It was probably one of the steamers running from New York to Liverpool or Havre. Soon it vanished into the darkness. At ten o'clock that evening, the sky seemed to be on fire. The air was slashed with brilliant lightning. I could hardly bear the glare, while the captain, staring at it, seemed almost to envy the spirit of the storm. A terrible noise filled the air, a tangled uproar made of crashing waves, roaring wind, and peals of thunder. The wind suddenly shifted through every point of the compass, and the cyclone, rising in the east, swung back after passing north, west, and south, following the reverse of the circular storms of the southern hemisphere. Ah, that Gulf Stream! It deserves its title, the King of Tempests. It creates those terrible cyclones through the difference in temperature between its air and its currents. Rain gave way to a shower of fire. The drops seemed to turn into sharp spikes. It was easy to think that Captain Nemo was seeking a death worthy of himself, a death by lightning. As the Nautilus, pitching horribly, lifted its steel spur into the air, it seemed to act like a conductor, and I saw long sparks burst from it. Exhausted and nearly crushed, I crawled to the hatch, opened it, and went down into the saloon. The storm was then at its height. It was impossible to stand upright inside the Nautilus. Captain Nemo came down around midnight. I heard the reservoirs gradually filling, and the Nautilus slowly sank beneath the waves. Through the open windows of the saloon, I saw large fish, terrified, gliding through the water like phantoms. Some were struck dead before my eyes. The Nautilus kept descending. I thought that at about eight fathoms we would find calm water. But no—the upper

layers were still too violently disturbed. We had to seek rest more than twenty-five fathoms down, in the depths of the sea. And there—what stillness, what silence, what peace! Who could have guessed that such a hurricane was raging on the surface of the ocean?

CHAPTER XX FROM LATITUDE 47° 24′ TO LONGITUDE 17° 28′

Because of the storm, we had been driven eastward once again. Any hope of escaping on the shores of New York or the St. Lawrence had vanished. Poor Ned, in despair, had shut himself away like Captain Nemo. Conseil and I, however, stayed constantly together. I said that the Nautilus had turned east. To be more precise, it had turned northeast. For several days it drifted first on the surface and then below it, through those fogs that sailors fear so much. How many accidents come from these dense mists! How many ships strike reefs when the wind drowns out the sound of breaking waves! How many collisions happen between vessels, despite their signal lights, whistles, and alarm bells! The floor of these seas looks like a battlefield, where the defeated of the ocean still lie scattered about—some old and already crusted over, others recent, still flashing back the light of our lantern from their iron fittings and copper plates.

On the 15th of May we were at the far southern edge of the Bank of Newfoundland. This bank is made up of alluvia, or great masses of organic material, carried either from the Equator by the Gulf Stream or from the North Pole by the cold counter-current that runs along the American coast. There too are piled up the erratic boulders carried along by broken ice, and nearby lies a vast graveyard of molluscs, which die here by the millions. The sea is not very deep at Newfoundland—not more than a few hundred fathoms—but farther south there is a depression 1,500 fathoms deep. There the Gulf Stream spreads out. It loses some of its speed and some of its warmth, but it

becomes a sea.

On the 17th of May, about 500 miles from Heart's Content, and at a depth of more than 1,400 fathoms, I saw the electric cable lying on the seabed. Conseil, to whom I had said nothing about it, at first took it for a gigantic sea serpent. I quickly set the good fellow right and, to console him, told him several details about the laying of the cable. The first cable had been laid in 1857 and 1858, but after transmitting about 400 telegrams, it stopped working. In 1863 the engineers built another one, 2,000 miles long and weighing 4,500 tons, which was loaded onto the Great Eastern. That attempt also failed.

On May 25, the Nautilus, at a depth of more than 1,918 fathoms, was exactly above the spot where the break had occurred that ruined the undertaking. It was 638 miles from the coast of Ireland, and at half past two in the afternoon they discovered that communication with Europe had been cut off. The electricians on board decided to cut the cable before hauling it up, and by eleven o'clock that night they had recovered the damaged section. They made a new joint, spliced it, and lowered it back into the sea. But a few days later it broke again, and in the depths of the ocean they could not recover it. The Americans, however, did not lose heart. Cyrus Field, the daring leader of the project, had already spent his entire fortune, but he launched a new subscription, and support came at once. Another cable was then made on improved principles. Each bundle of conducting wires was wrapped in gutta-percha and protected by a layer of hemp, all enclosed in a metal covering. The Great Eastern sailed on July 13, 1866. The work went well. But one troubling incident occurred. Several times, as the cable

was being paid out, they noticed that nails had recently been driven into it, clearly with the intention of damaging it. Captain Anderson, the officers, and the engineers consulted together and posted a notice stating that if the culprit were caught on board, he would be thrown into the sea without further trial. After that, the criminal attempt was never repeated.

