20,000 Leagues Under the Sea

Jules Verne



TIMELESS CLASSICS

Contents

1 A Bold Expedition 5

2 The Iron Monster 13

3 Aboard the *Nautilus* 21

4 Underwater Adventures.....29

5 Shipwrecks and Sharks 35

6 Captain Nemo's Secret.....43

7 The Underwater Tunnel 53

8 Captain Nemo's Good Deed 59

9 The Battle of the Whales.....65

10 Attacked by Cuttlefish.....71

11 Escape from the Maelstrom 77

Activities 85

1

A Bold Expedition

In the year 1866, a very strange thing happened. Several ships reported seeing an enormous "thing" in the ocean. Sometimes, the massive object seemed to be glowing. It was much larger and faster than a whale.

The captain of one ship thought it might be a sandbank. He was trying to figure out exactly where it was located. Then suddenly, the object started to shoot jets of water 150 feet into the air!

Three days later, the "thing" was spotted again. This time, it was several hundred miles away. Some people began to think it was a sea monster. They sang about it in cafes and made fun of it in newspapers.

Months later, the thing was no longer a scientific puzzle. It was a danger. A ship called the *Scotia* had been struck by it. Fortunately,

the *Scotia* was divided into compartments. Only one compartment filled with water. When the damage was examined, a hole about two feet wide was found. Something had poked through the ship's thick iron plates! Whatever it was, the thing had to be incredibly strong.

I, Pierre Aronnax, am a professor at the Museum of Natural History in Paris. At this time, I was in America, as part of an expedition. Several people asked me what I thought about this strange thing at sea. Of course, I had already read a lot about the mysterious object. It was puzzling, but after much thought, I wrote an article about it.

I believed the thing might be an enormous sea animal. After all, many creatures of the deep are still unknown to us. I thought it might be a narwhal—a whale with a long, sharp tusk. The common narwhal is about 60 feet long. Its ivory tusk is as hard as steel. If the mysterious thing was a giant narwhal, it could probably pierce the hull of a ship.

My article was widely discussed. Many people believed that I'd solved the mystery.

Then I learned that an American ship had been asked to help. The *Abraham Lincoln* was going to chase down the creature and destroy it. I was asked to join the hunt.

What to do? I longed to return to Paris. I wanted to see my friends, my home, and my precious collections. But once I received the invitation, I forgot all that. I felt it was my destiny to rid the world of this monster. So, I quickly made up my mind to take the journey on the *Abraham Lincoln*.

Then I called out to Conseil, my devoted servant. In French, his name means "advice." But, in fact, Conseil never gave advice. For 10 years, he'd followed me wherever science led. And he'd never once complained about our long journeys. He'd always been ready to pack his bags for any country, from China to the Congo. And even better—he has good health, and no nerves. In 1866, this young man was 30 years old—and I was 40.

Conseil had only one fault. He would only speak to me in the third person. That odd habit was sometimes provoking.

"Did my master call?" Conseil asked.

"Yes, my boy," I said. "Make preparations for me and yourself, too. We will leave on another expedition in two hours."

"As you please, sir," Conseil said softly.

"We don't have an instant to lose," I said. "Put all my coats, shirts, and stockings in my trunk right away. Pack as much as you can for yourself, and be quick."

Conseil looked concerned. "We are not returning to Paris, then?" he asked.

"Oh! We will be returning to Paris," I said, "—but not right away."

"As my master wishes," Conseil said coolly.

"We're going after the famous narwhal," I explained. "Ridding it from the seas is a dangerous mission. But the ship's captain—Commander Farragut—is a daring man."

Our luggage was taken to the ship immediately. I hurried on board and asked for Commander Farragut. One of the sailors led me to a good-looking officer, who reached out to shake hands.

"Monsieur Pierre Aronnax?" he asked.

"Yes," I replied. "Commander Farragut?"

He nodded and said, "Welcome, Professor.

Your cabin has been made ready for you."

The *Abraham Lincoln*, a fast and powerful ship, had been well chosen for her mission. And Captain Farragut was worthy of her. To him, the unknown object of the sea was no mystery. He was certain it was a monster—and he had sworn to destroy it. Captain Farragut would either kill the narwhal, or the narwhal would kill the captain. In his mind, there was no third course.

All the officers on board shared their captain's opinion. They wanted nothing more than to meet the narwhal and kill it. Each one of them watched the seas eagerly.

Captain Farragut had offered his crew a reward. He'd promised $2,000 to the first sailor who spotted the monster.

I leave you to judge how well their eyes were used on board the *Abraham Lincoln*.

Captain Farragut had armed his ship well. He'd gathered every sort of gun and harpoon. Better still, Ned Land was on board. He was known as the prince of harpooners.

Ned Land was a Canadian, about 40 years old. He was a tall man, strongly built, serious,

quiet—and occasionally violent. The look on his cunning face was bold. As a harpooner, he had no equal.

I didn't know him then, but we are old friends now. Our friendship was born from facing great danger together. Ah, brave Ned! I wish I had a hundred more years to live, so I could remember you longer!

Now, what were Ned Land's thoughts about the sea monster? I must admit that he didn't believe in the narwhal. He was the only one on board who held that opinion. Usually, he avoided the subject. But one evening, I pressed him to talk about it.

"Well, Ned," I said, "is it possible that you do not believe in the existence of the whale we are chasing? How can you be so incredulous?"

The harpooner looked at me for some moments before answering. "I've followed many a whale, sir. But none of them was strong enough to put even a scratch on the iron plate of a ship."

"Think about this, Ned," I said. "If such an animal exists, it would be extraordinarily

strong. If it lived miles beneath the surface, it would likely have no equal in strength."

"Why is that?" Ned asked.

"We humans are used to the pressure of the air," I said. "But the pressure of the water is far, far greater. If we were taken any great distance beneath the waves, why, we would be crushed!"

"You've convinced me of one thing," Ned said. "If such animals do exist, they very well might be as strong as you say."

"All right," I went on. "And if they do *not* exist, how would you explain what happened to the *Scotia*?"

TIMELESS CLASSICS

20,000 Leagues Under the Sea

Searching for a sea monster, a scientist discovers an amazing underwater vessel. At first he's thrilled to be invited aboard the *Nautilus*. What changes his mind? He discovers that the mad captain plans to stay at sea *forever*.

SADDLEBACK EDUCATIONAL PUBLISHING
www.sdlback.com

LEXILE HL580L

ISBN: 978-1-61651-099-2

90000

9 781616 510992