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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
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Löns Hesse Hoffmann Gogol Wilde Goedicke
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Roth Heyse Klopstock Puschkin Homer Mörike Musil
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Nietzsche Nansen Lassalle Gorki Klett Leibniz Ringelnatz
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Tom Swift and His Airship

Victor [pseud.] Appleton

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Chapter 1

An Explosion

"Are you all ready, Tom?"

"All ready, Mr. Sharp," replied a young man, who was stationed near some complicated apparatus, while the questioner, a dark man, with a nervous manner, leaned over a large tank.

"I'm going to turn on the gas now," went on the man. "Look out for yourself. I'm not sure what may happen."

"Neither am I, but I'm ready for it. If it does explode it can't do much damage."

"Oh, I hope it doesn't explode. We've had so much trouble with the airship, I trust nothing goes wrong now."

"Well, turn, on the gas, Mr. Sharp," advised Tom Swift. "I'll watch the pressure gauge, and, if it goes too high, I'll warn you, and you can shut it off."

The man nodded, and, with a small wrench in his hand, went to one end of the tank. The youth, looking anxiously at him, turned his gaze now and then toward a gauge, somewhat like those on steam boilers, which gauge was attached to an aluminum, cigar-shaped affair, about five feet long.

Presently there was a hissing sound in the small frame building where the two were conducting an experiment which meant much to them. The hissing grew louder.

"Be ready to jump," advised Mr. Sharp.

"I will," answered the lad. "But the pressure is going up very slowly. Maybe you'd better turn on more gas."

"I will. Here she goes! Look out now. You can't tell what is going to happen."

With a sudden hiss, as the powerful gas, under pressure, passed from the tank, through the pipes, and into the aluminum container, the hand on the gauge swept past figure after figure on the dial.

"Shut it off!" cried Tom quickly. "It's coming too fast! Shut her off!"

The man sprang to obey the command, and, with nervous fingers, sought to fit the wrench over the nipple of the controlling valve. Then his face seemed to turn white with fear.

"I can't move it!" Mr. Sharp yelled. "It's jammed! I can't shut off the gas! Run! Look out! She'll explode!"

Tom Swift, the young inventor, whose acquaintance some of you have previously made, gave one look at the gauge, and seeing that the pressure was steadily mounting, endeavored to reach, and open, a stop-cock, that he might relieve the strain. One trial showed him that the valve there had jammed too, and catching up a roll of blue prints the lad made a dash for the door of the shop. He was not a second behind his companion, and hardly had they passed out of the structure before there was a loud explosion which shook the building, and shattered all the windows in it.

Pieces of wood, bits of metal, and a cloud of sawdust and shavings flew out of the door after the man and the youth, and this was followed by a cloud of yellowish smoke.

"Are you hurt, Tom?" cried Mr. Sharp, as he swung around to look back at the place where the hazardous experiment had been conducted.

"Not a bit! How about you?"

"I'm all right. But it was touch and go! Good thing you had the gauge on or we'd never have known when to run. Well, we've made another failure of it," and the man spoke somewhat bitterly.

"Never mind, Mr. Sharp," went on Tom Swift. "I think it will be the last mistake. I see what the trouble is now; and know how to remedy it. Come on back, and we'll try it again; that is if the tank hasn't blown up."

"No, I guess that's all right. It was the aluminum container that went up, and that's so light it didn't do much damage. But we'd better wait until some of those fumes escape. They're not healthy to breathe."

The cloud of yellowish smoke was slowly rolling away, and the man and lad were approaching the shop, which, in spite of the explosion that had taken place in it, was still intact, when an aged man, coming from a handsome house not far off, called out, "Tom, is anyone hurt?"

"No, dad. We're all right."

"What happened?"

"Well, we had another explosion. We can't seem to get the right mixture of the gas, but I think we've had the last of our bad luck. We're going to try it again. Up to now the gas has been too strong, the tank too weak, or else our valve control is bad."

"Oh dear, Mr. Swift! Do tell them to be careful!" a woman's voice chimed in. "I'm sure something dreadful will happen! This is about the tenth time something has blown up around here, and —"

"It's only the ninth, Mrs. Baggert," interrupted Tom, somewhat indignantly.

"Well, goodness me! Isn't nine almost as bad as ten? There I was, just putting my bread in the oven," went on Mrs. Baggert, the housekeeper, "and I was so startled that I dropped it, and now the dough is all over the kitchen floor. I never saw such a mess."