On July 23, the Great Eastern was no more than 500 miles from Newfoundland when a telegram arrived from Ireland with news of the armistice concluded between Prussia and Austria after Sadowa. On the 27th, in the midst of dense fog, they reached the port of Heart's Content. The undertaking had succeeded. In its first dispatch, young America addressed old Europe with these words of wisdom, so rarely understood: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill towards men."

I had not expected to find the electric cable still in such a raw, original condition, almost as it had been when it left the factory. The long serpent-like line, coated with the remains of shells and bristling with foraminifera, was covered in a tough crust that protected it from all burrowing molluscs. It rested quietly, sheltered from the movement of the sea, under pressure well suited to carrying the electric spark that passes from Europe to America in .32 of a second. No doubt this cable will last a very long time, for they have found that sea water actually improves the gutta-percha covering. Besides, at this carefully chosen level, the cable is never submerged deeply enough to make it snap. The Nautilus followed it down to its greatest depth, more than 2,212 fathoms, where it lay without any anchorage. Then we reached the place where the accident had happened in 1863. There the ocean floor formed a valley about 100 miles

wide, large enough to hold Mont Blanc without its summit rising above the waves. On the east, this valley is shut in by a sheer wall more than 2,000 yards high. We arrived there on the 28th of May, and the Nautilus was then no more than 120 miles from Ireland.

Was Captain Nemo planning to land on the British Isles? No. To my great surprise, he turned south, heading back once again toward European waters. As we rounded the Emerald Isle, I caught a brief glimpse of Cape Clear and the light that guides the thousands of vessels leaving Glasgow or Liverpool. An important question then came to mind: would the Nautilus dare to enter the Manche? Ned Land, who had reappeared as we drew near land, kept questioning me. How could I answer? Captain Nemo remained out of sight. After showing the Canadian a glimpse of the American coast, was he now going to show me the shores of France?

But the Nautilus kept moving south. On the 30th of May, it passed within sight of Land's End, between the farthest point of England and the Scilly Isles, which it left to starboard. If he meant to enter the Manche, he would have had to turn due east. He did not.

Throughout May 31, the Nautilus moved in circles on the water, which fascinated me. It seemed to be searching for a place it was having trouble locating. At noon, Captain Nemo himself came to work out the ship's position. He did not speak to me, and he seemed gloomier than ever. What was making him so sad? Was it because he was nearing the shores of Europe? Had memories of his lost country come back to him? If not, what was

he feeling—remorse or regret? That question stayed with me for a long time, and I had a strong sense that chance would soon reveal the captain's secrets.

The next day, June 1, the Nautilus continued doing the same thing. It was clearly searching for some particular spot in the ocean. Captain Nemo measured the sun's altitude just as he had the day before. The sea was beautiful and the sky was clear. About eight miles to the east, I could make out a large steamship on the horizon. No flag flew from its mast, and I could not tell what nation it belonged to. A few minutes before the sun reached its highest point, Captain Nemo took out his sextant and observed with great care. The complete stillness of the water made the task much easier. The Nautilus was motionless. It neither rolled nor pitched.

I was on the platform when he took the altitude, and the Captain said these words: "It is here."

He turned and went below. Had he seen the vessel, which was changing course and seemed to be coming closer to us? I could not tell. I went back to the saloon. Once the panels were closed, I heard the hiss of water filling the reservoirs. The Nautilus began to sink straight down, since its screw was not driving it forward. A few minutes later, it stopped at a depth of more than 420 fathoms and settled on the bottom. The glowing ceiling went dark. Then the panels opened, and through the glass I saw the sea brightly lit by the rays of our lantern for at least half a mile around us.

I looked to port and saw nothing but a vast stretch of still water. But to starboard, on the seafloor, I noticed a large bulge that

immediately caught my eye. It looked like a ruin buried beneath a layer of white shells, almost like snow. When I studied the mass more closely, I could make out the broadening shape of a ship stripped of its masts, one that must have sunk long ago. It clearly belonged to another age. For this wreck to be so heavily coated with the lime deposits of the sea, it must have lain at the bottom of the ocean for many years.

