



Jules Verne

Joyous Miseries of Three Travellers in Scandinavia



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**Joyous Miseries of Three
Travellers in Scandinavia**

**Translated with an introduction, notes and
appendices by William Butcher**

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Chapter 1

An obsession — Travel madness — My over-enthusiastic companions — Our trinity — Preparations for departure — The dictionary of G. Belèze — Shopping — A haughty visit to Baron Rotschild — Leaving the dead body behind¹ — Invitation to the travellers' whirligig — Farewell, beloved France, farewell!²

I will freely confess to my readers: until then I had never left my burrow, and the need for travel was killing me. This passion of mine, suppressed from 20 to 30, had simply got bigger and bigger. I had read everything that can be read about journeys, and even all that cannot, and if this study had not ossified the lobes of my brain, I must be naturally endowed.

After the peregrinations of Cook, of Ross, of Dumont d'Urville, of Richardson and even of Alexandre Dumas,³ enough appetite remained for me to devour the 66 volumes of *L'Univers pittoresque*, an infinitely painstaking work⁴ that even the Benedictine Order's strictest rules would not have made obligatory reading. The adventures, discoveries, expeditions, excursions, pilgrimag-

¹ A reference to the collective decision "that if one of us succumbed while traveling, his body would not be repatriated".

² The existence of the heading, summarising the chapter in note form, shows the care with which the manuscript is presented. (Such a feature is rare in Verne's works, appearing principally in *Five Weeks in a Balloon*, *Uncle Robinson*, *The Mysterious Island* and *Two Years' Holiday*.) It may correspond to a very early stage of composition, for Verne often produced a paragraph-by-paragraph synopsis in note form before writing the draft manuscript of his books.

³ The explorer perhaps most often referred to in *The Adventures of Captain Hatteras* is Sir John Ross (1777–1856), author of *A Voyage of Discovery* (1819; French trans. 1819), who, with his nephew Sir James Clark Ross (1800–62), discovered the Magnetic Pole (1831).

Jules-Sébastien-César Dumont d'Urville (1790–1842) studied terrestrial magnetism, charted the South Atlantic, South Pacific and Antarctic, and discovered Adélie and Claire Coasts.

Dr John Richardson (1787–1865) mapped the Canadian Arctic (1826), wrote *Arctic Searching Expedition* (1851) and may have been a model for Dr Clawbonny in *Hatteras*.

James Cook (1728–79) explored the South Pacific and North America, and discovered Hawaii.

Verne met Alexandre Dumas père (1802–70) in January 1849 through his son Alexandre Dumas (1824–95).

⁴ *L'Univers pittoresque: Histoire et description de tous les peuples, de leurs religions, mœurs, coutumes . . .* (70 illustrated volumes, 1835–63). Verne's phrase, "ouvrage de Bénédictins", may be taken from the publisher's publicity material. Both *L'Univers pittoresque* and *Le Tour du monde* were in Verne's library.

es, campaigns, emigrations, explorations, itineraries, wanderings, sea crossings, tourism — these myriad magic words, serving but a single idea, intersected, overlapped, blended, merged and swirled in my brain. They made me quite ill. A nostalgia for foreign countries overwhelmed me. To get out of France, to escape from my country of birth, to flee my motherland, where I no longer lived, no longer slept, hardly breathed, became an absolute must.



1 Durand-Brager, *The "Roland"* (1857)

I am unaware whether my readers have ever been overcome by an irresistible passion. I do hope they have. Then they will understand, and realise my state of mind after ten years of constant reading had built up an overflow of impatience, of temptations, of all-devouring desires. I had reached the point of totally identifying with the great travellers whose works I absorbed. I discovered the lands they discovered, I took possession in France's name of the islands where they planted their flags, I was Columbus in America, Vasco da Gama in the Indies, Magellan in Terra del Fuego, Jacques Cartier in Canada, Cook in New Caledonia, Durville in New Zealand,⁵ everywhere and always French, even while exploring Labrador, Mexico, Brazil, Guinea, the Congo, Greenland, Peru or California. As Chateaubriand said,⁶ I found the world too small because people had been right round it, and I regretted that it contained only five continents.⁷

⁵ Christopher Columbus (1451–1506), (re)discovered America in 1492; Vasco da Gama (1469?–1524), the first European to reach India by sea (1497–8); Ferdinand Magellan (1480?–1521), leader of the first circumnavigation (1519–22); Jacques Cartier (1491–1557), discovered the St Lawrence River. A near-identical list appears in *Hatteras* (I xii).