"I'm sorry," answered the youth, trying not to laugh. "We'll see that it doesn't happen again."

"Yes; that's what you always say," rejoined the motherly-looking woman, who looked after the interests of Mr. Swift's home.

"Well, we mean it this time," retorted the lad. "We see where our mistake was; don't we, Mr. Sharp?"

"I think so," replied the other seriously.

"Come on back, and we'll see what damage was done," proposed Tom. "Maybe we can rig up another container, mix some fresh gas, and make the final experiment this afternoon."

"Now do be careful," cautioned Mr. Swift, the aged inventor, once more. "I'm afraid you two have set too hard a task for yourselves this time."

"No we haven't, dad," answered his son. "You'll see us yet skimming along above the clouds."

"Humph! If you go above the clouds I shan't be very likely to see you. But go slowly, now. Don't blow the place up again."

Mr. Swift went into the house, followed by Mrs. Baggert, who was loudly bewailing the fate of her bread. Tom and Mr. Sharp started toward the shop where they had been working. It was one of several buildings, built for experimental purposes and patent work by Mr. Swift, near his home.

"It didn't do so very much damage," observed Tom, as he peered in through a window, void of all the panes of glass. "We can start right in."

"Hold on! Wait! Don't try it now!" exclaimed Mr. Sharp, who talked in short, snappy sentences, which, however, said all he meant. "The fumes of that gas aren't good to breathe. Wait, until they have blown away. It won't be long. It's safer."

He began to cough, choking from the pungent odor, and Tom felt an unpleasant tickling sensation in his throat.

"Take a walk around," advised Mr. Sharp. "I'll be looking over the blue prints. Let's have 'em."

Tom handed over the roll he had grabbed up when he ran from the shop, just before the explosion took place, and, while his companion spread them out on his knee, as he sat on an upturned barrel, the lad walked toward the rear of the large yard. It was enclosed by a high board fence, with a locked gate, but Tom, undoing the fastenings, stepped out into a broad, green meadow at the rear of his father's property. As he did so he saw three boys running toward him.

"Hello!" exclaimed our hero. "There are Andy Foger, Sam Sne-decker and Pete Bailey. I wonder what they're heading this way for?"

On the trio came, increasing their pace as they caught sight of Tom. Andy Foger, a red-haired and squint-eyed lad, a sort of town bully, with a rich and indulgent father, was the first to reach the young inventor.

"How—how many are killed?" panted Andy.

"Shall we go for doctors?" asked Sam.

"Can we see the place?" blurted out Pete, and he had to sit down on the grass, he was so winded.

"Killed? Doctors?" repeated Tom, clearly much puzzled. "What are you fellows driving at, anyhow?"

"Wasn't there a lot of people killed in the explosion we heard?" demanded Andy, in eager tones.

"Not a one," replied Tom.

"There was an explosion!" exclaimed Pete. "We heard it, and you can't fool us!"

"And we saw the smoke," added Snedecker.

"Yes, there was a small explosion," admitted Tom, with a smile, "but no one was killed; or even hurt. We don't have such things happen in our shops."

"Nobody killed?" repeated Andy questioningly, and the disappointment was evident in his tones.

"Nobody hurt?" added Sam, his crony, and he, too, showed his chagrin.

"All our run for nothing," continued Pete, another crony, in disgust.

"What happened?" demanded the red-haired lad, as if he had a right to know. "We were walking along the lake road, and we heard an awful racket. If the police come out here, you'll have to tell what it was, Tom Swift." He spoke defiantly.

"I've no objection to telling you or the police," replied Tom. "There was an explosion. My friend, Mr. Sharp, the balloonist, and I were conducting an experiment with a new kind of gas, and it was too strong, that's all. An aluminum container blew up, but no particular damage was done. I hope you're satisfied."

"Humph! What you making, anyhow?" demanded Andy, and again he spoke as if he had a right to know.

"I don't know that it's any of your business," Tom came back at him sharply, "but, as everyone will soon know, I may as well tell you. We're building an airship."

"An airship?" exclaimed Sam and Pete in one breath.

"An airship?" queried Andy, and there was a sneer in his voice. "Well, I don't think you can do it, Tom Swift! You'll never build an airship; even if you have a balloonist to help you!"