What ship was it? Why had the Nautilus come to visit its grave? Could it be anything other than a wreck that had drawn us beneath the water? I did not know what to think when I heard Captain Nemo say beside me in a slow voice:

“This ship was once called the Marseillais. It carried seventy-four guns and was launched in 1762. On August 13, 1778, under the command of La Poype-Vertrieux, it fought bravely against the Preston. On July 4, 1779, it took part in the capture of Grenada with Admiral Estaing’s squadron. In 1781, on September 5, it joined the battle fought by the Comte de Grasse in Chesapeake Bay. In 1794, the French Republic changed its name. On April 16 of that same year, it joined Villaret Joyeuse’s squadron at Brest and was assigned to escort a cargo of grain coming from America under the command of Admiral Van Stebel. On the 11th and 12th of Prairial, Year Two, this squadron encountered an English fleet. Sir, today is the 13th of Prairial, June 1, 1868. Seventy-four years ago to this very day, on this very spot, at latitude 47° 24′ and longitude 17° 28′, this ship, after fighting heroically, after losing its three masts, with water in its hold and a third of its crew disabled, chose to sink with its 356 sailors rather than surrender. It nailed its colors to the poop and vanished beneath the waves to the cry of ‘Long live the

Republic!’”

“The Avenger!” I cried.

“Yes, sir, the Avenger! A fine name!” Captain Nemo muttered, crossing his arms.

CHAPTER XXI A HECATOMB

The way he described that unexpected scene, the story of the patriot ship told so coldly at first, and the emotion in his voice when he spoke the final words—the name of the Avenger, whose meaning I could not possibly miss—all of it left a deep impression on me. I could not take my eyes off the Captain. With his hand stretched out toward the sea, he watched the magnificent wreck with burning eyes. Perhaps I would never know who he was, where he came from, or where he was going. But now I saw the man beneath the savant. It was no ordinary misanthropy that had shut Captain Nemo and his companions inside the Nautilus, but a hatred—monstrous or sublime—that time could never weaken. Was that hatred still seeking revenge? The future would soon tell me. Meanwhile, the Nautilus was slowly rising to the surface, and the shape of the Avenger gradually faded from sight. Soon a gentle rolling told me we were in the open air. At that moment, a dull boom sounded. I looked at the Captain. He did not move.

“Captain?” I said.

He did not answer. I left him and climbed onto the platform. Conseil and the Canadian were already there.

“Where did that sound come from?” I asked.

“It was a gunshot,” Ned Land replied.

I looked toward the vessel I had already noticed. It was coming closer to the Nautilus, and we could see that it was under steam. It was within six miles of us.



“What ship is that, Ned?”

“From its rigging and the height of its lower masts,” said the Canadian, “I’d wager it’s a warship. May it reach us—and, if necessary, sink this cursed Nautilus.”

“My dear Ned,” Conseil replied, “what harm can it do to the Nautilus? Can it attack it beneath the waves? Can it bombard it at the bottom of the sea?”

“Tell me, Ned,” I said, “can you tell what country she belongs to?”

The Canadian drew his brows together, lowered his eyelids, narrowed his eyes, and for a few moments fixed the vessel with a sharp, searching look.

“No, sir,” he replied. “I can’t tell what nation she belongs to, because she isn’t flying any colors. But I can say that she is a warship, because a long pennant is fluttering from her mainmast.”

For fifteen minutes we watched the ship steaming toward us. Even so, I could not believe she could see the Nautilus from that far away, much less know what this submarine machine was. Soon the Canadian told me she was a large, armored, two-deck ram. Thick black smoke poured from her two funnels. Her sails were tightly furled and fastened to the yards. She flew no flag from her mizzen-peak. At that distance we could not make out the colors of her pennant, which streamed like a thin ribbon. She was coming on fast. If Captain Nemo let her draw near, we still had a chance of being saved.

“Sir,” said Ned Land, “if that vessel comes within a mile of us, I shall throw myself into the sea, and I advise you to do the same.”

I did not answer the Canadian’s suggestion, but kept watching the ship. Whether she was English, French, American, or Russian, she would certainly take us aboard if only we could reach her. A moment later a puff of white smoke burst from the front of the vessel. A few seconds afterward, water churned up by the fall of a heavy projectile splashed against the stern of the Nautilus, and soon after that a loud explosion reached my ears.

“What! They are firing at us!” I cried.

“If you please, sir,” said Ned, “they have recognized the unicorn, and they are firing at us.”

“But,” I cried, “surely they can see that there are men here?”

“Perhaps that is exactly why,” replied Ned Land, looking at me.

