

Tucholsky Wagner Zola Scott
Turgenev Wallace Fonatne Sydon Freud Schlegel
Twain Walther von der Vogelweide Fouqué Friedrich II. von Preußen
Weber Freiligrath Frey
Fechner Fichte Weiße Rose von Fallersleben Kant Ernst Richthofen Frommel
Engels Fielding Hölderlin Eichendorff Tacitus Dumas
Fehrs Faber Flaubert Eliasberg Eliot Zweig Ebner Eschenbach
Feuerbach Maximilian I. von Habsburg Fock Ewald Vergil
Goethe Elisabeth von Österreich London
Mendelssohn Balzac Shakespeare Rathenau Dostojewski Ganghofer
Trackl Stevenson Lichtenberg Doyle Gjellerup
Mommssen Thoma Tolstoi Lenz Hambruch Droste-Hülshoff
Dach Thoma von Arnim Hägele Hanrieder Hauptmann Humboldt
Karrillon Reuter Verne Rousseau Hagen Hauff Baudelaire Gautier
Garschin Defoe Hebbel Hegel Kussmaul Herder
Damaschke Descartes Schopenhauer Bebel Proust
Wolfram von Eschenbach Darwin Dickens Grimm Jerome Rilke George
Bronner Campe Horváth Aristoteles Voltaire Federer Herodot
Bismarck Vigny Gengenbach Barlach Heine Grillparzer Georgy
Storm Casanova Lessing Langbein Gilm Gryphius
Chamberlain Tersteegen Gilm Grillparzer Georgy
Brentano Claudius Schiller Lafontaine Kralik Iffland Sokrates
Strachwitz Bellamy Gerstäcker Raabe Gibbon Tschechow
Katharina II. von Rußland Schilling Kraus
Löns Hesse Hoffmann Gogol Wilde Gleim Vulpius
Luther Heym Hofmannsthal Klee Hölty Morgenstern Goedicke
Roth Heyse Klopstock Puschkin Homer Kleist Mörike Musil
Luxemburg La Roche Horaz Kraus
Machiavelli Kierkegaard Kraft Kraus
Navarra Aurel Musset Lamprecht Kind Kirchhoff Hugo Moltke
Nestroy Marie de France
Nietzsche Nansen Laotse Ipsen Liebknecht Ringelnatz
Marx Lassalle Gorki Klett Leibniz
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**Through the Air to the North Pole
or The Wonderful Cruise of the
Electric Monarch**

Roy Rockwood

Imprint

This book is part of the TREDITION CLASSICS series.

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THROUGH THE AIR TO THE NORTH POLE.

CHAPTER I

DRIVEN FROM TOWN

"Come now, you boys git out of here! No tramps allowed in Freeport while Ezra Jenkins is constable! Move along, now, or I'll arrest ye! Here's my badge of authority!" And a crabbed old man, wearing a faded blue suit, with a big shining star of metal on his coat, tapped the emblem with his club.

Two boys, who had just joined each other, after having called at houses on the main street of the little New York village, where Constable Jenkins held sway as the entire police force, started at the sound of the harsh voice.

"Come; are ye goin' to move?" snapped the constable.

"I suppose we'll have to," answered the larger and stouter of the two lads, "but we haven't done anything."

"Ye're tramps, ain't ye?" inquired the constable. "Course ye are! Been beggin', ain't ye? Course ye have! I kin see the victuals stickin' out of yer pockets now! Move on an' git out of Freeport! We don't want any tramps here!"

"Come on, Mark," said the heavier of the two boys; "if our room is better than our company, they can have the room. I hope you'll get richer boarders than we are," the youth went on, turning to the constable. "We are going to shake the dust of Freeport from our feet. I think they ought to call this town Closedport instead of Freeport!"

"None of yer sass, now!" warned the constable, tapping his badge again.

"Jest you move on out of town!"

"I think we had better go," murmured the other boy, who was thin and small. "Don't make any trouble, Jack."

"All right," assented the other. "Ta-ta, Mr. Chief of Police! See you later!"

"Here, you young rascals!" cried the constable. "Come back here an' I'll lock ye up!"

But the boys started to run, and, as Mr. Jenkins was no longer young, and as his legs were rather stiff, he went only a little way before he had to stop. He shook his fist after the two lads.

"Do you suppose he would have locked us up?" asked the small boy, whom his companion addressed as Mark. His full name was Mark Sampson, but he was very unlike his strong ancestor who pulled over the pillars of the temple.

"He acted mean enough to do anything," replied Jack Darrow, who was quite a contrast in point of size and fleshiness to his companion.

"What shall we do now?" asked Mark.

"Keep on moving, I guess," was the reply, "At least until we get outside of Freeport."

"Well, I'm glad I've got company now. It was lonesome before I met you."

"Same here. We'll travel a way together, eh?"

