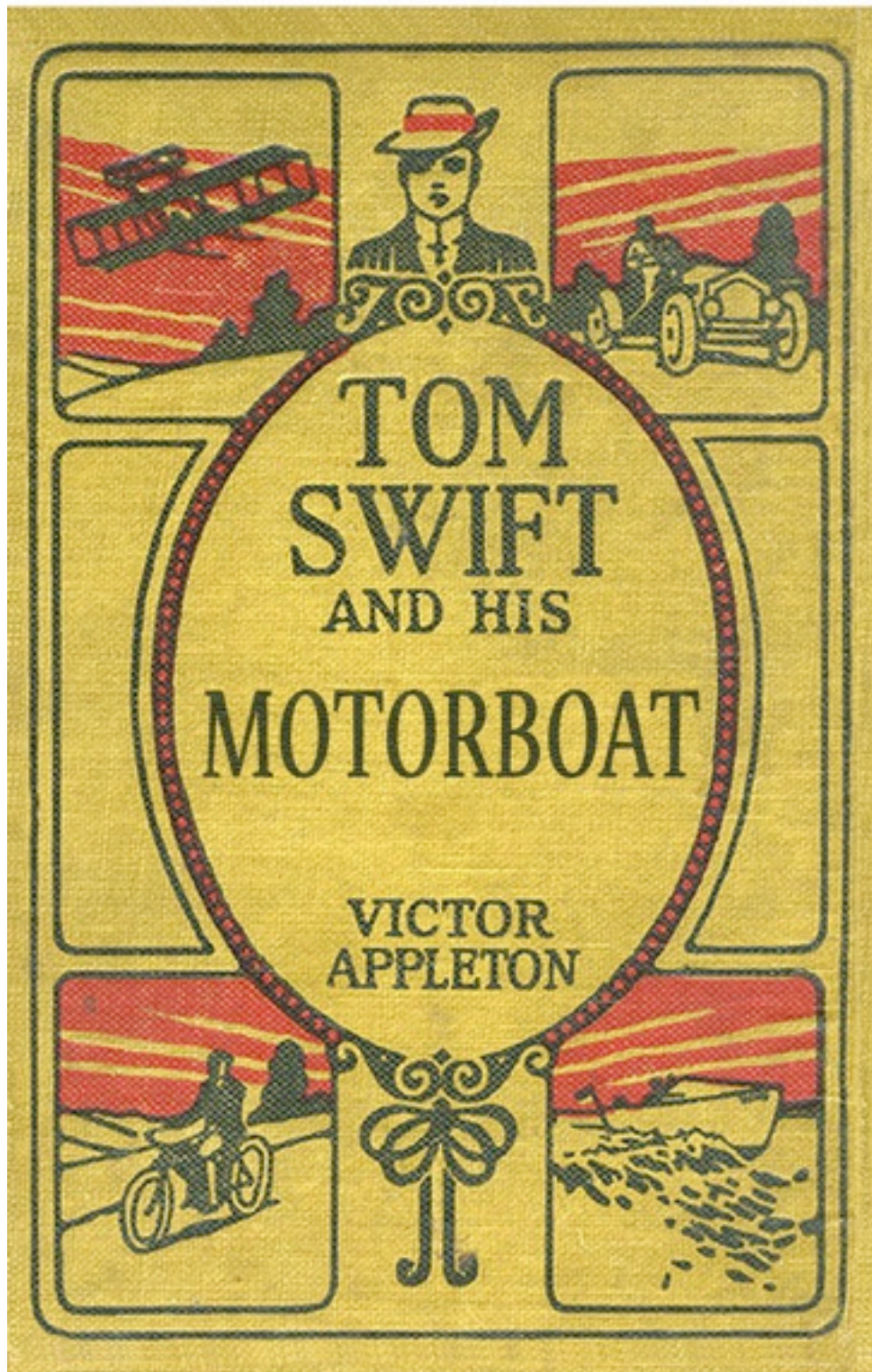


TOM SWIFT

His Motorboat







With a whirl of the screw, the *Arrow* shot out of the way, carrying the aeronaut with her. Page 110

# TOM SWIFT AND HIS MOTORBOAT

OR  
*THE RIVALS OF LAKE CARLOPA*

BY  
VICTOR APPLETON

AUTHOR OF "TOM SWIFT AND HIS MOTORCYCLE," "TOM SWIFT AND HIS AIRSHIP," "TOM SWIFT AND HIS SUBMARINE BOAT," ETC.