A sudden flood of understanding came over me. Of course they now knew what to make of the stories about the supposed monster. No doubt, aboard the Abraham Lincoln, when the Canadian struck it with his harpoon, Commander Farragut had recognized that the so-called narwhal was really a submarine vessel, far more dangerous than any supernatural whale. Yes, that had to be it; and now they were searching every sea for this engine of destruction. A terrifying thought, if, as we believed, Captain Nemo was using the Nautilus for acts of revenge. On the night when we were locked in that cell in the middle of the Indian Ocean, had he not attacked some ship? And the man buried in the coral cemetery—had he not been killed by the

shock caused by the Nautilus? Yes, I say it again, it had to be so. One part of Captain Nemo's mysterious life had been revealed; and even if his identity was still unknown, the nations now united against him were no longer chasing an imaginary creature, but a man who had sworn deadly hatred against them. His whole terrible past rose before me. Instead of finding friends aboard the approaching ship, we could expect only merciless enemies. But the shots kept rattling around us. Some struck the sea and bounced off, vanishing into the distance. None hit the Nautilus. The vessel was no more than three miles away. Despite the heavy cannon fire, Captain Nemo did not appear on the platform; yet if one of those conical shells had struck the hull of the Nautilus, the result would have been fatal. Then the Canadian said, "Sir, we must do everything we can to get out of this danger. Let us signal to them. Then perhaps they will understand that we are honest people."

Ned Land pulled out his handkerchief to wave it in the air, but he had barely raised it when an iron hand struck him down, and despite all his strength he fell onto the deck.

"Fool!" the Captain cried. "Do you want to be run through by the spur of the Nautilus before it is driven into that vessel?"

Captain Nemo was terrifying to hear, and even more terrifying to look at. His face had gone deathly pale, and a spasm seemed to seize his heart. For a moment, it must have stopped beating. His pupils were horribly contracted. He did not speak—he roared. Leaning forward, he gripped the Canadian by the shoulders and shook him. Then he released him and turned toward the warship, whose shots were still falling around him,

and cried out in a powerful voice, “Ah, ship of an accursed nation, you know who I am! I do not need your colors to recognize you! Look, and I will show you mine!”

At the front of the platform, Captain Nemo unfurled a black flag, like the one he had planted at the South Pole. At that moment, a shot struck the hull of the Nautilus at an angle without piercing it, then glanced off near the Captain and disappeared into the sea. He merely shrugged and said to me curtly, “Go below—you and your companions, go below!”

“Sir,” I cried, “are you going to attack that vessel?”

“Sir, I am going to sink it.”

“You will not do that?”

“I will,” he replied coldly. “And I advise you not to judge me, sir. Fate has shown you what you were not meant to see. The attack has begun. Go below.”

“What vessel is it?”

“You do not know? Good. So much the better. Its nationality will remain a secret to you, at least. Go below!”

We had no choice but to obey. About fifteen sailors stood around the Captain, staring at the approaching vessel with merciless hatred. You could feel that every one of them was driven by the same thirst for vengeance. I went below just as another projectile struck the Nautilus, and I heard the Captain cry out:

“Strike away, mad vessel! Rain down your useless shots! You will not escape the spur of the Nautilus. But you will not perish

here! I will not have your wreckage mixed with that of the Avenger!”

I returned to my room. The Captain and his second remained on the platform. The propeller began to turn, and the Nautilus, gathering speed, soon moved beyond the range of the ship’s guns. But the pursuit continued, and Captain Nemo was content simply to keep his distance.

At about four in the afternoon, no longer able to hold back my impatience, I went to the central staircase. The panel was open, and I stepped out onto the platform. The Captain was still pacing back and forth in obvious agitation. He kept his eyes on the ship, which lay five or six miles to leeward.

He was circling around it like a wild beast, drawing it eastward and letting it give chase. But he did not attack. Perhaps he was still hesitating. I wanted to intervene one more time. But I had barely spoken when Captain Nemo silenced me, saying:

“I am the law, and I am the judge! I am the oppressed, and there stands the oppressor! Because of him, I have lost everything I loved, cherished, and revered—my country, my wife, my children, my father, and my mother. I saw them all perish! Everything I hate is there! Say no more!”

I gave the warship one last look as it built up steam, then went back to Ned and Conseil.

“We must escape!” I cried.

“Good!” said Ned. “What vessel is it?”

“I do not know. But whatever it is, it will be sunk before night. In any case, it is better to die with it than to become accomplices in an act of revenge whose justice we cannot judge.”

“That is my opinion too,” said Ned Land calmly. “Let us wait for night.”