"I won't, eh?" and Tom was a trifle nettled at the sneering manner of his rival.

"No, you won't! It takes a smarter fellow than you are to build an airship that will sail. I believe I could beat you at it myself."

"Oh, you think you could?" asked Tom, and this time he had mastered his emotions. He was not going to let Andy Foger make him angry. "Maybe you can beat me at racing, too?" he went on. "If you think so, bring out your Red Streak and I'll try the Arrow against her. I beat you twice, and I can do it again!"

This unexpected taunt disconcerted Andy. It was the truth, for, more than once had Tom, in his motor-boat, proved more than a match for the squint-eyed bully and his cronies.

"Go back at him, Andy," advised Sam, in a low voice. "Don't take any of his guff!"

"I don't intend to," spluttered Andy. "Maybe you did beat me in the races, because my motor wasn't working right," he conceded, "but you can't do it again. Anyhow, that's got nothing to do with an airship. I'll bet you can't make one!"

"I don't bet," replied Tom calmly, "but if you wait a few weeks you'll see me in an airship, and then, if you want to race the Red Streak against that, I'll accommodate you. Or, if you want to enter into a competition to build a dirigible balloon or an aeroplane I'm willing."

"Huh! Think you're smart, don't you? Just because you helped save that balloonist from being killed when his balloon caught fire," went on Andy, for want of something better to say. "But you'll never build an airship!"

"Of course he won't!" added Sam and Pete, bound to side with their crony, to whom they were indebted for many automobile and motor-boat rides.

"Just wait," advised Tom, with a tantalizing smile. "Meanwhile, if you want to try the Red Streak against the Arrow, I'm willing. I have an hour or so to spare."

"Aw, keep still!" muttered Andy, much discomfited, for the defeat of his speedy boat, by a much smaller and less powerful one, was a sore point with him. "You just wait, that's all. I'll get even with you!"

"Look here!" cried Tom, suddenly. "You always say that whenever I get the best of you. I'm sick of hearing it. I consider that a threat, and I don't like it. If you don't look out, Andy Foger, you'll have trouble with me, and at no very distant date!"

Tom, with flashing eyes, and clenched fists, took a step forward. Andy shrank back.

"Don't be afraid of him," advised Sam. "We'll stand by you, Andy."

"I ain't afraid," muttered the red-haired lad, but it was noticed that he shuffled off. "You just wait, I'll fix you," he added to Tom. The bully was plainly in a rage.

The young inventor was about to reply, and, possibly would have made a more substantial rejoinder to Andy than mere words, when the gate opened, and Mr. Sharp stepped out.

"The fumes have all cleared away, Tom," he said. "We can go in the shop, now."

Without further notice of Andy Foger, Tom Swift turned aside, and followed the aeronaut into the enclosed yard.

Chapter 2

Ned Sees Mysterious Men

"Who were those fellows?" asked the balloonist, of his companion.

"Oh, some chaps who think we'll never build our airship, Mr. Sharp. Andy Foger, and his crowd."

"Well, we'll show them whether we will or not," rejoined the man. "I've just thought of one point where we made a mistake. Your father suggested it to me. We need a needle valve in the gas tank. Then we can control the flow of vapor better."

"Of course!" cried Tom. "Why didn't I think of that? Let's try it." And the pair hurried into the machine shop, eager to make another test, which they hoped would be more successful.

The young inventor, for Tom Swift was entitled to that title, having patented several machines, lived with his father, Barton Swift, on the outskirts of the small town of Shopton, in New York State. Mr. Swift was quite wealthy, having amassed a considerable fortune from several of his patents, as he was also an inventor. Tom's mother had been dead since he was a small child, and Mrs. Baggert kept house for the widower and his son. There was also, in their household, an aged engineer, named Garret Jackson, who attended to the engine and boilers that operated machinery and apparatus in several small shops that surrounded the Swift homestead; for Mr. Swift did most of his work at home.

