

Family Theatre  
Twenty-Thousand Leagues Under the Sea  
By Jules Verne  
Originally broadcast April 22, 1953

CAST

Announcer  
Professor  
Aronnax  
Captain Nemo  
Boy  
Consais  
Farragaut  
Land  
Deckhand 1  
Deckhand 2

ANNOUNCER: Years before their appearance, Jules Verne foretold the submarine, the balloon, the airplane, the telephone, the long-range projectile, and many other inventions. But perhaps his greatest writing achievement was the complex but very human character of Captain Nemo, the tragic star of Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea. In this man we glimpse Homer's "Ulysses", Shakespeare's "Hamlet", and ourselves; our dreams, our disillusionment's, above all, our instinctive yearning for good. These are the things that make Captain Nemo and his great adventure timeless. And so it is with pride and pleasure that Family Theatre presents Gene Lockheart as Captain Aronnax in Jules Verne's beloved classic Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea.

MUSIC

The Earth does not need new continents. It needs new men.

MUSIC

PIERRE ARONNAX: My name is Pierre Aronnax. I am an assistant professor in the Museum of Natural History in Paris. The year is eighteen sixty-six. Delving into the unknown, as I do, there is little that surprises me, and yet, today, in this modern life, unbelievable newspaper headlines shock the world.

BOY: Extra! Extra! A steamer attacked by sea serpent! Read all about it! Extra!

MUSIC

BOY: Extra! Extra! Another ship attacked! Navy to sea monster! Extra! Extra! Extra! Extra!

PIERRE ARONNAX: I was in my New York apartment at the conclusion of my most recent scientific tour and had planned to return to Paris with my valuable collection of specimens when. . .

CONSAIS: Professor Aronnax,

PIERRE ARONNAX: Yes, Consais? What is it?

CONSAIS: Commander Farragut of the United States Navy to see you, sir.

ARONNAX: Commander Farragut!

FARRAGAUT: Professor Aronnax. This is a great pleasure.

ARONNAX: Well, believe me, Commander Farragut, I, the feeling is mutual, in fact, I'm somewhat overcome. To have a man of your reputation seek out an obscure professor. . .

FARRAGAUT: Quite the contrary, sir. My government would like to see France represented in the expedition in search of the monster.

ARONNAX: You mean you wish me to. . .

FARRAGAUT: I am holding a cabin at your disposal on the President Lincoln, sir. We leave Brooklyn Pier in three hours.

MUSIC

ARONNAX: You have a fine ship, Commander.

FARRAGAUT: Yes, we're well armed, professor.

ARONNAX: Yes, didn't I see a breach loading cannon atop your foxhole?

FARRAGAUT: You did, sir. But my best weapon of all, professor, is Ned Lan.

ARONNAX: Huh?

FARRAGAUT: Oh, Ned! Come over here, if you please.

LAND: Ay-Ay, Commander Farragaut. At you service, sir.

FARRAGAUT: Professor Aronnax, Ned is known all over the seven seas as the prince of harpooners. If and when we track down the sea monster, he'll show you some real action.

ARONNAX: You have a real test for your talents, Mr. Lan. It's a fabulous beast indeed that can stove in the side of a ship.

FARRAGAUT: You're speaking of a scosha, a take it. Begging your pardon, professor, if there should be a sea monster that big, that mighty, then Ned Lan wants to be the man to harpoon it.

MUSIC

ARONNAX: That's the way our voyage began, a strong ship, hand picked men, and a vast curiosity and determination to end this terror of the seas. On and on we went, past the marquises, the Sandwich Islands, across the Tropic of Cancer, and headed for the China Seas. And then. . .

.

LAND: Ahoy there! The very thing we're looking for! On our weather beam, the sea monster!

Walla of cheers from crew

LAND: I can't harpoon it sir, the monster's runnin' circles around us. We can't get near enough for me to use my harpoon.

FARRAGAUT: Right the helm, ahead as you are.

LAND: It's no use, Commander, the monster's going twice as fast as we are.

FARRAGAUT: I know it sir. There's only one thing left to do. . . stand and fight. Up to the foxhole cannon, men!

MUSIC

ARONNAX: The foxhole gun was loaded and slewed into position. The President Lincoln was running at half speed now, and the sea monster seemed content to follow at a certain distance, as though mocking us. The gunner, steady of eye, brave of face, took long and careful aim, and then. . .

FARRAGAUT: Fire!

F/X: boom

DECKHAND 1: Watch out sir, the monster's closin' in on us! That shot made him mad. He's gonna ram us!

Yells F/X: crash More yells

DECK HAND 1: Professor Aronnax! He's fallen overboard!

DECK HAND 2: And so has Ned Lan!

MUSIC

NEMO: I trust that the state of your health is improving, Professor Aronnax.

ARONNAX: Uhg, where. . . where am I?

NEMO: Aboard my submarine, the Nautilus.

ARONNAX: Submarine?

LAND: Who. . . who are you?

NEMO: You may address me as Captain Nemo, Mr Lan.

LAND: Captain? Submarine? Then you're. . .

NEMO: I am your sea monster, oh prince of harpooners.