Night came. A deep silence hung over the ship. The compass showed that the Nautilus had not changed course. It remained on the surface, rolling slightly. My companions and I decided to escape when the vessel came close enough either to hear us or to see us, for the moon, which would be full in two or three days, was shining brightly. Once aboard that ship, even if we could not prevent the blow threatening it, we would at least do everything the situation allowed. Several times I thought the Nautilus was about to attack. But Captain Nemo was content to let his enemy come closer, then flee from it once again.

Part of the night passed without incident. We stayed alert, watching for our chance to act. We spoke little, because we were too deeply shaken. Ned Land would have thrown himself into the sea, but I made him wait. I believed that the Nautilus would attack the ship at the waterline, and then escape would be not only possible, but easy.

At three in the morning, restless and uneasy, I climbed onto the platform. Captain Nemo was still there. He stood at the bow beside his flag, which a light breeze stirred above his head. His eyes never left the ship. There was such force in his gaze that it seemed to draw the vessel toward us, to hold it spellbound, more surely than if he had been towing it himself. The moon was crossing the meridian, and Jupiter was rising in the east. In

that peaceful scene, sky and sea seemed to compete in calmness, while the ocean offered the night's heavenly bodies the finest mirror in which to reflect themselves. But when I compared that deep stillness of nature with the passions silently gathering inside the Nautilus, I shuddered.

The ship was now within two miles of us. It kept moving closer to the phosphorescent glow that revealed the presence of the Nautilus. I could make out its green and red lights, and the white lantern hanging from the tall foremast. A faint tremor ran through its rigging, showing that its furnaces were being driven to their limit. Showers of sparks and red-hot ashes burst from the funnels and glittered in the air like stars.

I stayed there until six in the morning, and Captain Nemo never noticed me. The ship was now about a mile and a half away, and at the first light of dawn the firing began again. The moment could not be far off when the Nautilus would attack its enemy, and my companions and I would leave this man forever. I was about to go below and remind them when the second officer came onto the platform with several sailors. Captain Nemo either did not see them or chose not to. They carried out a few preparations that could be called the signal for action. They were very simple. The iron railing around the platform was lowered, and the lantern and pilot cages were drawn back into the hull until they were level with the deck. The long steel cigar now presented not a single projection that could hinder its movements. I went back to the saloon. The Nautilus was still floating on the surface, and streaks of light were filtering through the water outside. As the waves rose and fell, the windows flashed with the red rays of the rising sun, and that

dreadful day, the 2nd of June, had begun.

At five o'clock, the log showed that the Nautilus was slowing down, and I realized it was letting them come closer. The shots could also be heard more clearly now, and the projectiles, forcing their way through the surrounding water, died out with a strange hissing sound.

"My friends," I said, "the moment has come. One clasp of the hand, and may God protect us!"

Ned Land was determined, Conseil was calm, and I was so shaken that I hardly knew how to control myself. We all went into the library; but the moment I pushed open the door leading to the central staircase, I heard the upper hatch slam shut. The Canadian rushed toward the stairs, but I stopped him. A familiar hissing sound told me that water was being let into the reservoirs, and within a few minutes the Nautilus was several yards below the surface of the waves. I understood the maneuver. It was too late to do anything. The Nautilus did not mean to strike the ship's impenetrable armor, but to hit below the waterline, where the metal plating no longer protected it.

Once again we were prisoners, forced to witness the dreadful scene that was about to unfold. We barely had time to think. We took refuge in my room and looked at one another without speaking. A heavy numbness had seized my mind; thought itself seemed to stop. I was in that agonizing state of suspense that comes just before a terrible sound. I waited. I listened. Every sense was absorbed into hearing. The Nautilus began to pick up speed. It was getting ready to charge. The whole vessel shook. Suddenly I cried out. I felt the impact, though it was relatively

slight. I felt the steel spur drive through. I heard rattling and scraping. But the Nautilus, driven forward by its own power, passed through the ship's hull like a needle through sailcloth!

I could bear it no longer. Wild, beside myself, I rushed from my room into the saloon. Captain Nemo was there, silent, grim, relentless, staring through the viewing panel. A great dark mass cast its shadow in the water; and so that it might miss none of her agony, the Nautilus was descending with her into the abyss. Ten yards from me I saw the gaping breach, through which the water was pouring with a sound like thunder, then the double row of guns and the netting. The bridge was crowded with dark, frantic shadows.