⁶ Writer François-René de Chateaubriand (1768–1848), a distant relation by marriage of Verne's. Cf. "did he find the world too small because he had been right round it?" (*Hatteras* II xxv), reflecting a constituent tension of Verne's *Extraordinary Journeys in the Known and Unknown Worlds*.

⁷ Excluding Antarctica, and presumably counting the Americas as a single continent.

Note, incidentally, that I had never left France,⁸ nor my Department, nor Paris, nor my neighbourhood, street, home or room. It was there, surrounded by four walls carpeted with maps and charts, that I got going from cold. But my travel books were no longer enough. I subscribed to the review *Le Tour du monde*.⁹ It was the *coup de grace*. The engravings finished me off. Those illustrations took my imagination to its highest point, drawn as they were by the Dorés, the Durand-Bragers, the Rious, the Hadamars, the Girardets, the Flandins, the Lancelots of this world,¹⁰ all artists of sufficient talent to reproduce what they had never seen. I had to travel at any cost, or else depart this world. When I say at any cost, I really mean cheaply. Topping up my budget did not cross the mind of my Chancellor of the Exchequer, and as I did not possess a transfer system allowing the carrying over from agriculture of what was needed for war, it did not cross my mind to travel as a nob.¹¹

⁸ Verne had previously visited an unidentified Continental country (1849) and Britain (1859).

⁹ Magazine (1860–1914) frequently cited as a source in Verne’s draft manuscripts (henceforth “*TdM*”, followed by year, volume and page number). More specifically, as Verne says below, he was enthralled by “certain landscapes . . . of Norway and Denmark”: Paul Riant, “Voyage dans les États scandinaves: Le Télémark et l’évêché de Bergen” (*TdM* 1860.2 49–85), and Saint-Blaise, “Voyage dans les États scandinaves” (1861.2 161–86), or rather by their illustrators.

¹⁰ Many of these artists, especially Durand-Brager (erroneously “Durant-Berger” in the transcription in *Géo*), appear prominently in *TdM* 1862.2, raising the possibility that *Joyous Miseries* was not completed before the autumn of 1862. Detailed information about them is provided in Appendix D.

¹¹ The same popular expression, “trancher du nabab”, is used in *Paris in the Twentieth Century* (xi). Because Verne travelled by public transport, lacked money and was stimulated by Hignard especially — to whom the Extraordinary Journeys therefore owe a great deal — he participated fully in Scandinavian life, able to satisfy his curiosity about such social features as what people ate, drank, traded, sang, travelled on, wore or spent.



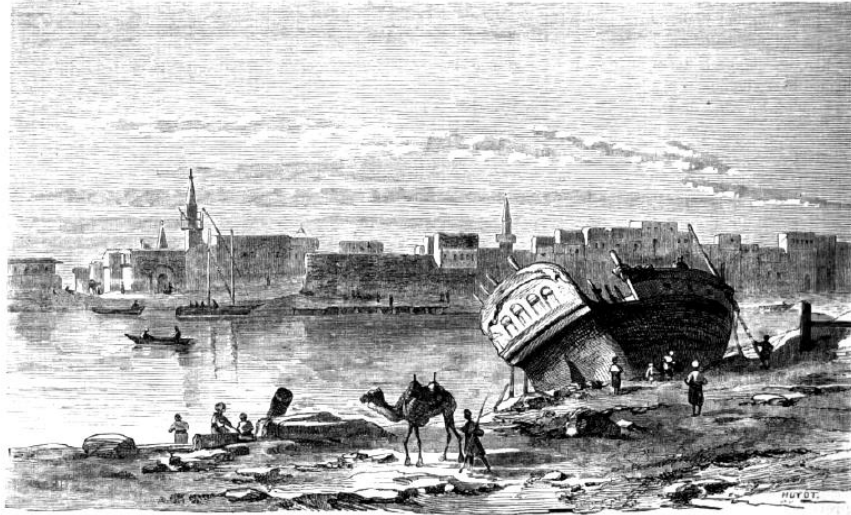
2 Durand-Brager, *Panorama of Kamiesch*

Once the idea of movement had taken hold, it did not afford me a moment's respite. Having reflected at length, I chose the Scandinavian states as the goal of my explorations; I was drawn to the hyperboreal regions, like the magnetic needle to the north, without knowing quite why.

In any case, the other destinations are too easy to get to. Who does not to a certain extent visit Italy, Germany, Switzerland or Algeria! Who amongst my readers has not more or less crossed the Alps or the Pyrenees? It is all just a piece of cake, and many have not bothered, seeing it as not uphill enough! I do share their view. In any case, I am temperamentally drawn to cold countries: Scandinavia suited me down to a T. It comprises Sweden, Norway and Denmark, three poetic lands, vague like Ossian's verse;¹² and there is also sea in between, for any journey worthy of the name involves a degree of sailing.

