

9. The Second Journey

By this time you will have gained a fair idea of Rob's character. He is, in truth, a typical American boy, possessing an average intelligence not yet regulated by the balance-wheel of experience. The mysteries of electricity were so attractive to his eager nature that he had devoted considerable time and some study to electrical experiment; but his study was the superficial kind that seeks to master only such details as may be required at the moment. Moreover, he was full of boyish recklessness and irresponsibility and therefore difficult to impress with the dignity of science and the gravity of human existence. Life, to him, was a great theater wherein he saw himself the most interesting if not the most important actor, and so enjoyed the play with unbounded enthusiasm.

Aside from the extraordinary accident which had forced the Electrical Demon into this life, Rob may be considered one of those youngsters who might possibly develop into a brilliant manhood or enter upon an ordinary, humdrum existence, as Fate should determine. Just at present he had no thought beyond the passing hour, nor would he bother himself by attempting to look ahead or plan for the future.

Yet the importance of his electrical possessions and the stern injunction of the Demon to use them wisely had rendered the boy more thoughtful than at any previous time during his brief life, and he became so preoccupied at the dinner table that his father and mother cast many anxious looks in his direction.

Of course Rob was anxious to test his newly-acquired powers, and decided to lose no time in starting upon another journey. But he said nothing to any of the family about it, fearing to meet with opposition.

He passed the evening in the sitting-room, in company with his father and mother and sisters, and even controlled his impatience to the extent of playing a game of carom with Nell; but he grew so nervous and impatient at last that his sister gave up the game in disgust and left him to his own amusement.

At one time he thought of putting on the electric spectacles and seeing what the real character of each member of his family might be; but a sudden fear took possession of him that he might regret the act forever afterward. They were his nearest and dearest friends on earth, and in

his boyish heart he loved them all and believed in their goodness and sincerity. The possibility of finding a bad character mark on any of their familiar faces made him shudder, and he determined then and there never to use the spectacles to view the face of a friend or relative. Had any one, at that moment, been gazing at Rob through the lenses of the wonderful Character Marker, I am sure a big "W" would have been found upon the boy's forehead.

When the family circle broke up, and all retired for the night, Rob kissed his parents and sisters with real affection before going to his own room. But, on reaching his cozy little chamber, instead of preparing for bed Rob clothed himself in the Garment of Repulsion. Then he covered the glittering Garment with his best summer suit of clothes, which effectually concealed it.

He now looked around to see what else he should take, and thought of an umbrella, a rain-coat, a book or two to read during the journey, and several things besides; but he ended by leaving them all behind.

"I can't be loaded down with so much truck," he decided; "and I'm going into civilized countries, this time, where I can get anything I need."

However, to prevent a recurrence of the mistake he had previously made, he tore a map of the world and a map of Europe from his geography, and, folding them up, placed them in his pocket. He also took a small compass that had once been a watch-charm, and, finally, the contents of a small iron bank that opened with a combination lock. This represented all his savings, amounting to two dollars and seventeen cents in dimes, nickles and pennies.

"It isn't a fortune," he thought, as he counted it up, "but I didn't need any money the last trip, so perhaps I'll get along somehow. I don't like to tackle Dad for more, for he might ask questions and try to keep me at home."

By the time he had finished his preparations and stowed all his electrical belongings in his various pockets, it was nearly midnight and the house was quiet. So Rob stole down stairs in his stocking feet and noiselessly opened the back door.

It was a beautiful July night and, in addition to the light of the full moon, the sky was filled with the radiance of countless thousands of brilliant stars.

After Rob had put on his shoes he unfolded the map, which was plainly visible by the starlight, and marked the direction he must take to cross the Atlantic and reach London, his first stopping place. Then he consulted his compass, put the indicator of his traveling machine to the word "up," and shot swiftly into the air. When he had reached a sufficient height he placed the indicator to a point north of east and, with a steady and remarkably swift flight, began his journey.

"Here goes," he remarked, with a sense of exaltation, "for another week of adventure! I wonder what'll happen between now and next Saturday."