



The Secret of the Earth

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When Dirk Waaijen, master of the Voorne, was five days out from the island of Celebes, a strange thing happened.

For nearly a week the Dutchman had idled along with a cargo of cocoa, jaggaree, trepang, some Manado coffee, a few bags of nutmegs and other products of the Archipelago, but without an incident worth logging; when suddenly, an odd looking cask, with mast and streamer, was seen floating in the waters ahead, and all hands became alive with excitement. A couple of burly fellows hauled the barrel upon the deck, with the expectation of a prize, but were discomfited on finding that it contained only some cotton cloth, carefully wrapped about a dirty water-stained document, written in a language which no one could understand. Even Captain Waaijen himself was unable to read a word of it, despite his wise look, and the volumes of smoke which he blew from time to time over the packet. Had he confided in me, his only English speaking passenger, I might at least have made him comprehend the importance of the paper, even if unable to render a literal translation; but the captain was surly, and took the bundle to his room. It is even possible that he was ignorant of the fact that it was written in the English language. However this may have been, I was surprised on reaching Gravenhage, the end of our voyage, to have the paper thrust into my hands by Waaijen himself, and without a word of explanation. Believing it to be merely the record of some unfortunate craft foundered in the South Sea, I laid the packet aside, not even unrolling it for weeks. When I did so, I was amazed at the contents, and immediately sought the master of the Voorne; but he had left upon another of those endless voyages, the length of which even the company was unable to decide. Assured that no claim will ever be made upon the document, and overwhelmed with the profundity of its contents, I offer it to the public, convinced that in the history of our planet, there is nothing half so astounding as the revelation it contains. It is to be regretted that the paper cannot be given in its entirety; the omissions, indicated by asterisks, being the result of damage caused by salt water to the MS., which has made it undecipherable in those places; the total thus lost amounting to more than a hundred pages.

The following is an exact rendering of the decipherable parts of the Attlebridge papers, handed me by the captain of the Voorne.

The Secret of the Earth Details

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From Reader Review The Secret of the Earth for online ebook

Benjamin Chandler says

One would think a book about two twin brothers who invent a flying machine and discover the hidden world and civilizations within the hollow earth would be more thrilling.

the gift says

this is sort of the opposite from edgar rice burroughs, in delayed action, in talk and conspiracy, in that it takes a while until the journey to the centre of the earth is even begun. unlike verne also, in that there is no obvious or subtle or any attempt to establish scientific plausibility, even possibility, of the hollow earth idea. if i was not aware it was coming, i would have thought this just another mysterious, victorian, adventure preamble...

first, the big dumb object seems to be a flying ship- but this is never explained, in science, in creation, in funding, and our dense narrator can only discover a bit because he is identical twin to the brother who creates the device. not that he does much with this info. not that he ever talks much to his genius sibling, and when they take off... at first, he treats the destination of the north pole as a joke, he enjoys flight for the opportunity to shoot geese while flying at the same height...

but the big dumb object is really only the deceptive start, the real concern, the real adventure, the extraordinary voyage, will be the discovery of the hollow earth- which everyone by now knows is open only at the north and south poles, as yet unexplored in any serious way in 1899, when this book was written. there are some beautiful vistas from our world, of cities at night, of dangerous fog, of hiding in clouds, of traveling at a mile a minute!- but the memorable vistas are the inner world, which happens to be without night, rain, snow, without all the disadvantages of our surface, with many friendly humanoids- but our heroes never really stop their exploration and visit because, well, they do not speak english-

wait, what!? yes, that is another way it is not burroughs. it is this world, this remarkable, fantastic, wondrous place where there are other people mostly met from thirty metres above, where there are no comely slave girls or princesses or slave girl/princesses to rescue, to save, no monsters or evil priests or emperors or priest/emperors, to slay, to escape, no there is none of that. this book does have some great images. maybe in a sequel you could have a war or something. maybe edgar rice just got bored waiting so wrote it himself. on the other, i looked at other books of that decade i have read, and as much as i love philosopher henri bergson, he does not have such great images...

Chanel Earl says

This book is like Journey to the Center of the Earth only with different mythologies. It is classic sci-fi that doesn't get read as often as Verne, but I thought it was just as good. (Keep in mind, my Verne experience is very limited.)
