

ЛЕГКО ЧИТАЕМ ПО-АНГЛИЙСКИ

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ПУТЕШЕСТВИЕ
К ЦЕНТРУ ЗЕМЛИ

Jules Verne

A JOURNEY
TO THE CENTRE
OF THE EARTH

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**A JOURNEY
TO THE CENTRE
OF THE EARTH
by Jules Verne**

1.

On the 24th of May, 1863, my uncle, Professor **Otto Liedenbrock**¹, rushed into his little house in Hamburg. He was professor at the **Johannaicum**², and was delivering a series of lectures on mineralogy. His teaching was to benefit himself, not others. He was a learned egotist. Germany has many professors of this sort. The name of Liedenbrock was honourably mentioned in colleges and learned societies. Moreover, my uncle was the curator of the museum of mineralogy formed by the Russian ambassador; a most valuable collection, the fame of which is European.

He was a tall man, of an iron constitution, and with a fair complexion. His restless eyes were in incessant motion behind his spectacles. His long, thin nose was like a knife blade.

He lived in his own little house in **Königstrasse**³, a structure **half brick and half wood**⁴. My uncle was tolerably rich for a German professor. The house was his own, and everything in it: his god-daughter **Gräuben**⁵, a young girl of seventeen, **Martha**⁶, and myself. As his nephew and

¹ **Otto Liedenbrock** — Отто Лиденброк

² **Johannaicum** — Йоганнеум

³ **Königstrasse** — Королевская улица

⁴ **half brick and half wood** — наполовину из кирпича, наполовину из дерева

⁵ **Gräuben** — Гретхен

⁶ **Martha** — Марта

an orphan, I became his laboratory assistant. The blood of a mineralogist was in my veins, and in the midst of my specimens I was always happy.

2.

One day I came to his study. It was like a museum. Specimens of every kind lay there in their places in perfect order, and correctly named, divided into inflammable, metallic, and **lithoid minerals**¹.

My uncle was sitting in a velvet armchair, and was looking at a book with intense admiration.

"Here's a remarkable book! What a wonderful book!" he was exclaiming. "Don't you see? I have got a priceless treasure, that I found this morning, in the bookshop."

"Magnificent!" I replied, with a good imitation of enthusiasm.

Why worry about this old, bound in rough calf, yellow, faded volume?

"See," the Professor went on. "Isn't it a beauty? Yes; splendid! Did you ever see such a **binding**²? Doesn't the book open easily? Yes; it stops open anywhere. But does it shut equally well? Yes; for the binding and the leaves are flush. And look at its back, after seven hundred years!"

I asked a question about its contents, although I did not feel the slightest interest.

"And what is the title of this marvellous work?" I asked.

"This work," replied my uncle, "this work is the **Heims Kringla**³ of **Snorre Turlleson**⁴, the most famous Icelandic author of the twelfth century! It is the chronicle of the Norwegian princes who ruled in Iceland."

"Indeed;" I cried, "and of course it is a German translation?"

"What!" sharply replied the Professor, "A translation! What can I do with a translation? This is the Icelandic original!"

¹ **lithoid minerals** — камневидные материалы

² **a binding** — переплёт

³ **Heims Kringla** — «Хеймс Кригла» (название книги)

⁴ **Snorre Turlleson** — Снорре Турлесон

“Ah!” said I; “and is **the type**¹ good?”

“Type! What do you mean by the type, wretched **Axel**²? Type! Do you **take it for**³ a printed book, you ignorant fool? It is a manuscript, a Runic manuscript.”

“Runic?”

“Yes. Do I need to explain what that is?”

“Of course not,” I replied in the tone of an injured man. But my uncle continued.

“Runic characters were in use in Iceland in former ages. They were invented, it is said, by **Odin**⁴ himself. Look there, and wonder, impious young man, and admire these letters, the invention of the Scandinavian god!”

Well, well! I was going to prostrate myself before this wonderful book, when a little incident happened to divert conversation into another channel. A dirty slip of parchment slipped out of the volume and fell upon the floor.

“What’s this?” cried my uncle.

And he laid out upon the table that piece of parchment, **five inches by three**⁵, with certain mysterious characters.

The Professor raised his spectacles and pronounced:

“These are Runic letters; they are exactly like those of the manuscript of Snorre Turlleson. But what is their meaning? It is certainly old Icelandic.”

Suddenly two o’clock struck by the little clock over the fireplace. At that moment our good housekeeper Martha opened the study door, and said:

“Dinner is ready!”

I followed her, and sat in my usual place. I waited a few minutes. Professor did not come. He had never missed the important ceremonial of dinner.

“I have never known such a thing,” said Martha. “M. Liedenbrock is not at table! Something serious is going to happen.”

After the dinner, I came back to the study.

¹ **the type** — шрифт

² **Axel** — Аксель

³ **to take it for** — принимать за

⁴ **Odin** — Один, верховный бог в германо—скандинавской мифологии

⁵ **five inches by three** — размером 5x3 дюйма

3.