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Books by Victor Appleton

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**THE TOM SWIFT SERIES**

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TOM SWIFT AND HIS MOTORCYCLE  
Or Fun and Adventure On The Road

TOM SWIFT AND HIS MOTORBOAT  
Or the Rivals of Lake Carlopa

TOM SWIFT AND HIS AIRSHIP  
Or the Stirring Cruise of the Red Cloud

TOM SWIFT AND HIS SUBMARINE BOAT  
Or Under the Ocean For Sunken Treasure

TOM SWIFT AND HIS ELECTRIC  
RUNABOUT  
Or the Speediest Car on the Road

(Other volumes in preparation)

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*Tom Swift and His Motorboat*

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**Foreword... The Story So Far**

Tom Swift, son of Barton Swift, lives with his father and a motherly housekeeper, Mrs. Baggert, in a large house on the outskirts of the town of Shopton, in New York State. Mr. Swift had acquired considerable wealth from his many inventions and patents, but does not give up working on new ideas simply because he has plenty of money.

Tom followed in the footsteps of his father and had, by the age of eighteen, already taken out several patents.

Shortly before this story opens the youth had come into possession of a motorcycle in a peculiar fashion. As told in the first volume of this series, entitled "Tom Swift and His Motorcycle," Tom was riding to the town of Mansburg on an errand for his father one day when he was nearly run down by a motorcyclist. A little later the same motorcyclist, Mr. Wakefield Damon, of Waterfield, collided with a tree in front of Tom's home, was severely cut and bruised, and the motorcycle was broken. Tom and his father cared for the injured rider and Mr. Damon, who is an eccentric individual, was so disheartened by his attempts to ride the motorcycle that he sold it to Tom for fifty dollars, though it had cost much more.

About the same time that Tom bought the motorcycle a firm of unscrupulous lawyers, Elrod & Drimble by name, had in conjunction with several men made an attempt to

get control of an invention of a secret turbine motor perfected by Mr. Swift. The men, who are Ferguson Appleson, Amberson Morse, Wilson Featherston—alias Simpson—and Harry Greene—alias Happy Harry, who sometimes disguised himself as a tramp—tried several times to steal the model.

Their drive to get it was due to the fact that they had invested a large sum in a turbine motor invented by another man, but their motor would not work. They sought to steal Mr. Swift's. It is still not known if they knew of the military purpose for which it was created by Mr. Swift.

Tom was sent to Albany on his motorcycle to deliver the model and some valuable patent filing papers to Mr. Crawford of the law firm of Reid & Crawford of Washington, attorneys for Mr. Swift. Mr. Crawford had agreed to meet Tom there with the model.

But, on the way, Tom was attacked by the gang of unscrupulous men and the model was stolen. He was assaulted and carried far away in an automobile. In an attempt to capture the gang in a deserted mansion, in the woods on the shore of Lake Carlopa, Tom was aided by Mr. Damon, of whom he had purchased the motorcycle. The men escaped prosecution, however, and nothing could be done to punish them.

So, to our new story...

# TOM SWIFT and His Motorboat

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## CHAPTER I

### A MOTORBOAT AUCTION

"WHERE ARE you going, Tom?" asked Mr. Barton Swift of his son as the young man was slowly pushing his motorcycle out of the yard toward the country road. "You look as though you have some destination in mind."

"So I have, Dad. I'm going over to Lanton."

"To Lanton? Whatever for?"

"I want to have a look at that motorboat."

"Which boat is that, Tom? I don't recall your speaking

about a boat over at Lanton. And, what do you want to look at one for?"

"It's the motorboat used by those fellows had who tried to get away with your turbine invention, Dad. The one they used at the old General Harkness mansion in the woods near the lake, and the same boat that fellow used when he got away from me the day I was chasing him from here."