ARONNAX: Captain, how do you know so much about us?

NEMO: You told me, professor. You were some what delirious for awhile, thus I learned all about yourself, your servant Consais, and uh, hmph, Ned Lan. I also know that you are from the frigate President Lincoln, which deliberately invaded my privacy -- attacked me. You are prisoners of war. By rights I should place you back on deck and submerge, forgetting your existence.

ARONNAX: Well, you wouldn't dare. Why, that wouldn't be civilized.

NEMO: I am not what you so glibly call a civilized man, Professor Aronnax.

ARONNAX: Then what is to be our fate, Captain Nemo?

NEMO: I am not all together heartless. I do have a certain sense of pity for any living thing, but of course you must live under my law. Give your word to cause no trouble, and don't try to escape.

LAND: Stay with you? For how long?

NEMO: For the rest of you life, Mr. Lan.

ARONNAX: Do you know what you ask, Captain? Are we never to see our country again? Our friends? Our families?

NEMO: You'll see far more fascinating country under water. Renouncing the world is not so painful as you think.

ARONNAX: You're simply offering us the choice between life and death.

NEMO: Just that.

ARONNAX: Then we, we have no choice. Captain Nemo, we will abide by your wishes.

NEMO: It won't be as bad as you think, gentlemen. You, professor will find your own published works in my library. And I will show you marvels under sea that even you haven't dreamed of. You will live in the best of quarters. You will enjoy the finest foods.

LAND: Yes, but without freedom.

NEMO: There is always a price, sir. Be glad that yours is no higher.

MUSIC

ARONNAX: We were fed, housed in comfortable quarters and we slept. But little did I dream of the wonders that tomorrow would bring. Right after breakfast Ned and Consais were taken to their permanent quarters while I was escorted to a luxurious sweet adjoining the quarters of Captain Nemo himself. As a stared about me in amazement, I heard the strains of a pipe organ in the next room. And venturing in, I found myself in a magnificent drawing room and the captain at the keyboard of the organ.

ORGAN MUSIC

NEMO: Good morning, Professor Aronnax. You seem somewhat surprised to learn that I practice the arts as well as the sciences.

ARONNAX: I must confess, Captain Nemo, I scarcely expected to find you a musician of such inspired music.

NEMO: Inspired?

ARONNAX: I see too, that you have priceless works of art on the walls. A Madonna by Raphael, a virgin by DaVinci, a nymph by Carravaggio, and an assumption by Moreo.

NEMO: I see that the professor of natural history has not neglected his cultural training.

ARONNAX: Even a museum professor can have taste, sir, and a zest for life, an appreciation of beauty.

NEMO: I like you, Professor Aronnax. I like courage in a quiet man. Native pride. You. . . you have no answer for this turn of events?

ARONNAX: I must admit, I don't know what to say.

NEMO: Then say nothing, but watch instead. I have another wonder to show you. I go over here to press a lever,

ARONNAX: Great heavens! The whole side of the submarine is sliding back! We-we're doomed!

NEMO: Do not fear, sir. We are protected from the sea by several layers of heavy glass. Behold. Behold the army of the sea, professor. The fish seem to float in liquid light, do they not?

ARONNAX: It's unbelievable.

NEMO: But true! The banded mallot, the Japanese cumbrus, the beautiful mackerel, all sewn by the hand of him who created all living things.

ARONNAX: Him? Then. . . then you. . .

NEMO: . . . believe in God. Look out there, my dear professor, in the face of such wonders, how could I possibly not believe in such a deity?

ARONNAX: But I don't understand. You gave up the world. . .

NEMO: Merely because I forsook man does not me I forsook God. In the sea I sense the weaving of creation on every hand.

ARONNAX: But with this philosophy how can you forget man? How, and why?

NEMO: Why, why does mankind which has forgotten not I, they've forgotten God by making unjust laws, tearing one another to pieces, destroying. . . Professor, you and your friend shall accompany me on my next hunting expedition.

MUSIC

NEMO: If you will kindly don these into your diving suits and weighted boots we'll soon be off on the hunt.

LAND: Hunt in divin' suits?

ARONNAX: Captain Nemo has promised undreamed wonders, Ned.

LAND: I can believe that, sir.

NEMO: Ah, we've now arrived at the forests of the lost island of Crespa, gentlemen. You, have your suits on? Now please put the helmets in place. I am about to close the waterproof door.

ARONNAX: We were in utter darkness. The ruki-ro apparatus began operating as soon as our helmets were fixed firmly in place, and I breathed with ease. Now, I was about to step into a completely new element the sinister unknown. Let by a man, who, for all I knew, was mad. A second door, located in the outer shell of the Nautilus slid back, and in another moment I was treaded the floor of the ocean.

MUSIC

ARONNAX: Oh, my dear friends, how can I describe the sight that met my eyes. A fantastic dream? No. More like, an emotion. Yes, and emotion, that's it. I moved through unbelievable beauty. No longer feeling the drag of my clothing and weighted shoes. The water acted like a prism for the early morning sun. So that we walked in the radiance of the seven solar colors. I could see the silver sand shimmering away to a distance of, of a hundred and fifty yards, and dotted with star shells, flowers, and rocks, and shells, and pulpy of every shade and formation.