“Undoubtedly it is Runic,” said the Professor; “but there is a secret in it, and I want to discover the key.”

He finished the sentence with a violent gesture.

“Sit there,” he added. “Sit there, and write.”

I sat down.

“Now I will dictate to you every letter of our alphabet which corresponds with each of these Icelandic characters. We will see what that will give us.”

The dictation commenced. I did my best. Every letter came **one after the other**¹, with the following remarkable result:

*mm.rnlls esrevel seecIde
sgtssmf vnteief niedrke
kt,samn atrateS saodrrn
emtnaeI nvaect rrilSa
Atsaar .nvcrc ieaabs
ccrmi eevtVl frAntv
dt,iac oseibo KediiI*

When this work has ended my uncle tore the paper from me and examined it attentively for a long time.

“What does it all mean?” he asked mechanically.

I could not help him.

“This is what is called a cryptogram, or a cipher,” he said, “in which letters are purposely thrown in confusion. Under this jargon there may lie the clue to some great discovery!”

As for me, I thought that there was nothing at all in it; though, of course, I did not say so.

Then the Professor took the book and the parchment, and diligently compared them together.

“These two writings are not by the same hand,” he said; “the cipher is of later date than the book. There are two hundred years between the manuscript and the document.”

I agreed.

“I can imagine,” continued my uncle, “that some possessor of this book wrote these mysterious letters. But who was that possessor? Is there his name in the manuscript?”

¹ **one after the other** — одна за другой

My uncle raised his spectacles, and carefully examined the blank pages of the book. On the front of the second title-page he could distinguish some letters.

“**Arne Saknussem**!” he cried in triumph. “That is the name of another Icелander, a savant of the sixteenth century, a celebrated alchemist!”

I gazed at my uncle with admiration.

“Those alchemists,” he resumed, “**Avicenna, Bacon, Lully, Paracelsus**², were the real and only savants of their time. They made discoveries at which we are astonished. Has not this Saknussem concealed under his cryptogram some surprising invention? It is so; it must be so!”

“No doubt,” I replied, “but why did he hide so marvellous discovery?”

“Why? Why? How can I tell? Did not **Galileo**³ do the same with Saturn? We shall see. I will reveal the secret of this document, and I will neither sleep nor eat!”

My comment on this was “Oh!”

“First of all we must find out the key to this cipher; that cannot be difficult.”

At that I quickly raised my head.

“There’s nothing easier. In this document there are a hundred and thirty-two letters: seventy-seven consonants and fifty-five vowels. So this is a southern language. But what language is it?”

I was looking at the letters.

“This Saknussem,” the Professor went on, “was a very well-informed man; so he was not writing in his own mother tongue, he selected Latin. The savants of the sixteenth century generally wrote in Latin. So it is Latin.”

I jumped up in my chair. These barbarous words belong to the sweet language of **Virgil**⁴!

“Yes, it is Latin,” my uncle went on; “but it is Latin confused and in disorder. Let us examine carefully. Here is a series of one hundred and thirty-two letters in apparent disorder. This arrangement has arisen mathematically in

¹ **Arne Saknussem** — Арне Сакнуссем

² **Avicenna, Bacon, Lully, Paracelsus** — Авиценна, Бэкон, Люль, Парацельс

³ **Galileo** — Галилей, итальянский физик, механик, астроном, философ, математик

⁴ **Virgil** — Виргилий, древнеримский поэт.

obedience to the unknown law. Whoever possesses the key of this cipher will read it with fluency. What is that key? Axel, have you got it?"

I did not answer, and for a very good reason. My eyes had fallen upon a charming picture: the portrait of Gräuben. We had become engaged unknown to my uncle. Gräuben was a lovely blue-eyed blonde. I adored her. Every day she helped me to arrange my uncle's precious specimens; she and I labelled them together. Mademoiselle Gräuben was an accomplished mineralogist. How often I envied the stones which she handled with her charming fingers.

"No, no, no," cried my uncle, "there's no sense in it!" Then he rushed outside onto the Königstrasse and fled.

4.

"He is gone!" cried Martha, running out of her kitchen.

"Yes," I replied, "completely gone."

"Well; and how about his dinner?" said the servant.

"He won't have any."

"And his supper?"

"He won't have any."

"What?" cried Martha, with clasped hands.

"No, my dear Martha, he will eat no more. Uncle Liedebrook is going to decipher an undecipherable scrawl."

"Oh, my dear!"

She returned to the kitchen.

I was alone. That old document **kept working in my brain**¹. My head throbbed with excitement, and I felt an undefined uneasiness. I took the sheet of paper with mysterious letters; and repeated to myself "What does it all mean?"