The two boys had met under rather strange circumstances. Early that morning Jack Darrow, the stout one, had awakened from his sleep in a pile of hay in a farmer's field. Close to him was another youth, whose name he had inquired as soon as the owner of it awoke.

Then the two boys discovered that their conditions in life were very similar. Both were orphans, about the same age, Jack being sixteen and Mark fifteen years, and neither had a place he could call home.

"My folks have been dead for some years," said Jack, in telling his story to his companion. "I was hired out to a farmer in the upper part of New York, but he worked me so hard and treated me so mean that I ran away. I've been tramping ever since; don't my clothes show it? You see I was forced to go without taking my many trunks along," and he laughed, for he was of a jolly disposition.

"My people are dead also," said Mark. "I had a job with a man going around the country with a traction engine, threshing wheat and oats at different farms. But he used to beat me, so, one night, I ran away."

"And didn't bring any extra clothes with you, either," put in Jack.

"I never owned any to bring. I only had the one suit I wore."

And after that the boys had told something of their experiences and become very friendly.

The two boys walked on for a while in silence, kicking up the dust of the country road. Then Jack came to a halt, clapped his hand on his pocket, and said:

"I nearly forgot I had something to eat! Just think of it! And I haven't dined since yesterday! I wonder what the lady gave me. She looked good natured."

He sat down on a grassy bank along the highway, pulled the package of food out, and began to eat with every indication of satisfaction.

"Bread, meat, piece of pie and a piece of cake!" he announced, looking over his lunch. "What did you get, Mark?"

"I got the same as you, except I didn't get any pie or cake."

"I guess your lady hadn't baked this week. Never mind, you can have half my pie and half my cake."

"I'm sure I'm much obliged," said the thin youth.

"You needn't be," broke in Jack. "That's the law of the road. When two—well, I suppose I might as well say tramps, for that's what we are—when two tramps go off together, they whack up. And that's what we're going to do!"

It did not take long for the boys to finish their simple meal. Jack, true to his promise, shared his dessert with his companion.

"Well, I feel like going on now, and looking for a job," remarked the heavier weighted lad. "What do you say, Mark?"

"I guess we might as well get out of this town. They don't seem to care for us. But I wish I had a drink of water."

"Nothing easier," replied Jack. "There you are," and he pointed a short distance ahead, where a brook ran along the road. The boys got down on their faces near a little pool, the bottom of which was covered with white pebbles, and drank heartily. Then, refreshed by the water, their hunger appeased, and rested, they started on the tramp again.

"Any particular place you want to go to?" asked Mark.

"No, I'm not particular. East or west, the north pole or the south pole. I haven't any one to worry about me, no matter which way I go. I'd a little rather go north, though, as it is mighty warm to-day," and Jack laughed carelessly.

Little did he guess how soon his wish was to be gratified.

"Then we may as well keep on until we get to the next town," said Mark.

They walked on for some distance, their thoughts busy with their recent experiences, when they suddenly heard a noise at a distance.

"Sounds like a freight train," said Mark.

"So it is! Come on! Let's get aboard! Riding is easier than walking any day! Hurry up!"

And then the two boys broke into a run toward a slow moving freight on a track that crossed the country road a short distance away from them.

"Look out that you don't get under the wheels!" cautioned Jack to his companion.

"Oh, I'm used to jumping the cars," replied Mark, as he ran quickly up beside the rails.

The two boys reached the track along which the freight train was bumping and clicking. It was a long outfit, with many box, flat and gondola cars.

"Try for a gondola!" suggested Jack, indicating the cars with sides about five feet high, and open at the top.

The next instant he had swung up on a car, thrusting his foot in the iron step, and grasping the handle in a firm grip. Jack grabbed the next car, and landed safely aboard. Then, running forward, and clambering over to where his companion was, Jack pulled Mark down on the bottom of the gondola.

"No use letting a brakeman see you if you can help it," he explained.

CHAPTER II

THE RUNAWAY TRAIN

On went the train, carrying the boys to a destination unknown to them. All they cared for was that they were going away from Freeport and its vindictive constable.

"How long have your folks been dead?" asked Jack, after he had settled himself comfortably in a corner.

"About five years," was the answer. "Father and mother went about the same time. They were poor, and I had no brothers or sisters. When I was all alone," the boy's voice trembled a bit, "I didn't know what to do. They wanted to send me to the poor-house, but I ran away. Then, after knocking about a bit, I got the job with the traction engine man, until he used me so I couldn't stand it."

"That's about my case," said Jack. "I had a brother, and he ran away before my folks died. I guess they felt bad about him. Anyhow, mother used to cry an awful lot. When I was left all alone I was taken care of by some poor folks, who kept me as long as they could. Then I had to shift for myself. I had a good many jobs, and then I thought I'd like to be a farmer. I was sent to a place but the man wasn't very kind. He whipped me because I made a mistake and pulled up an onion instead of a weed. Then he beat me because I gave the horse too many oats. He never told me how much to give. So I ran away, and I'm glad of it. I've been cold and hungry lots of times since, but I haven't been whipped."