The water kept rising. The poor people crowded onto the ratlines, clung to the masts, and fought in the water. It was like a human anthill swallowed by the sea. I stood there frozen, rigid with anguish, my hair on end, my eyes wide, gasping, unable to breathe or cry out, and still I watched. Some irresistible force held me to the glass. Suddenly there was an explosion. The compressed air burst through the decks, as if the powder magazines had caught fire. Then the doomed ship sank even faster. Her topmast, crowded with victims, was still visible; then her spars, bending under the weight of men; and at last the tip of her mainmast. Then the dark mass vanished, and with it the dead crew, dragged down by the powerful whirlpool.

The doomed ship sank even faster.

I turned to Captain Nemo. That terrible avenger, like an archangel of hatred, was still staring ahead. When it was all over, he went back to his room, opened the door, and went

inside. I watched him. On the far wall, beneath the portraits of his heroes, I saw the picture of a still-young woman and two small children. Captain Nemo looked at them for a few moments, stretched out his arms toward them, then fell to his knees and burst into deep sobs.

CHAPTER XXII THE LAST WORDS OF CAPTAIN NEMO

The panels had closed over that dreadful scene, but no light returned to the saloon. Inside the Nautilus, everything was silent and dark. A hundred feet below the surface, and moving at astonishing speed, it was leaving that desolate place behind. Where was it going? North or south? Where was this man fleeing after such terrible revenge? I went back to my room, where Ned and Conseil had remained almost completely silent. I felt an overwhelming horror toward Captain Nemo. Whatever he had suffered at these men's hands, he had no right to punish them like that. He had made me, if not an accomplice, then at least a witness to his vengeance. At eleven, the electric light came on again. I went into the saloon. It was empty. I checked the instruments. The Nautilus was racing north at twenty-five miles an hour, sometimes on the surface and sometimes thirty feet below it. When I took our bearings from the chart, I saw that we were passing the mouth of the Channel and heading at terrifying speed toward the northern seas. That night we had crossed two hundred leagues of the Atlantic. Darkness fell, and the sea remained black until the moon rose. I returned to my room, but I could not sleep. I was tormented by terrible nightmares. The horrifying scene of destruction stayed constantly before my eyes. From that day on, who could say to what part of the North Atlantic basin the Nautilus would carry us? It still moved with inexplicable speed, still through these northern fogs. Would it touch at Spitzbergen or on the shores of Nova Zembla? Would we explore those unknown seas—the



White Sea, the Sea of Kara, the Gulf of Obi, the Liarrov Archipelago, and the unknown coast of Asia? I could not tell. I could no longer judge how much time was passing. The clocks on board had been stopped. It seemed, as in polar regions, that night and day no longer followed their usual order. I felt myself being drawn into that strange world where Edgar Poe's haunted imagination wandered freely. Like the fabulous Gordon Pym, I expected at any moment to see "that veiled human figure, of larger proportions than those of any inhabitant of the earth, thrown across the cataract which defends the approach to the pole." I estimated—though I may be mistaken—that this reckless course of the Nautilus lasted fifteen or twenty days. And I do not know how much longer it might have continued if not for the catastrophe that ended the voyage. I saw nothing more of Captain Nemo, or of his second. Not one member of the crew appeared even for an instant. The Nautilus was almost constantly underwater. When we surfaced to renew the air, the panels opened and closed mechanically. No new marks appeared on the planisphere. I had no idea where we were. The Canadian, too, had reached the end of his strength and patience, and no longer showed himself. Conseil could not get a word out of him and, afraid that in some terrible fit of madness he might kill himself, watched over him with tireless devotion. One morning—I could not have said the date—I had fallen into a deep sleep toward dawn, a sleep that was both painful and unhealthy, when I suddenly woke. Ned Land was bending over me and whispering, "We are going to fly." I sat up.

"When are we going?" I asked.

"Tonight. All inspection aboard the Nautilus seems to have stopped. Everyone appears to be dazed. You'll be ready, sir?"

"Yes. Where are we?"

"Land is in sight. I took our position this morning in the fog—twenty miles to the east."

"What country is it?"

"I don't know. But whatever it is, we'll take shelter there."

"Yes, Ned, yes. We'll escape tonight, even if the sea swallows us."

"The sea is rough and the wind is fierce, but twenty miles in that light boat from the Nautilus doesn't frighten me. Without the crew knowing, I've managed to get food and a few bottles of water."

"I'll follow you."

"But," the Canadian went on, "if they catch me by surprise, I'll defend myself. I'll force them to kill me."

"We'll die together, my friend Ned."

