

Review - Baron Trump's Marvellous Underground Journey

Written by Elizabeth Austin

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ELIZABETH AUSTIN, OCT 26 2017

Baron Trump's Marvellous Underground Journey
By Ingersoll Lockwood
London: Penguin Books, 1893

In 1893, an American lawyer named Ingersoll Lockwood wrote *Baron Trump's Marvellous Underground Journey*. It tells the story of a wealthy young man, Baron Trump, who is bored with his life of luxury and sets off on an adventure. Though written nearly 130 years ago, it reads as if it was written for today's Trump family. These parallels have caused some conspiracy theorists to claim that U.S. President Donald Trump is a time traveler who inspired Lockwood's tale. Of that I'm dubious, but if Mr. Trump were to read and learn from this story, he and the country could benefit in many ways.

Let's dive in.

In Lockwood's story, Baron Trump is a young aristocrat suffering from ennui. Then a friend of his father's gives him a 15th century manuscript penned by a man named Don. The manuscript details a mystic "World within a World" near the center of the Earth, and the only way to reach it is through a portal in Russia.

There is no map to the portal, but Don explains that as the reader travels through Russia, "the people will tell thee" where the portal is and how to get there. Baron Trump then sets off for Russia with his trusted dog, Bulger, and finds the portal with the help of the Russian people.

In this World within a World, he encounters four strikingly different lands:

1. The Land of Transparent Folk
2. The Land of the Sodopsies or Ant People
3. The Frozen Land of King Gilead
4. The Land of the Rattlebrains or Happy Forgetters

The Land of Transparent Folk

The people here wear long black cloaks and hold large black fans to cover their transparent bodies and if they say something untrue, it clouds them and they become opaque. One of the folk explains it to Trump this way:

"I may as well tell you right here that falsehood is unknown, or, more correctly stated, impossible in the Land of Transparent Folk...the slightest attempt to say one thing when they are thinking another roils and clouds them as if a drop of milk had fallen into a glass of the purest water."

He further explains that in the upper world, "...your people really love noise, and that the man who makes the greatest

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noise is considered the greatest man.”

That is not true, he says, in the Land of Transparent Folk. To speak clearly, honestly, and with purpose is far more admirable. Baron Trump listens, absorbs this, and travels on to the next land.

The Land of the Sodopsies or Ant People

Hundreds of years ago, the “sodopsies” or “ant people” experienced an unexpected Ice Age that drove them down into the World within a World. It was dark and they didn't know where they would find food. Eventually, they found a natural gas source and were able to make fire and cook fish they found in a nearby river.

However, because they were no longer exposed to natural light or sound, over time they lost their eyesight and hearing. Having lost these senses, they lost the ability to speak and developed a form of sign language using touch.

Trump quickly learns their language and expresses his regret at their tragic life. They disagree and explain that they are glad to have lost these senses for it allows them to live without a ruler:

“No one would have any desire to be a ruler if there was no one left to look at him and if he couldn't hear what the flatterers said about him. Vanity is the soil that rulers spring from... They pretend that it is the exercise of power that they are so fond of. Believe them not. It is the gratification of their vanity and nothing else.”

Then, a giant tortoise invades their land and kills one of the Ant People. Trump devises a plan to poison the tortoise with natural gas. Once the tortoise is dead, its shell is turned into a boat for Trump and he sails away to the next land.

The Frozen Land of King Gilead

Here, everything is made of ice and everyone has a very low body temperature. Since their brains are “frozen” they take a long time to process information and make decisions. Their ruler, King Gilead, explains that they do not like men who have warm body temperatures, described as “hot heads.” These men are dangerous for their brains move too quickly and they rush to judgment without examining the consequences. King Gilead believes it is better to think slowly and consider all the options before making a decision.

Trump stays for a long time in this land but his body temperature remains too warm for him to remain there and he travels to the final land.

The Land of the Rattlebrains or Happy Forgetters

In this land, everyone's memories are very short. They don't remember anything from any time more than an hour or so before. They see this as a virtue, for if no one remembers anything they can't have disagreements or hold grudges. Their heads are very small since they can't hold memories. They are scared of Trump's large head, banish him, and push him and Bulger back through the portal.

Baron Trump then returns from Russia to Castle Trump in Germany and continues his life without much self-reflection. The End.

Almost anyone would benefit from the lessons in this book, particularly Donald Trump. He could learn the value of speaking clearly and honestly, and not just being loud to make a point, from the Land of Transparent Folk. If he listened to the Ant People, he might stop ruling with vanity, only valuing flatterers and big crowds, and be more equitable. Perhaps he would cool down a little, like those in the Frozen Land of King Gilead, and be less of a “hot head.” And maybe, like the Happy Forgetters, he would not hold so many grudges, and, as a result, spend less time on Twitter and more time engaging in peaceful, productive policymaking.

Baron Trump, apparently, was not changed by his experiences. Perhaps that is the real story.

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About the author:

Elizabeth Austin is a writer in Los Angeles. Her debut novel, *Compass Rose*, was released in March 2017. Elizabeth has a master's in international affairs from the American University of Paris, where she was awarded a travel grant and completed thesis field work in Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh. She also has a master's in international relations from the University of St. Andrews, for which she completed dissertation field work in Cambodia. She has contributed articles to *International Policy Digest* and *Global Politics Magazine*, and book reviews to E-International Relations.