"I guess that old constable would have licked us if he had the chance," put in Mark.

"No use worrying over that. He's a good many miles away now."

"Here! What are you boys doing there?" cried a voice.

Jack and Mark looked up, to see a brakeman gazing down at them from the top of a box car.

"We're taking a ride," answered Jack coolly.

"So I see," replied the brakeman. "Well, I guess it will come to an end right now. Hop off!"

"Are you the conductor?" asked Jack.

"No, of course not," said the wheel-twister.

"Then don't try to put us off," went on the boy, with an assumed haughty air. "Just send the conductor here to punch our tickets. We're traveling first class, and don't want to be disturbed any more than is necessary."

"Well, I like your nerve!" exclaimed the brakeman, climbing down. "Who are you, anyhow?"

The railroad man laughed. Then Jack smiled, for he knew he and his companion were safe. In a few words he told their stories, and the brakeman promised they might go as far as the train went.

"You boys are all right," said the brakeman. "I have two youngsters of my own at home, and I hope, if ever they get in a tight place, some one will help them. Can I do anything to fix you up?"

"Not unless you can lend us about one thousand dollars each," laughed Jack, and the brakeman joined in with him.

"Or tell us where we can get work," put in Mark, who seemed quite worried.

"I can't say for sure where you can get jobs," the brakeman said, "but if I was in your place I'd get off at the next town. The name of it is Millville, and there are lots of factories there. Maybe you can strike something. I'll speak to the conductor and have him ask the engineer to slow up so you can jump off."

"We'd be obliged if you would," Jack said. "We may be tramps for a while, but we're both anxious to get work, and maybe Millville will be just the place for us."

"We're coming into it now," the brakeman went on. "It's about a mile from here. I'll go back, and when you hear five whistles from

the engine you'll know it's slowing up and you are to jump off. I know the conductor will do that if I ask him."

The brakeman climbed up the ladder on the end of the box car next to the gondola where the boys were, until he reached the run-boards on top. Then he hurried along to the caboose, where the conductor was.

"We must listen for the five whistles," said Jack. "Get ready to jump, Mark. Don't forget your baggage."

"No danger of that," chimed in the other, falling into the joyful mood of his companion, who never seemed to be cast down for long, no matter what happened.

The train was going down grade now, and the speed was much increased. Telegraph poles whizzed past at a rapid rate and the wheels sung a livelier tune as they clipped over the rail joints.

"It's a good thing the engineer is going to slow down for us," said Jack. "We'd never be able to jump off at the rate we're going."

"Hark!" exclaimed Mark. "There goes the whistle!"

The boys listened. A long, shrill blast cut the summer air, and vibrated back to them over the tops of the cars.

"That isn't five whistles; it's one!" cried Jack. "It's the call for brakes! I wonder if anything has happened to the train!"

There was a pause. Then came another single shriek from the engine's whistle. It sounded appealingly, as if the steam monster was in distress.

"Look! Look!" shouted Mark. "We are going much faster than we were!"

At the same instant there was a crash and a jolting sound. The train seemed to break in two parts at about the centre. The forward section, drawn by the engine, went one way, and the other part, with the gondola containing the boys, in the lead, took another track. An insecurely fastened switch was responsible for the acci-

dent. The locomotive and nearly half the cars of the train took the main track, while the remainder of the outfit swung on to a siding.

The section of the train with the boys aboard had become a runaway freight!

"What has happened?" cried Mark.

"The train's broken in two!" shouted Jack. "Come on! Help twist the brakes!"

Both boys sprang to the wheel of the gondola. It was all they could do to give it a few turns, but they managed to make the brake-shoes grip the wheels to some degree, as was evidenced by the shrill shrieking.

"Can you climb up to the top of the box car?" asked Jack.

"Sure!" shouted Mark. "Go ahead!"

Though Mark was thin, he had a nervous strength almost equal to that of his stouter companion.

"We must set all the brakes we can!" Jack cried. "That's the only way to stop the runaway train!"

With their small arms they twisted the wheel on the box car. They got it as tight as they could, then ran along the top of the vehicle to the next one. About ten cars down they saw their friendly brakeman.

"That's the stuff, boys!" he shouted. "There'll be a smash-up if we don't stop the cars!"

He was twisting wheels with all his might. As fast as they could the two boys went from car to car, setting the brakes.

But in spite of their efforts, and the efforts of another brakeman besides the one they had spoken to, the speed of the runaway freight train increased. The grade was a steep one, and down the hill the uncontrolled cars rushed.

"I don't believe we're going to stop," said Jack.

"Shall we jump?" asked Mark.