Certain landscapes published in *Le Tour du monde's* coverage of Norway and Denmark seduced me. I imagined I would discover there the savages of the South Seas, the Eskimos of Greenland, Switzerland on a grand scale, South America on a compact scale, my most unusual and original thoughts and dreams, what few people had seen, at least those in the regrettable habit of writing down their travel impressions, in sum a region that is both brand-new and age-old, capable of fulfilling my craziest hopes. I would like to add something that I hope will not be taken the wrong way.

¹² Epic songs ascribed to the legendary Gaelic bard, Ossian, in fact mostly written (1736–96) by Scot James Macpherson.



3 Girardet, "Port of Suez" (*Le Tour du monde* 1860.2 100)¹³

While reading Mr Énault's book on Norway,¹⁴ I found this curious passage: "As you head north, you constantly get higher; but so uniformly and imperceptibly that you only realise the height you have got to by looking at the rise in the barometer and the drop in the thermometer."

Such a claim by a pleasant writer horrified me. It turned my most basic knowledge of physics upside down and inside out; its contrasting ideas were charming, but would have shocked novice scholars; until then I had always assumed that as barometers and thermometers went up mountains, they necessarily fell in unison, due to the drop, respectively, in atmospheric pressure and temperature. The two instruments' antagonism seemed strange to me; I told myself that Norway must be a curious country for such a thing to happen, and resolved to go and observe the phenomenon for myself.

But going alone was not possible; a confidant is needed in travel, at least as much as in tragedy. Without an accommodating Acastus,¹⁵ who to share your impressions with? How to take decisions by using the council's fire to light a single peace-pipe? Who to pass bad moods on to? I had assiduously followed the course of comparative friendship of the learned A. Karr;¹⁶ I knew what can be made of a friend by handling him adroitly; so I needed to seek

¹³ *Le Tour du monde*, 2nd half 1860, p. 100.

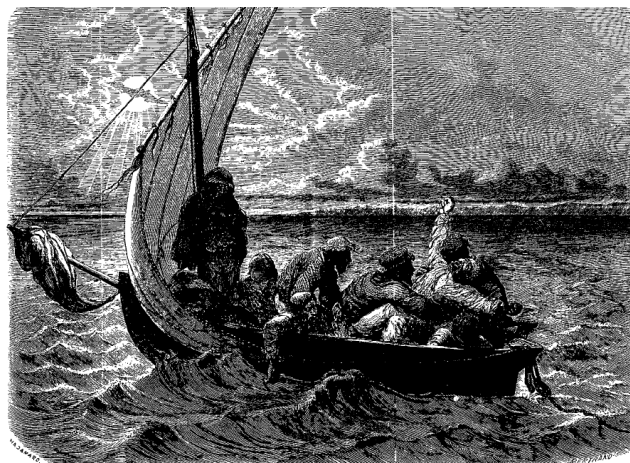
¹⁴ Louis Énault (1824–1900), author of *La Norvège* (1857) and *Angleterre, Écosse, Irlande: Voyage Pittoresque* (1859), a source for Verne's *Voyage en Angleterre et en Écosse* (1859–60).

¹⁵ Acastus, mythological king of Iolcos (Thessaly) and brother of Alcestis, who accompanies the Argonauts; used as a generic term in Moliere.

¹⁶ Author Alphonse Karr (1808–90); conceivably an allusion to his contrast between the quick birth of love and the slow growth of friendship (*Les Femmes* (1859) 128).

out my better half, having decided to submit him to every whim of the other half.

I knew the best boy in the world, gentle, witty, slightly nonchalant, a little slow, with legs too short to be a great walker, highly artistic, likely therefore while travelling to see those charming things that do not exist.



4 Hadamard, "One of the sailors dies in the launch of the *Saint-Paul*" (T&M 1861.2 88)

"He's free," I said to myself; "he'll be willing to follow, and that's the term, as I'm sure he'll always walk behind me; let's give it a try."

