



Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea · Episode 40 / 46 · B1–B2 · 00

From Cape Horn to the Amazon

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OVERVIEW

Summary

From Cape Horn to the Amazon — chapter 40 of Jules Verne's Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea, told in clear English for language learners.

Transcript

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Chapter Forty — From Cape Horn to the Amazon

I do not know how I got up onto the platform. Perhaps Ned carried me. But I was breathing the fresh sea air, and it filled me with joy. Ned and Conseil drank in the breeze like happy children. We felt strong and fresh again.

"How lovely this oxygen is!" said Conseil. "There is enough for everyone."

Ned said nothing, but opened his mouth as wide as a shark. Soon our strength came back. The crew stayed inside, happy with the air there, so we three were alone.

I thanked my two friends with all my heart. They had kept me alive through that terrible time.

"I will take you both with me," said Ned, "when I leave this Nautilus at last."

"Are we going the right way?" asked Conseil.

"Yes," I said. "We are following the sun, and the sun is in the north."

The Nautilus went fast. We passed the polar circle and rounded Cape Horn on the evening of March 31st. All our suffering in the ice was forgotten. We thought only of the future. Captain Nemo did not appear, but the map showed our course: we were going north, up the Atlantic.

On April 1st we saw land to the west. It was Terra del Fuego, "the land of fire," named long ago for the smoke of the natives' fires. High behind the low coast rose Mount Sarmiento, its sharp peak clear against the sky. The Nautilus dived and came close to shore. Through the windows I saw giant seaweeds, some three hundred yards long, thick as ropes. Seals and otters fed among them.

That evening we reached the Falkland Islands. Our nets brought up seaweed whose roots were full of the finest mussels in the world. We caught geese and ducks too, for the kitchen.

The Nautilus sank a little and followed the coast of South America. We passed Patagonia and the mouth of the Uruguay River, always heading north. We had now traveled 1,600 miles since Japan. We crossed the Tropic of Capricorn and passed Cape Frio. Nemo did not like the busy coast of Brazil, so we raced by so fast that no fish or bird could follow.

On April 9th we saw Cape San Roque, the eastern tip of South America. Then the Nautilus dived into a deep valley on the ocean floor, between America and Africa, in some places 9,000 yards deep. Nemo had drawn charts of this place with his own hand. For two days we crossed these deep, empty waters. On April 11th the ship rose near the mouth of the Amazon, the great river whose fresh water reaches far out to sea.

We crossed the equator. Twenty miles to the west lay the Guianas, where we might have found safety on land. But a strong wind was blowing and the waves were wild, so no small boat could live in them. Ned understood this and said nothing, and I did not speak of escape.

For two days the Nautilus stayed near the surface, and the nets brought up a wonderful catch. I studied many strange fish. There were long, eel-like fish that the Amazon had carried out to sea. There were little sharks, a yard

long, with rows of back-bent teeth, known as pantouffles. Some fish shone with gold spots, and others were a soft violet that changed color like a pigeon's throat.

Then Conseil had a shock he would never forget. A flat, round ray fish lay struggling on the platform, and he grabbed it with both hands to stop it escaping. At once he was thrown down, his legs in the air, half his body helpless.

"Master! Master! Help me!" he cried.

It was the first time he had spoken to me so warmly. Ned and I lifted him and rubbed his stiff arms until he could move again. He had seized an electric fish, which sends a powerful shock through the water.

The next day the Nautilus passed the Maroni River on the Dutch coast. There we saw manatees, gentle sea cows eighteen to twenty feet long. I told my friends how useful these animals are: they eat the weeds that would otherwise choke the tropical rivers. Men had hunted them almost to nothing, and the rotting weeds had poisoned the air and brought terrible fevers. We talked for a long time about how each creature has its place, and how much harm men do when they destroy the life of the sea.

Audio, timed transcript, and companions online:

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