"Not if you want to get a job in the mill or factory," replied Jack. "I reckon if you or I jumped that would be the last of us."

With a rush and a roar the train continued to speed along. The trees and telegraph poles whizzed past so quickly as to be almost invisible.

"I guess this is Millville," said Mark, as the runaway train passed a station, on several sides of which there were large buildings to be seen.

So fast was the runaway train going now that the boys had to lie down on their faces and cling to the run-boards on top of the box car to avoid being jolted off. The wind fairly whistled in their ears. Through the town they rushed, observing, as by a flash, the white, frightened face of the station agent as he watched them go past.

"Do you think there'll be a smash-up?" asked Mark.

"I don't see how it can be avoided," replied Jack. "This track has to come to an end somewhere. When it does, look out, that's all!"

On and on rushed the train! Its speed was now fearful, for the down grade had increased. It was of no avail to twist the brakes, for no strength would avail to slacken the awful speed. The boys, in common with the brakemen, could only cling and wait in terror for what was to come.

The cars swayed as they went around a curve. Jack lifted his head and peered forward.

"Hold fast!" he shouted. "We're going to strike something in a minute!"

He had looked up in time to see that the track siding came to an abrupt end about a quarter of a mile further on, the rails stopping in a sand bank.

Hardly had the boys time to take a tighter grip with their fingers on the boards to which they were clinging, when the whole string of freight cars seemed to crumple up like a collection of paper vehicles.

There was a grinding, sickening crash, a succession of heavy jolts, a piling up of one car on top of another, a splintering of wood, a rending of iron and steel, and then with one terrible smash, with one final roar, the runaway freight piled itself up in a mass of shattered cars against the sand hill, at the base of which the rails came to an end. It was a fearful wreck.

"Hold fast!" were the last words Jack cried to his companion. His voice sounded faint above the din.

"Where are you, Jack?" he heard Mark shout in reply.

Then all became dark, and the boys lost their senses as they were hurled into the splintered mass of wreckage.

CHAPTER III

A STRANGE RESCUER

"For de land sakes, Perfessor, hurry up! Heah's de stupenduousness conglomeration dat eber transcribed dis terrestrial hemisphere!" exclaimed a stout, jolly looking colored man a few seconds after the crash of the wreck had ceased echoing.

"What is it, Washington?" asked a mild mannered elderly gentleman, with long flowing hair and beard, who, with the negro, had been walking in a field close to the railroad.

"I doan perzackly know, Perfessor, but it seems like there was a discontinuation ob de transportation facilities, when some sudden construction on de elongated tempestuousness attached to de railroad made de cars go bump! bump! Bang! Smack! Crash!"

"Washington! Washington! When will you stop using words that don't mean anything!" cried the old man, hurrying forward. "I presume you mean there has been a railroad wreck?"

"That's it, Perfessor. De extenuatin' circumstances ob transmigration—"

"That will do, Washington!" said the aged man, somewhat sternly. "You must stop talking, and act. This is no time for foolishness. There may be people hurt. Come along and let us see what we can do."

"Yes, sah!" replied the negro, calming down.

Then the two hurried down along the track, piled high with the debris of the runaway freight train.

"My! My! This is a terrible wreck!" cried the old man, as the two climbed over the mass of wreckage.

"Hi, Perfessor!" called the colored man, suddenly. "I've found something!"

"What is it, Washington?"

"It's a boy, an' he dead!"

"Oh, that's too bad!"

"An' heah's another, an' he's dead! Dis catafterme is de most —"

"Now, Washington, remember what I told you. No big words wanted at the present time. Where are the boys?"

"Here, Perfessor," and the negro showed the old man where Mark and Jack were lying, close together on a pile of sand. The professor bent over them. He felt of their hearts and listened to their breathing.

"Here!" he cried, suddenly. "They're not dead! They're only stunned! Maybe we can save them! Hurry, Washington, and carry them to my cabin.

You take one and I will bring the other!"

"You don't need to carry any ob 'em," answered the colored man. "Dis chile is strong 'nuff, I reckon, to tote dem two boys," and, suiting the action to the words, he stooped down, put an arm around each of the prostrate forms and lifted one on each shoulder. "'Bout face! Forward march!" he cried.

With the old man following, the negro made his way along a path that led over the fields, until he came to a long and rather narrow shed built on the edge of the woods.

"Be sure no one is in sight before you go in!" cautioned the old man, as he opened the door, which was fastened with several padlocks. "It would never do to have my secret discovered now."

"Nobody in sight, master!" exclaimed the colored man, as he turned, with the two unconscious boys on his shoulders, and gazed about "De coast am clear."

"Then hurry inside and we will see what we can do for the poor lads. I fear they are seriously hurt."

The negro slipped in as the old man held the door open, hurriedly closing it afterward, and bolting it on the inside.