As related in the first volume of this series, entitled "Tom Swift and His Motor-Cycle," the lad had passed through some strenuous adventures. A syndicate of rich men, disappointed in a turbine motor they had acquired from a certain inventor, hired a gang of scoundrels to get possession of a turbine Mr. Swift had invented. Just before they made the attempt, however, Tom became possessed of a motor-cycle. It had belonged to a wealthy man, Mr. Wakefield Damon, of Waterford, near Lake Carlopa, which body of water adjoined the town of Shopton; but Mr. Damon had two accidents

with the machine, and sold it to Tom cheap. Tom was riding his motorcycle to Albany, to deliver his father's model of the turbine motor to a lawyer, in order to get a patent on it, when he was attacked by the gang of bad men. These included Ferguson Appleson, Anson Morse, Wilson Featherton, alias Simpson, Jake Burke, alias Happy Harry, who sometimes masqueraded as a tramp, and Tod Boreck, alias Murdock. These men knocked Tom unconscious, stole the valuable model and some papers, and carried the youth away in their automobile.

Later the young inventor, following a clue given him by Eradicate Sampson, an aged colored man, who, with his mule, Boomerang, went about the country doing odd jobs, got on the trail of the thieves in a deserted mansion in the woods at the upper end of the lake. Our hero, with the aid of Mr. Damon, and some friends of the latter, raided the old house, but the men escaped.

In the second book of the series, called "Tom Swift and His Motor-Boat," there was related the doings of the lad, his father and his chum, Ned Newton, on Lake Carlopa. Tom bought at auction, a motor-boat the thieves had stolen and damaged, and, fixing it up, made a speedy craft of it so speedy, in fact that it beat the racing-boat Red Streak—owned by Andy Foger. But Tom did more than race in his boat. He took his father on a tour for his health, and, during Mr. Swift's absence from home, the gang of bad men stole some of the inventor's machinery. Tom set out after them in his motor boat, but the scoundrels even managed to steal that, hoping to get possession of a peculiar and mysterious treasure in it, and Tom had considerable trouble.

Among other things he did when he had his craft, was to aid a Miss Mary Nestor, who, in her cousin's small boat, the Dot, was having trouble with the engine, and you shall hear more of Miss Nestor presently, for she and Tom became quite friendly. Events so shaped themselves that Andy Foger was glad to loan Tom the Red Streak in which to search for the stolen Arrow, and it was in the later craft that Tom, his father and Ned Newton had a most thrilling adventure.

They were on their way down the lake when, in the air overhead they saw a balloon on fire, with a man clinging to the trapeze. They

managed to save the fellow's life, after a strenuous endeavor. The balloonist, John Sharp, was destined to play quite a part in Tom's life.

Mr. Sharp was more than an aeronaut—he was the inventor of an airship—that is, he had plans drawn for the more important parts, but he had struck a "snag of clouds," as he expressed it, and could not make the machine work. His falling in with Mr. Swift and his son seemed providential, for Tom and his father were at once interested in the project for navigating the upper air. They began a study of Mr. Sharp's plans, and the balloonist was now in a fair way to have the difficulty solved.

His airship was, primarily an aeroplane, but with a sustaining aluminum container, shaped like a cigar, and filled with a secret gas, made partly of hydrogen, being very light and powerful. It was testing the effect of this gas on a small model of the aluminum container that the explosion, told of in the first chapter, occurred. In fact it was only one of several explosions, but, as Tom said, all the while they were eliminating certain difficulties, until now the airship seemed almost a finished thing. But a few more details remained to be worked out, and Mr. Swift and his son felt that they could master these.

So it was with a feeling of no little elation, that the young inventor followed Mr. Sharp into the shop. The balloonist, it may be explained, had been invited to live with the Swifts pending the completion of the airship.

"Do you think we'll get on the right track if we put the needle valve in?" asked Tom, as he noted with satisfaction that the damage from the explosion was not great.

"I'm sure we will," answered the aeronaut. "Now let's make another model container, and try the gas again."

They set to work, with Mr. Swift helping them occasionally, and Garret Jackson, the engineer, lending a hand whenever he was needed. All that afternoon work on the airship progressed. The joint inventors of it wanted to be sure that the sustaining gas bag, or aluminum container, would do its work properly, as this would

hold them in the air, and prevent accidents, in case of a stoppage of the engine or propellers.

The aeroplane part of the airship was all but finished, and the motor, a powerful machine, of new design, built by Mr. Swift, was ready to be installed.

All that afternoon Tom, his father and Mr. Sharp labored in the shop. As it grew dusk there sounded from the house the ringing of a bell.

"Supper time," remarked Tom, laying aside a wrench. "I wish Mrs. Baggert would wait about an hour. I'd have this valve nearly done, then."

But the housekeeper was evidently not going to wait, for her voice supplemented the bell.

