

Rob smiled and pointed the electric tube at the man, who doubtless recognized its power, for he fell back scowling and trembling.

"This place seems like a good jog from civilization," remarked the boy, as coolly as if his companion could understand what he said; "but as your legs are long and strong you may be able to find your way. It's true you're liable to starve to death, but if you do it will be your own misfortune and not my fault."

The Turk glared at him sullenly, but did not attempt to reply.

Rob took out his box of tablets, ate one of them and offered another to his enemy. The fellow accepted it ungraciously enough, but seeing Rob eat one he decided to follow his example, and consumed the tablet with a queer expression of distrust upon his face.

"Brave man!" cried Rob, laughingly; "you've avoided the pangs of starvation for a time, anyhow, so I can leave you with a clear conscience."

Without more ado, he turned the indicator of the traveling machine and mounted into the air, leaving the Turk sitting upon the rocks and staring after him in comical bewilderment.

15. A Battle with Monsters

Our young adventurer never experienced a more grateful feeling of relief and security than when he found himself once more high in the air, alone, and in undisputed possession of the electrical devices bestowed upon him by the Demon.

The dangers he had passed through since landing at the city of the desert and the desperate chance that alone had permitted him to regain the traveling machine made him shudder at the bare recollection and rendered him more sober and thoughtful than usual.

We who stick closely to the earth's surface can scarcely realize how Rob could travel through the air at such dizzy heights without any fear or concern whatsoever. But he had come to consider the air a veritable refuge. Experience had given him implicit confidence in the powers of the electrical instrument whose unseen forces carried him so swiftly and

surely, and while the tiny, watch-like machine was clasped to his wrist he felt himself to be absolutely safe.

Having slipped away from the Turk and attained a fair altitude, he set the indicator at zero and paused long enough to consult his map and decide what direction it was best for him to take. The mischance that had swept him unwittingly over the countries of Europe had also carried him more than half way around the world from his home. Therefore the nearest way to reach America would be to continue traveling to the eastward.

So much time had been consumed at the desert oasis that he felt he must now hasten if he wished to reach home by Saturday afternoon; so, having quickly come to a decision, he turned the indicator and began a swift flight into the east.

For several hours he traveled above the great desert of Gobi, but by noon signs of a more fertile country began to appear, and, dropping to a point nearer the earth, he was able to observe closely the country of the Chinese, with its crowded population and ancient but crude civilization.

Then he came to the Great Wall of China and to mighty Peking, above which he hovered some time, examining it curiously. He really longed to make a stop there, but with his late experiences fresh in his mind he thought it much safer to view the wonderful city from a distance.

Resuming his flight he presently came to the gulf of Laou Tong, whose fair face was freckled with many ships of many nations, and so on to Korea, which seemed to him a land fully a century behind the times.

Night overtook him while speeding across the Sea of Japan, and having a great desire to view the Mikado's famous islands, he put the indicator at zero, and, coming to a full stop, composed himself to sleep until morning, that he might run no chances of being carried beyond his knowledge during the night.

You might suppose it no easy task to sleep suspended in mid-air, yet the magnetic currents controlled by the traveling machine were so evenly balanced that Rob was fully as comfortable as if reposing upon a bed of down. He had become somewhat accustomed to passing the night in the air and now slept remarkably well, having no fear of burglars or fire or other interruptions that dwellers in cities are subject to.

One thing, however, he should have remembered: that he was in an ancient and little known part of the world and reposing above a sea famous in fable as the home of many fierce and terrible creatures; while not far away lay the land of the dragon, the simurg and other ferocious monsters.

Rob may have read of these things in fairy tales and books of travel, but if so they had entirely slipped his mind; so he slumbered peacefully and actually snored a little, I believe, towards morning.

But even as the red sun peeped curiously over the horizon he was awakened by a most unusual disturbance--a succession of hoarse screams and a pounding of the air as from the quickly revolving blades of some huge windmill.

He rubbed his eyes and looked around.

Coming towards him at his right hand was an immense bird, whose body seemed almost as big as that of a horse. Its wide-open, curving beak was set with rows of pointed teeth, and the talons held against its breast and turned threateningly outward were more powerful and dreadful than a tiger's claws.

While, fascinated and horrified, he watched the approach of this feathered monster, a scream sounded just behind him and the next instant the stroke of a mighty wing sent him whirling over and over through the air.

He soon came to a stop, however, and saw that another of the monsters had come upon him from the rear and was now, with its mate, circling closely around him, while both uttered continuously their hoarse, savage cries.

Rob wondered why the Garment of Repulsion had not protected him from the blow of the bird's wing; but, as a matter of fact, it had protected him. For it was not the wing itself but the force of the eddying currents of air that had sent him whirling away from the monster. With the indicator at zero the magnetic currents and the opposing powers of attraction and repulsion were so evenly balanced that any violent atmospheric disturbance affected him in the same way that thistledown is affected by a summer breeze. He had noticed something of this before, but whenever a strong wind was blowing he was accustomed to rise to a

position above the air currents. This was the first time he had slept with the indicator at zero.

The huge birds at once renewed their attack, but Rob had now recovered his wits sufficiently to draw the electric tube from his pocket. The first one to dart towards him received the powerful electric current direct from the tube, and fell stunned and fluttering to the surface of the sea, where it floated motionless. Its mate, perhaps warned by this sudden disaster, renewed its circling flight, moving so swiftly that Rob could scarcely follow it, and drawing nearer and nearer every moment to its intended victim. The boy could not turn in the air very quickly, and he feared an attack in the back, mistrusting the saving power of the Garment of Repulsion under such circumstances; so in desperation he pressed his finger upon the button of the tube and whirled the instrument around his head in the opposite direction to that in which the monster was circling. Presently the current and the bird met, and with one last scream the creature tumbled downwards to join its fellow upon the waves, where they lay like two floating islands.

Their presence had left a rank, sickening stench in the surrounding atmosphere, so Rob made haste to resume his journey and was soon moving rapidly eastward.

He could not control a shudder at the recollection of his recent combat, and realized the horror of a meeting with such creatures by one who had no protection from their sharp beaks and talons.

"It's no wonder the Japs draw ugly pictures of those monsters," he thought. "People who live in these parts must pass most of their lives in a tremble."

The sun was now shining brilliantly, and when the beautiful islands of Japan came in sight Rob found that he had recovered his wonted cheerfulness. He moved along slowly, hovering with curious interest over the quaint and picturesque villages and watching the industrious Japanese patiently toiling at their tasks. Just before he reached Tokio he came to a military fort, and for nearly an hour watched the skilful maneuvers of a regiment of soldiers at their morning drill. They were not very big people, compared with other nations, but they seemed alert and well trained, and the boy decided it would require a brave enemy to face them on a field of battle.

Having at length satisfied his curiosity as to Japanese life and customs Rob prepared for his long flight across the Pacific Ocean.

By consulting his map he discovered that should he maintain his course due east, as before, he would arrive at a point in America very near to San Francisco, which suited his plans excellently.

Having found that he moved more swiftly when farthest from the earth's surface, because the air was more rarefied and offered less resistance, Rob mounted upwards until the islands of Japan were mere specks visible through the clear, sunny atmosphere.

Then he began his eastward flight, the broad surface of the Pacific seeming like a blue cloud far beneath him.