I had made up my mind to everything. The Canadian left me. I went up to the platform, where I could barely keep my footing against the crashing waves. The sky looked threatening. But land lay somewhere in those thick brown shadows, and we had to flee. I went back to the saloon, afraid and yet hoping to see Captain Nemo, wanting and yet not wanting to see him. What could I have said to him? Could I have hidden the involuntary horror he inspired in me? No. It was better not to meet him face to face; better to forget him. And yet—— How long that day

seemed, the last I was to spend in the Nautilus. I remained alone. Ned Land and Conseil avoided speaking, afraid of betraying themselves. At six I dined, though I had no appetite. I forced myself to eat despite my disgust, so that I would not grow weak. At half past six, Ned Land came to my room and said, "We won't see each other again before we leave. At ten the moon will not yet have risen. We'll make use of the darkness. Come to the boat; Conseil and I will be waiting for you."

The Canadian left before I had a chance to answer. Wanting to confirm the Nautilus's course, I went to the saloon. We were heading north-northeast at terrifying speed, more than fifty yards below the surface. I took one last look at these natural wonders, at the artistic riches piled up in this museum, at the unmatched collection destined to sink to the bottom of the sea with the man who had assembled it. I wanted to stamp the sight of it forever on my memory. I stayed there for an hour, bathed in the light from the glowing ceiling, looking over those treasures shining behind their glass cases. Then I returned to my room.

I put on heavy seafaring clothes. I gathered my notes and tucked them carefully around me. My heart was pounding. I could not calm it. Surely my distress and agitation would have been obvious to Captain Nemo if he had seen me. What was he doing at that moment? I listened at the door of his room. I heard footsteps. Captain Nemo was there. He had not gone to bed. At any moment I expected him to appear and ask why I wanted to escape. I stayed constantly on guard. My imagination exaggerated everything. At last the strain became so intense that I asked myself whether it might not be better to go to the

Captain’s room, face him directly, and confront him with my eyes and my bearing.

It was a mad impulse. Fortunately, I resisted it and lay down on my bed to calm my body’s agitation. My nerves grew somewhat steadier, but in my fevered mind I relived my entire time aboard the Nautilus: every event, happy or disastrous, that had happened since I disappeared from the Abraham Lincoln—the underwater hunt, the Torres Straits, the natives of Papua, running aground, the coral cemetery, the passage through Suez, the island of Santorin, the Cretan diver, Vigo Bay, Atlantis, the iceberg, the South Pole, our imprisonment in the ice, the fight with the poulps, the storm in the Gulf Stream, the Avenger, and the dreadful scene of the ship sunk with all her crew. All these events passed before my eyes like scenes from a play. Then Captain Nemo seemed to grow immense, his features taking on superhuman proportions. He was no longer my equal, but a man of the waters, the spirit of the sea.

It was half past nine. I pressed my head between my hands, as if to keep it from splitting apart. I shut my eyes. I could not bear to think any longer. There was still another half hour to wait—another half hour of nightmare that might drive me mad.

At that moment, I heard the distant sound of the organ, a mournful harmony beneath a chant I could not make out, like the cry of a soul longing to break free from earthly ties. I listened with all my senses, hardly daring to breathe, swept up, like Captain Nemo, in that musical rapture that was drawing him in spirit toward the end of life.

Then a sudden thought filled me with terror. Captain Nemo had left his room. He was in the saloon, which I would have to cross to escape. There I would meet him for the last time. He would see me, perhaps speak to me. One gesture from him might ruin everything; a single word might keep me prisoner on board.

But ten o'clock was about to strike. The time had come for me to leave my room and join my companions.

I could not hesitate, even if Captain Nemo himself stood in my way. I opened my door carefully, and yet, as it turned on its hinges, it seemed to make a terrible noise. Perhaps that sound existed only in my imagination.

I moved quietly down the dark stairs of the Nautilus, stopping at every step to steady the pounding of my heart. I reached the door of the saloon and opened it gently. It lay in deep darkness. The sound of the organ came faintly through it. Captain Nemo was there. He did not see me. Even in full light, I do not think he would have noticed me, so completely was he lost in his rapture.

I crept across the carpet, careful not to make the slightest sound that might give me away. It took me at least five minutes to reach the door on the far side, which opened into the library.

I was about to open it when a sigh from Captain Nemo froze me where I stood. I knew he was rising. I could even see him, because the light from the library spilled into the saloon. He came toward me without a sound, his arms crossed, gliding like a ghost rather than walking. His chest heaved with sobs, and I heard him murmur these words—the last that ever reached my ears:

“Almighty God! Enough! Enough!”

Was this cry, escaping from his conscience, a confession of remorse from that man?