ARONNAX: What. . . (LAUGHING). . . what if my colleagues could see me now? They wouldn't believe it, no.

NEMO: We're approaching the old Spanish galleon, but here, friends, look, look as I open this gigantic chest. There, look, gold! Plenty of it. Sparkling, glinting in cold salt water. My eternal bank. I fill the small chest we brought along, and now, my dear professor, we'll go to my pearl beds.

MUSIC

ARONNAX: Captain, all these riches we saw today, you can use only so much, what good is the rest, unless you help your fellow man.

NEMO: Professor Aronnax, you are my guest, an onlooker, I do not desire your advice.

ARONNAX: Auh, but it seems such a waste, sir. With so much need in the world,

NEMO: Enough! Yes, there is need. I am and ever shall be one with unfortunance.

ARONNAX: Oh, Captain, look out there, a diver! He's looking in at us.

NEMO: Oh, yes. We're near shore.

ARONNAX: But. . . but what does he want?

NEMO: You asked a question, professor, you shall have your answer.

MUSIC

ARONNAX: And even as I watched, a crew member in a diving suit appeared outside the window and gave the native diver the small treasure chest taken from the Spanish Gallion. The swimmer returned to the window, humbly saluted Captain Nemo, who returned the gesture and then the diver darted upward with his treasure. I turned and looked at Nemo.

NEMO: What more do you want of me, Professor Aronnax? A confession written in hearts blood that though I hate the world I love my fellow man?

MUSIC

ARONNAX: I couldn't answer him. If ever I saw tragedy burned across a man's face, I saw it in Nemo's. I could now understand his bitter philosophy. His moods blowing hot and cold. Like, like destroying searing winds. And then a week later, Ned, Consais, and I saw another side of Nemo's nature. He had sighted the mysterious Man-o-War. The ship fired at us.

LAND: They're firin' a us. Let me at that periscope.

NEMO: Stand back, Mr. Land. The ship of an accursed nation. You recognize me, don't you. You fear me. Now, my vengeance. Torpedo One! Fire!

ARONNAX: No! Captain! No! They won't have a chance.

MUSIC

ARONNAX: The Man-o-War seemed to disintegrate. Captain Nemo watched it sink. An Archangel of hatred. Then he turned and entered his quarters. I followed him as though hypnotized. I saw him uncover a picture on the far wall. A portrait of a young woman, and two beautiful children. Before this little group, Nemo spread out his arms, and then. . .

NEMO: Almighty God, enough, enough.

MUSIC

ARONNAX: After that catastrophic occurrence, the Nautilus moved on more and more of a dream world. And then Ned came to me with his plan.

LAND: We're escapin' tonight, professor.

ARONNAX: Escape? Are we in sight of land?

LAND: Ay, just took the rection. There are hill twenty miles to the east of us.

ARONNAX: Twenty miles, it might as well be two hundred. You know very well that I'm not a swimmer, Ned.

LAND: You won't have to swim, sir. We'll take the small boat. We'll meet at ten tonight.

ARONNAX: Oh, heaven knows I'm with you, Ned. Lay your plans. I'll meet you at ten.

MUSIC

ARONNAX: I went to my quarters, dressed in my stoutest sea garment, collected my notes and settled down to await the appointed time. And then, music, from a tormented soul, longing to break it's earthly bonds. Such music as could only come from Captain Nemo himself. And then my heart froze in terror. The very room I must cross in order to make my escape. I made my way to the drawing room. The room was in a greenish half-light, Nemo sat before the pipe organ. Playing as though music were his last avenue of expression in life. I held my breath, I passed in back of him. I reached for the far door.

NEMO: STOP!

ARONNAX: Captain Nemo arose and came straight toward me. I slammed the heavy door. Bolted it and ran to meet Ned.

LAND: Professor, is that you?

ARONNAX: Yes, yes, let's go!

LAND: Aye sir. We have surfaced to take on fresh air.

ARONNAX: They're coming after us!

LAND: Quick, up on deck. Come on, professor, hurry!

ARONNAX: Oh, good heavens! A Storm!

LAND: A storm nothin' - it's a maelstrom! Quick - get on the small boat!

MUSIC

ARONNAX: Oh, now the waves? We're caught in the mailstrom! We're going down!

???: You're safe, professor. Quite safe now.

ARONNAX: Consais?

???: Same sir. And he has Ned too. He brought us through the maelstrom safely.

LAND: We're in a fisherman's hut on the Lofotan Islands, professor.

ARONNAX: But the. . . the Nautilus?



LAND: She was caught fair in the middle of it and went down, sir. And it's no better than she deserved if you ask me.

ARONNAX: If anyone could survive such a storm, Captain Nemo could. At least, I hope so.

LAND: You hope so!

ARONNAX: Yes, Ned. After traveling twenty thousand leagues under the sea with Nemo, I hope he lives on to conquer his hatred for the world, forget vengeance in his love for the oppressed, as Ecclesiastics questioned six-thousand years ago, "that which is far off and exceeding deep, who can find it out?" I hope that Captain Nemo can find his answer.

MUSIC