"Supper! Sup-per!" she called. "Come now, Mr. Swift; Tom, Mr. Sharp! I can't wait any longer! The meat and potatoes will be spoiled!"

"I s'pose we'd better go in," remarked Mr. Sharp, with something of a sigh. "We can finish to-morrow."

The shop, where certain parts of the airship were being made, was doubly locked, and Jackson, the engineer, who was also a sort of watchman, was bidden to keep good guard, for the fear of the gang of unscrupulous men, who had escaped from jail during a great storm, was still in the minds of Mr. Swift and his son.

"And give an occasional look in the shed, where the aeroplane is," advised Mr. Sharp. "It wouldn't take much to damage that, now."

"I'll pay particular attention to it," promised the engineer. "Don't worry, Mr. Sharp."

After supper the three gathered around the table on which were spread out sheets of paper, covered with intricate figures and calculations, which Mr. Swift and the balloonist went over with care. Tom was examining some blue prints, which gave a sectional view of the proposed ship, and was making some measurements when the bell rang, and Mrs. Baggert ushered in Ned Newton, the most particular chum of the young inventor.

"Hello, Ned!" exclaimed Tom. "I was wondering what had become of you. Haven't seen you in a dog's age."

"That's right," admitted Ned. "We've been working late nights at the bank. Getting ready for the regular visit of the examiner, who usually comes along about this time. Well, how are things going; and how is the airship?" for, of course, Ned had heard of that.

"Oh, pretty good. Had another explosion to-day, I s'pose you heard."

"No, I hadn't."

"I thought everyone in town had, for Andy Foger and his two cronies were on hand, and they usually tell all they know."

"Oh, Andy Foger! He makes me sick! He was scooting up the street in his auto just as I was coming in, 'honking-honking' his horn to beat the band! You'd think no one ever had an auto but him. He certainly was going fast."

"Wait until I get in our airship," predicted Tom. "Then I'll show you what speed is!"

"Do you really think it will go fast?"

"Of course it will! Fast enough to catch Anson Morse and his crowd of scoundrels if we could get on their track."

"Why, I thought they were in jail," replied Ned, in some surprise. "Weren't they arrested after they stole your boat?"

"Yes, and put in jail, but they managed to get out, and now they're free to make trouble for us again."

"Are you sure they're out of jail?" asked Ned, and Tom noted that his chum's face wore an odd look.

"Sure? Of course I am. But why do you ask?"

Ned did not answer for a moment. He glanced at Tom's father, and the young inventor understood. Mr. Swift was getting rather along in age, and his long years of brain work had made him nervous. He had a great fear of Morse and his gang, for they had made much trouble for him in the past. Tom appreciated his chum's hesi-

tancy, and guessed that Ned had something to say that he did not want Mr. Swift to hear.

"Come on up to my room, Ned. I've got something I want to show you," exclaimed Tom, after a pause.

The two lads left the room, Tom glancing apprehensively at his father. But Mr. Swift was so engrossed, together with the aeronaut, in making some calculations regarding wind pressure, that it is doubtful if either of the men were aware that the boys had gone.

"Now what is it, Ned?" demanded our hero, when they were safe in his apartment. "Something's up. I can tell by your manner. What is it?"

"Maybe it's nothing at all," went on his chum. "If I had known, though that those men had gotten out of jail, I would have paid more attention to what I saw to-night, as I was leaving the bank to come here."

"What did you see?" demanded Tom, and his manner, which had been calm, became somewhat excited.

"Well, you know I've been helping the paying-teller straighten up his books," went on the young bank employee, "and when I came out to-night, after working for several hours, I was glad enough to hurry away from the 'slave-den,' as I call it. I almost ran up the street, not looking where I was going, when, just as I turned the corner, I bumped into a man."

"Nothing suspicious or wonderful in that," commented Tom. "I've often run into people."

"Wait," advised Ned. "To save myself from falling I grabbed the man's arm. He did the same to me, and there we stood, for a moment, right under a gas lamp. I looked down at his hands, and I saw that on the little finger of the left one there was tattooed a blue ring, and—"

"Happy Harry—the tramp!" exclaimed Tom, now much excited. "That's where he wears a tattooed ring!"

"That's what I thought you had told me," resumed Ned, "but I didn't pay any attention to it at the time, as I had no idea that the men were out of jail."