"Oh, yes, I remember now. But what is the boat doing over at Lanton?"

"That's where it belongs. It's the property of Mr. Bently Hastings. The thieves stole it from him. When they ran away from the old mansion, the time Mr. Damon and I raided the place, they left the boat on the lake. I turned it over to the county authorities, and they found out it belonged to Mr. Hastings. He has it back now, but I understand it's somewhat damaged, and he wants to get rid of it. He's going to sell it at auction today, and I thought I'd go over and take a look at it. You see—"

"Yes, I see, Tom," exclaimed Mr. Swift with a laugh, knowing his son's penchant for tinkering with mechanical devices. "I see precisely what you're aiming at. You want a motorboat, and you're going all around Robin Hood's barn to get at it."

"No, Dad, I only—"

"Oh, I know you, Tom," interrupted the inventor, shaking his finger at his son, who seemed somewhat confused. "You have a nice rowing skiff and a sailboat, yet you are hankering for a motorboat. Come now, own up. Aren't you?"

"Well, Dad, a motorboat certainly would go fine on Lake Carlopa. There's plenty of room to speed her, and I wonder there aren't more of them. I was going to see what Mr. Hastings' boat would sell for, but I didn't *exactly* think of buying it... Still—"

"But you wouldn't buy a damaged boat, would you?"

"It isn't much damaged," stated Tom. In his eagerness the young inventor stood his motorcycle up against the fence and came closer to his father. "It's only slightly damaged," he went on. "I can easily fix it. I can make it even better. I looked it all over before I gave it to the authorities, and it's certainly a fine boat. It's worth nine hundred dollars—or it was when it was new."

"That's a good deal of money for a boat," and Mr. Swift looked serious, for though he was well off he was inclined to be conservative when money was concerned.

"Oh, I shouldn't think of paying that much. In fact, Dad, I really had no intent of bidding at the auction. I only thought I'd go over and get an idea of what the boat might sell for. Perhaps some day—"

Tom paused. Since his father had begun to question him some new plans had come into the lad's head. He looked at his father and saw a smile beginning to work around the corners of Mr. Swift's lips. There was also a humorous look in the eyes of the older inventor. He understood boys fairly well, even if he only had one, and he knew Tom perfectly.

"Would you really like to make a bid on that boat Tom?" he asked.

"Would I, Dad? Well—" The youth did not finish, but his father knew what he meant.

"I suppose a motorboat would be a nice thing to have on Lake Carlopa," went on Mr. Swift musingly. "You and I could take frequent trips in it. It isn't like a motorcycle, only useful for one person. What do you suppose the boat will go for, Tom?"

"I'm not certain. Not a high price, surely. Motorboats are so new on our lake that only a few persons might take a chance on them. If Mr. Hastings is getting another, and I have heard that he might be buying a larger model, he will not be so particular about insisting on a high price for the old one. Then, too, the fact that it is damaged will help to keep the price down. I know I can easily put it in good shape. To tell you the truth, I *would* like to make a bid, if you think it's all right."

"Well, Tom, if you really want it. You have money of

your own. A motorboat might not be a bad investment. What do you think ought to be the limit?"

"Would you consider a hundred and fifty dollars too high?"

Mr. Swift looked at Tom critically. He was plainly going over several matters in his mind, and not the least of them was the pluck his son had shown recently in getting back some valuable papers and a model from a gang of thieves. The boy certainly was entitled to some reward, and to allow him to get a boat might properly be part of it.

"How much will you need to spend to make all the repairs on it?" his father inquired.

"Perhaps another thirty or forty, I believe."

"I think you could safely go as high as two hundred dollars, Tom," said Mr. Swift at length. "That would be my limit on a damaged boat. It might be better to pay a little more and get a new one. However, use your own judgment, but don't go over two hundred."

Tom agreed to his father's counsel.

"So the thieves who made so much trouble for me stole that boat from Mr. Hastings, eh?"

"Yes, and they didn't take much care of it either. They damaged the engine, but the hull is in good shape. I'm really glad you'll let me bid on it. I'll start right off. The auction is at ten o'clock and I have just enough time to get



there."