The deed was executed one fine day; he needed no second asking to agree to the expedition. His name was Aristide H . . . , a talented musician who dreamed of seeing Elsinore on the pretext of writing a score for *Hamlet*.¹⁷

"Scandinavia!" he exclaimed. "Visit the country of Odin, of Thor and of Freyr!¹⁸ The three gods of Valhalla,¹⁹ known as the Sublime, the Equally Sublime and the Third!²⁰ Adore Freya the goddess of love, Aegyr the god of the

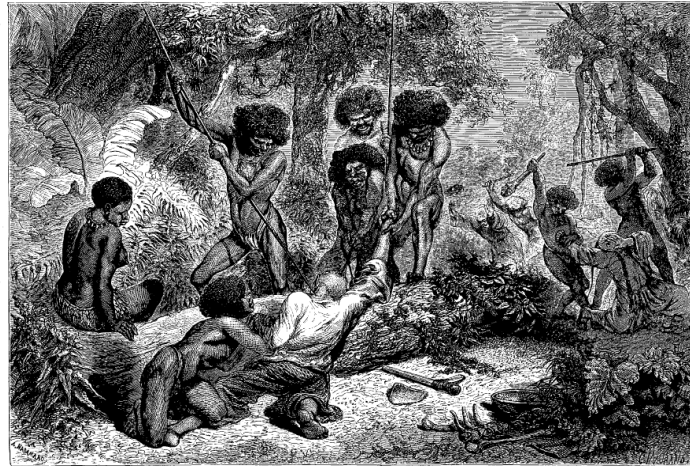
¹⁷ Aristide Hignard (1822–98): see Appendix B. At Elsinore (Denmark) Axel and Lidenbrock are disappointed to find Hamlet's castle knocked down and rebuilt (*Journey to the Centre of the Earth* ix) — although in fact the majority of the building survived the works at the end of the eighteenth century. Hignard stayed on in Denmark after Verne was urgently called back to France by his expectant wife, and in 1868 published a five-act opera called *Hamlet* (M. Allotte de la Fuÿe, *Jules Verne*, 87; Jean Jules-Verne, *Jules Verne*, 54).

¹⁸ Respectively: the leading god, god of wisdom, war, battle and death; a hammer-wielding god associated with thunder, lightning, strength, destruction, fertility and healing; and the god of fertility.

¹⁹ Walhalla (Fr.), or Valhalla, is a majestic hall, to which dead warriors are carried by the Valkyries.

²⁰ Respectively Har, Jafnhar and Thridie, early embodiments of Thor, Odin and Freyr. Verne's source is probably Abbé Jacques-Paul Migne, *Encyclopédie théologique: Série de dictionnaires sur toutes les parties de la science religieuse . . .* vols. 1–50, 1844–62; new series, vols. 1–52, 1851–66, in particular *Dictionnaire universel de mythologie: ancienne et moderne* (1855), 1438.

ocean, Kar the god of winds, Loki the god of fire, Tyr the god of war and Bragi the god of eloquence!²¹ And the wolf Feuris, chained up until the last days of the world!²² Sacrifice to the Three Fates,²³ Urd the past, Verandi the present, and Sihuld²⁴ the third! Get inspiration from the songs of the ancient *Edda*²⁵ and the colour of Scandinavian cosmogony! Sit at the hearth of that age-old family, Snaer the snow and his three daughters, Faun, or frozen snow, Driva, melted snow, and Miol, white snow.²⁶ My friend, how can I hesitate for a single moment!”



5 Hadamard, “Massacre of Chinese on Rossel Island” (*TdM* 1861.2 89)

²¹ Normally Freyja, goddess of love, beauty, fertility, war and death.

Aegyr, god of unquiet seas.

Normally spelled Kare, or Njörd, god of the winds, father of Freyja and like her prominently mentioned by Snorri Sturluson (see below).

Often spelled Loge or Logi, a fire giant described by Sturluson.

The god of single combat, victory and heroic glory, portrayed as one-handed.

Bragi, god of poetry, presented by Sturluson.

²² Although “Feuris” is attested in the contemporary literature, the correct form is Fenris: son of Locke, enchained by the gods, destined one day to swallow up the sun.

²³ Three Fates, or the Moirae, sisters in Roman mythology, Clotho, Lachesis and Atropos, goddesses of human destiny from the cradle to the grave.

²⁴ Respectively: “what has happened”; slip for Verdandi, “what is happening”; and Skuld, “what will happen”.

²⁵ The *Prose Edda*, a narrative of Norse mythology, by Snorri Sturluson (1179–1241), Icelandic historian, poet and politician, author also of the *Heimskringla*, a history of the Norwegian kings, and probable model for Arne Saknussemm in *Journey to the Centre of the Earth*.

²⁶ Verne’s source is *L’Univers pittoresque* (which he cites above), of which *Suède et Norwège [sic]* (1838), by Philippe Le Bas, forms a volume: “Snaer had . . . three daughters: Faun ([representing] frozen snow), Driva (melted snow) and Miol (white . . . snow)” (506).