In desperation, I ran through the library, climbed the central staircase, and then took the upper flight to the boat. I slipped through the opening that had already let in my two companions.

“Let us go! Let us go!” I cried.

“At once!” the Canadian replied.

The opening in the Nautilus’s plates was first shut and locked with a false key that Ned Land had obtained; the opening in the boat was closed as well. Then the Canadian began loosening the bolts that still fastened us to the submarine vessel.

Suddenly we heard a noise. Voices were calling loudly to one another. What was happening? Had they discovered our escape? I felt Ned Land slip a dagger into my hand.

“Yes,” I murmured, “we know how to die!”

The Canadian stopped working. But one word, repeated again and again—a dreadful word—revealed the cause of the alarm spreading through the Nautilus. The crew were not searching for us!

“The maelstrom! The maelstrom!” Could any more terrible word have reached our ears in a more terrible moment? We were off the dangerous coast of Norway. Was the Nautilus being pulled into that gulf just as our boat was about to leave its side? We knew that when the tide turns, the waters trapped between the islands of Ferroe and Loffoden rush out with irresistible force,

creating a whirlpool from which no vessel has ever escaped. From every point on the horizon, enormous waves came together, forming a gulf rightly called the “Navel of the Ocean,” whose pull reaches as far as twelve miles away. There, not only ships are destroyed, but whales as well, and even white bears from the northern regions.

It was toward that place that the Nautilus, whether by choice or not, had been driven by the Captain.

It was moving in a spiral whose circle was gradually shrinking, and the boat, still fastened to its side, was swept along at dizzying speed. I felt the nauseating vertigo that comes from being spun around for too long.

We were terrified. Our fear had reached its peak. Our blood seemed to stop flowing, every nerve went numb, and cold sweat covered us like the sweat of agony. And what a noise surrounded our fragile boat! The roaring echoed for miles. The water crashed against the sharp rocks below with a terrible din, where even the hardest things are smashed and trees are stripped bare, “with all the fur rubbed off,” as the Norwegians say.

What a terrible position we were in. We were tossed about violently. The Nautilus defended itself like a living creature. Its steel frame groaned and cracked. At times it seemed to stand upright, and we rose with it.

“We must hold on,” said Ned, “and keep an eye on the bolts. We may still survive if we stay with the Nautilus.”

He had barely finished speaking when we heard a violent crash. The bolts gave way, and the boat, ripped from its groove, was flung into the middle of the whirlpool like a stone shot from a sling.

My head struck a piece of iron, and the force of the blow made me lose consciousness.

CHAPTER XXIII CONCLUSION

So ends the voyage beneath the seas. What happened during that night—how the boat escaped the maelstrom's swirling currents, and how Ned Land, Conseil, and I ever made it out of that gulf—I cannot say.

But when I came to, I was lying in a fisherman's hut on the Loffoden Isles. My two companions were beside me, safe and unharmed, holding my hands. We embraced warmly.

At that moment, we could not think about returning to France. Travel between northern and southern Norway is limited. So I am forced to wait for the steamboat that runs once a month from Cape North.

And here, among the good people who have welcomed us so kindly, I am revising the record of these adventures one last time. I have left out no fact and exaggerated no detail. It is a faithful account of this incredible expedition through an element inaccessible to man, but one to which Progress will one day open a path.

Will I be believed? I do not know. And in the end, it matters little. What I can now say with certainty is that I have earned the right to speak of these seas, beneath which, in less than ten months, I traveled 20,000 leagues on that submarine journey around the world, a journey that revealed so many wonders.

But what became of the Nautilus? Did it withstand the pressure of the maelstrom? Is Captain Nemo still alive? Does he still carry out those terrible acts of revenge beneath the sea? Or did he

stop after that last massacre?

Will the waves one day bring him this manuscript, which contains the story of his life? Will I ever learn this man's name? Will the lost vessel, by its nationality, reveal Captain Nemo's?

I hope so. I also hope that his powerful vessel overcame the sea in its most terrible abyss, and that the Nautilus survived where so many other ships were lost. If that is so—if Captain Nemo still lives in the ocean, his adopted country—may hatred be quieted in that fierce heart. May the sight of so many wonders extinguish forever the spirit of vengeance. May the judge vanish, and the philosopher continue the peaceful exploration of the sea. If his destiny is strange, it is also sublime. Did I not understand it myself? Did I not live ten months of this unnatural life? And to the question Ecclesiastes asked three thousand years ago, “That which is far off and exceeding deep, who can find it out?” only two men now living have the right to give an answer——

CAPTAIN NEMO AND MYSELF.



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