"Now be careful how you bid. Don't raise your own figures, as I've sometimes seen excited women and foolish men do in their excitement. Somebody may go over your top bid; and if he does, let him. If you get the boat I'll be very glad on your account and believe that you will have paid a fair price. Just don't bring any of Amberson Morse's gang back in it with you. I've seen enough of them."

"I'll won't, Dad!" cried Tom and he pushed his motorcycle out of the gate and into the country road that led to the village of Shopton—where the Swifts lived—and to Lanton—site of the auction. The young inventor had not gone far before he turned back, leaving his machine standing on the side path.

"What's the matter?" asked his father, who had begun walking toward one of several machine shops on the premises—shops where Mr. Swift and his son did inventive work.

"Guess I'd better get a blank check and some money," replied Tom as he entered the house. "I'll need to pay a deposit if I get the boat."

"That's so. Well, good luck," and with his mind busy on a plan for a new kind of storage battery, the inventor went on to his workroom. Tom got some cash and his checkbook from a small safe in his room, grabbed the

bright red helmet he had devised for safety, and was soon speeding over the road to Lanton, his motorcycle making quite a cloud of dust.

Tom was thinking of the exciting adventure he had passed through about a month previous as he spun along the road leading to Lanton.

"I hope I don't meet Happy Harry or any that his gang today," mused the lad as he turned on a little more power to enable his machine to mount a hill. "They were let out of jail and disappeared. Hopefully, back to where they came from. Even if they have remained in the area, I don't believe they'll attend the auction. And, why would they? It would be too risky for them."

As Tom sped along at a rapid pace he heard, behind him, the puffing of an automobile, with the muffler cut out. He turned and cast a hasty glance behind.

"I hope that ain't Andy Foger and any of his cronies," he said to himself. "He might try to run me down just for spite. He generally rushes along with the muffler open so as to attract attention and make folks think he has a racing car."

It was not Andy, however, as Tom saw a little later when a man passed him in a big touring car. Andy Foger was a red-haired, squinty-eyed lad with plenty of money given to his far too freely by his father, and not much else. He and his cronies, including Sam Snedecker, nearly ran Tom

down one day, when Tom was on his bicycle. Andy had been off on a tour with his chums during the time when Tom was having such strenuous adventures and had recently returned.

"If I can only get that boat," mused Tom as he swung back into the middle of the road after the auto had passed him, "I certainly can have lots of fun. I'll make a week's tour of Lake Carlopa and take Dad and Ned Newton with me."

Ned was Tom's best friend and the two had shared many adventures as young teenagers. But as young Newton was employed in the Shopton bank, he did not have much time for pleasure. Lake Carlopa was a large body of water, and it would take a moderately powered boat several days to make a complete circuit of the shore, and to cut up into all of its bays and inlets. There was a beautiful small island near the north end where the town of Shopton lay. Tom kept his sailboat tied to one of the docks near town.

In about an hour Tom was at Lanton. As he neared the home of Mr. Hastings, which was on the shore of the lake, he saw quite a throng going down toward the boathouse.

"There'll be some lively bidding," thought Tom as he got off his machine and pushed it ahead of him through the drive and down toward the river. "I hope they don't go above two hundred dollars."

"Get out the way there!" called a sudden voice, and looking back, Tom saw that an automobile had crept up silently behind him. In it were Andy Foger and Sam Snedecker. "Why don't you get out my way?" petulantly demanded the red-haired lad.

"Because I don't choose to," replied Tom calmly, knowing that Andy would never dare to speed up his machine on the slope leading down to the lake.

"Go ahead, bump him!" the young inventor heard Sam whisper.

Tom stopped and turned to face the bully and his friend. "Try it, if you want to get the best trouncing you ever had!" said Tom hotly.

Briefly blanching, Andy sought to change the subject. "Huh! I suppose you think you're going to bid on the boat?" sneered Andy.

"Is there any law against it?" asked Tom.

"Huh! Well, you'll not get it. I'm going to take that boat," retorted the squint-eyed bully. "Dad gave me the money to get it."