I tried to group the letters so as to form words. Quite impossible! I was stifling; I wanted air. Unconsciously I **fanned myself**² with the bit of paper, the back and front of which successively came before my eyes. What was my surprise when, in one of those rapid revolutions, at the moment when the back was turned to me I thought I noticed the Latin words "craterem", "terrestre", and others.

¹ **kept working in my brain** — не выходил у меня из головы

² **fanned myself** — обмахивался

A sudden light burst in upon me; I had discovered the key to the cipher! To read the document, it was not even necessary to read it through the paper. My eyes were dim, I could scarcely see. I laid the paper upon the table. At a glance I could tell the whole secret.

"Now I'll read it," I cried.

I leaned over the table; and I read the whole sentence aloud.

"Ah!" I cried. "But no! No! My uncle will never know it. He will try to know all about it. Ropes will not hold him, such a determined geologist as he is! He will start, in spite of everything and everybody, and he will take me with him, and we will never get back. No, never! never!"

My over-excitement was beyond all description.

"No! No!" I declared energetically; "and as it is in my power to prevent the knowledge of it, I will do it. I will destroy this paper."

There was a little fire on the hearth. I was about to fling the paper upon the coals, when the study door opened, and my uncle appeared.

5.

I replaced the unfortunate document upon the table. Professor Liedenbrock was greatly abstracted. The mystical letters gave him no rest. He sat in his armchair, took the pen and began to write algebraic formulas. For three long hours my uncle worked on without a word, without lifting his head. But time was passing away; night came on; the street noises ceased; my uncle noticed nothing. Martha opened the door and said:

"Will not monsieur take any supper tonight?"

But there was no answer. As for me, after long resistance, I began to sleep.

When I awoke next morning the Professor was still working. To tell the plain truth, I pitied him. "No, no," I repeated, "I shall not speak. He will go at once; nothing on Earth can stop him. His imagination is a volcano, and he will risk his life. I will preserve silence. I will keep the secret which mere chance has revealed to me. To discover it is to kill Professor Liedenbrock! Let him find it out himself if he can."

I folded my arms and waited. Two o'clock struck. This was becoming ridiculous; worse than that, unbearable. The

Professor jumped up, clapped on his hat, and prepared to go out.

“Uncle!” I cried.

He did not hear me.

“Uncle Liedenbrock!” I cried, lifting up my voice.

“Ay,” he answered.

“Uncle, that key!”

“What key? The door key?”

“No, no!” I cried. “The key of the document.”

The Professor stared at me over his spectacles. I nodded my head up and down.

“Yes, that key, chance—”

“What is that you are saying?” he shouted with indescribable emotion.

“There, read that!” I said, presenting a sheet of paper on which I wrote the sentences.

“But there is nothing in this,” he answered.

“No, nothing until you proceed to read from the end to the beginning.”

A new revelation burst in upon the Professor. He was transformed!

“Aha, clever Saknussem!” he cried. And he read the whole document from the last letter to the first:

*In Sneffels Jocular craterem quem delibat
Umbra Scartaris Julii intra calendas descende,
Audax viator, et terrestre centrum attinges.
Quod feci, Arne Saknussem.*

Which may be translated thus:

“Descend, bold traveller, into the crater of the Jokul of Sneffels¹, which the shadow of Scartaris² touches before the kalends³ of July, and you will attain the centre of the Earth; which I have done, Arne Saknussem.”

My uncle sprang very high. He seized his head between both his hands; he pushed the chairs out of their places,

¹ **Sneffels** — Снеффелс

² **Scartaris** — Скартарис

³ **kalends** — календы; в древнеримском календаре название первого дня каждого месяца.

he piled up his books. At last his nerves calmed down, and he sank back into his armchair.

"What's the time?" he asked after a few moments of silence.

"Three o'clock," I replied.

"Is it really? It's the dinner-hour! **I am half dead with hunger**¹. Come on, and after dinner—"

"Well?"

"After dinner, pack up my trunk."

"What?" I cried.

"And yours!" replied the indefatigable Professor, entering the dining-room.

6.

At these words a cold shiver ran through me. Yet I controlled myself. During all dinner time my uncle was almost merry. After the dessert, he invited me into his study.

I obeyed; he sat at one end of his table, I at the other.

"Axel," said he very mildly; "you are a very ingenious young man, you have done me a splendid service, when I was going to abandon the contest. Never, my lad, shall I forget it. But I want to preserve the secrecy: you understand? There are people in the scientific world who envy my success."

"Do you really think there are many people bold enough?" said I.

"Certainly! A whole army of geologists is ready to follow Arne Saknussemm."

"But, uncle," I replied; "we have no proof of the authenticity of this document."

"What! Not of the book, inside which we have discovered it?"

"I admit that Saknussemm wrote these lines. But has he really accomplished such a journey?"

A smile flitted across the lip of my uncle, and he answered:

"That is what we shall see."

"Ah!" said I. "But let me present all the possible objections against this document."

¹ **I am half dead with hunger.** — Я умираю от голода.