"All right," answered Tom noncommittally. "Go ahead. Spend your daddy's money. I'm certain you will never have any of your own. It's a free country."

Andy glared at him, but said nothing.

Tom stood his motorcycle up against a tree and went toward a group of persons who were surrounding the auctioneer.

“I still need to work on some sort of built in stand for it,” he pondered as he walked. Some day I’ll not find a handy fence or tree to lean it against.” He made a mental note to look into the matter as soon as possible.

The time had arrived to start the sale. As Tom edged in closer he brushed against a man who looked at him sharply. He wondered if he had ever seen the individual before, as there seemed to be something strangely familiar about him, when the man turned quickly away, as if afraid of being recognized.

"That's odd," thought Tom, but he had no further time for speculation as the auctioneer was stepping up onto a soapbox and had begun to address the gathering.

## TOM SWIFT and His Motorboat

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### CHAPTER II

#### SOME LIVELY BIDDING

"ATTENTION, people!" cried the auctioneer. "Give me your attention for a few minutes, and we will proceed with the business in hand." He waited for the crowd to quiet which took more than a minute.

“As you all know, I am about to dispose of a fine motorboat, the property of Mr. Bently Hastings. The reason for disposing of it at auction is known to most of you, but for the benefit of those who have not been informed, I will briefly state that reason. The boat was stolen by a gang of thieves and recovered recently through

the efforts of a young man, Thomas Swift, son of Barton Swift, our fellow-townsmen, of Shopton." There was a murmur of recognition of Tom's and his father's names by many in the crowd.

At that moment the auctioneer, Jacob Wood, caught sight of Tom in the group and, looking directly at the lad, continued, "I understand that young Mr. Swift is here today. I hope he intends to bid on this boat. If he does, the bidding should be lively, for Tom Swift is a lively young man. I wish I could say that some of the men who stole the boat were here today."

As the auctioneer paused, there were questioning murmurs from those in the throng as to why such a wish should be mentioned.

Tom felt someone moving near him and looked around. He saw the same man with whom he had come in contact earlier. The person seemed to be trying to move out to the edge of the crowd. Tom felt a return of his vague suspicions. He looked closely at the fellow, but could find no resemblance to any of the men who had so daringly stolen his father's model.

"The reason I wish they were here today," went on Mr. Wood, "is that the men did some... well, let's call it *slight* damage to the boat, and if they were here today we would make them pay for it. However, the damage is slight as I said and can easily be repaired. I mention that, as Mr.

Hastings has asked me to. Now," he looked about trying to gauge the crowd, "we will soon proceed with the bidding. First, I will say that an opportunity is to be given all to examine the boat. Perhaps Tom Swift will give us his opinion on its state as we know he is well qualified to talk about machinery."

All eyes were turned on Tom, for many knew him.

"Humph! I guess I know as much about boats and motors as he does," sneered Andy Foger. Several adults made shushing noises toward him, which he ignored. Harder to ignore were a few chuckles that seemed to not favor him. "He isn't the only one in this crowd! Why didn't the auctioneer ask me?"

"Keep quiet," begged Sam Snedecker. "People are laughing at you, Andy."

"I don't care if they are," muttered the sandy haired youth. "Tom Swift needn't think he's everything."

"If you will all come down to the dock," went on the auctioneer, "you can see the boat, and I would be glad to have young Mr. Swift give us the benefit of his advice."

The throng trooped down to the lake and, blushing somewhat, Tom gave a quick overview of what was the matter with the boat and motor and how it might be fixed. He neglected to mention what the cost of repairs might be, but noticed that there was less enthusiasm over the

matter than there had been, for certainly the engine, rusty and out of order as it was, after his description. The auctioneer looked as if he regretted asking Tom to talk about the boat as crowd interest waned.

Tom noted that the man, who had acted so strangely, did not come down to the dock.

"Guess he can't be much interested in the motor," decided Tom.

"Now then, if it's all the same to you folks, I'll proceed with the auction right here," went on Mr. Wood. "You can all see the boat from here. It is, as you see, a nice little launch and will carry six persons comfortably. Great for excursions or fishing. With a canopy fitted to it, a person could cruise all about the lake and stay out overnight. You could sleep on the seat cushions. It is twenty-one feet in length and has a five-and-a-half-foot beam, the design being what is known as a compromise stern. The motor is a double-cylinder two-cycle one, of ten horsepower. It has a float-feed carburetor, mechanical oiler, and the ignition system is the jump-spark—I understand that's the best for this style of motor. The boat will make ten miles an hour, with six people in. Of course, more than that with a lighter load. A good deal will depend on the way the motor is managed."

Again, he paused and looked the crowd over. He was pleased to see that his little description had sparked a

little more interest.

"Now, as you know, Mr. Hastings wishes to dispose of the boat partly because he does not wish to repair it and partly because he has a newer and larger one on order. This craft, which is named *Carlopa* by the way, cost originally nine hundred dollars. It could not be purchased new today for under a thousand. If you could find one of this model. Now, what am I offered in its present condition? Will anyone make an offer? Will you give me five hundred dollars?"

The auctioneer paused and looked critically at the throng. Several persons smiled. Many shook their heads. Tom looked worried. He had no idea that the price would start so high.

"Well, perhaps that is a bit stiff," went on Mr. Wood. "Shall we say four hundred dollars? Come now, I'm sure it's worth four hundred. Who'll start it at four hundred?"

No one would, and the auctioneer descended to three hundred, then to two and finally, as if impatient, he called out, "Well, will anyone start at fifty dollars?"

Instantly there were several cries of "I will!"

"I thought you would," went on the auctioneer. "Now we will get down to work. I'm offered fifty dollars for this twenty-one foot, ten horsepower family launch. Who will make it sixty?"

"Sixty!" called out Andy Foger in a shrill voice. Several turned to look at him thinking the high voice might belong to a woman or girl.

"I didn't know he was going to bid," thought Tom. "He may go above me. He's got plenty of his dad's money. Maybe more than I have. Well, I'm not going to pay too much for a damaged boat."

"Sixty I'm bid, sixty—sixty!" cried Mr. Wood in a sing-song tone, "who'll make it seventy?"

"Sixty-five!" spoke a quiet voice at Tom's elbow, and he turned to see that the mysterious man had joined the crowd at the edge of the lake.

"Sixty-five from the gentleman in the white straw hat!" called Mr. Wood with a smile at his wit, for there were many men wearing white straw hats, the day being a warm one in June.

"Here, who's bidding above me?" exclaimed Andy looking sharply toward the bidder's voice, as if it was against the law.

"I guess you'll find a number going ahead of you, my young friend," remarked the auctioneer. "I must insist you have the goodness not to interrupt me, except when you want to bid."

"Well, I offered sixty," said the squint-eyed bully, while his crony, Sam, was vainly pulling at his sleeve.

"I know you did, and this gentleman offered above you. If you want to bid more then do so. I'm offered sixty-five, sixty-five I'm offered for this boat. Will anyone make it seventy-five?"

Mr. Wood looked at Tom, who was thinking it was time for him to make a bid. He offered seventy. "Seventy from Tom Swift!" cried the auctioneer. "There is a lad who knows this motorboat from stem to stern, if those are the right words. I don't know much about boats except what I'm told, but Tom Swift does. Now, if he bids, you people ought to know that it's all right. I'm bid seventy—seventy I'm bid. Will anyone make it eighty?"

"Eighty!" exclaimed Andy Foger after a whispered conference with Sam. "I know as much about boats as Tom Swift. I'll make it eighty."

"No side remarks. I do most of the talking at these events. You just bid, young man," remarked Mr. Wood. "I have eighty bid for this boat—eighty dollars. Why, my friends, I can't understand this. I ought to have it up to three hundred dollars by now. But I thank you all the same. We are coming on. I'm bid eighty—"

"Ninety!" exclaimed the quiet man at Tom's elbow. He was continually fingering his upper lip, as though he had a mustache there, but his face was clean-shaven. He looked around nervously as he spoke.

"Ninety!" called out the auctioneer.

"Ninety-five!" returned Tom. Andy Foger scowled at him, but the young inventor only smiled. It was evident that the bully did not relish being bid against. He and his crony whispered together again.

"One hundred!" called Andy, as if no one would dare go above that.

"I'm offered an even hundred," resumed Mr. Wood. "We are certainly coming on. A hundred I am bid, a hundred—a hundred—a hundred—"

"And five," said the strange man hastily, and he seemed to choke as he uttered the words.

"Oh, come now, folks. We ought to have at least ten-dollar bids from now on," suggested Mr. Wood. "Won't you make it a hundred and ten?" The auctioneer looked directly at the man, who seemed to shrink back into the crowd. He shook his head, cast a sort of despairing look at the boat and hurried away.

"That's strange," murmured Tom. "I guess that was his limit, yet if he wanted the boat badly that wasn't a high price."

"Who's going ahead of me?" demanded Andy in loud tones.

"Keep quiet!" urged Sam. "We may get it yet."

"Yes, don't make so many remarks. I don't mind your offers of money, but any more disturbance and I'll have to

ask you to remove yourself," counseled the auctioneer. "I'm bid a hundred and five. Will anyone make it a hundred and twenty-five?"

Tom wondered why the man had not remained to see if his bid was accepted, for no one raised it at once, but he hurried off and did not look back. Tom took a sudden resolve.

"A hundred and twenty-five!" he called out.

"That's what I like to hear," exclaimed Mr. Wood. "Now we are doing business. A hundred and twenty-five from Tom Swift. Will anyone offer me one fifty?"

Andy and Sam seemed to be having some dispute.

"Let's make him quit right now," suggested Andy in a hoarse whisper.

"You can't," declared Sam.

"Yes, I can. I'll go up to my limit right now."

"And then someone will go above you—maybe Tom will," was Sam's retort.

"I don't think he can afford to," Andy whispered back. "I'm going to call his bluffs. I believe he's only bidding to make others think he wants it. I don't think he even wants it."

Tom heard what was said, but did not reply. The auctioneer was calling monotonously: "I'm bid a hundred

and twenty-five—one-twenty-five. Will anyone make it fifty?"

"A hundred and fifty!" sang out Andy, and all eyes were directed toward him.

"Sixty!" said Tom quietly.

"Here, you—" began the red-haired lad. "You just quit —"

"That will do!" exclaimed the auctioneer sternly. "I am offered a hundred and sixty. Now who will give me an advance? I want to get the boat up to two hundred, and then the real bidding will begin."

Tom's heart sank. He hoped it would be some time before a two hundred dollar offer would be heard. As for Andy Foger, the boy was almost speechless with rage. He shook off the restraining arm of Sam, and, worming his way to the front of the throng, exclaimed, "I'll give a hundred and seventy-five dollars for that boat!"

"Good!" cried the auctioneer. "That's the way to talk. I'm offered a hundred and seventy-five."

"Eighty," said Tom quietly, though his heart was beating fast.

"Well, of all—" began Andy spinning around, but Sam dragged him back.

"You haven't got any more money," said the bully's

crony. "Better stop now."

"I will not! I'm going home for more," declared Andy. "I must have that boat."

"It will be sold when you get back," said Sam.

"Haven't you got any money you can lend me?" inquired the squint-eyed one, scowling in Tom's direction. "No, not a bit. There, someone raised Tom's bid."

At that moment a man in the crowd offered a hundred and eighty-one dollars.

"Small amounts thankfully received," said Mr. Wood with a laugh. Then the bidding became lively, a number making one-dollar advances.

The price got up to one hundred and ninety-five dollars and there it hung for several minutes, despite the eloquence of Mr. Wood, who tried by all his persuasive powers to get a substantial advance. But everyone seemed afraid to bid.

As for the young inventor, he was in a quandary. He could only offer five dollars more, and, if he bid it in a lump, someone might go to two hundred and five, and he would not get the boat. He wished he had secured permission from his father to go higher, yet he knew that as a fair proposition two hundred dollars was about all the motorboat in its present condition was worth, at least to him. Then he made a sudden resolve. He thought he



might as well have the suspense over.

"Two hundred dollars!" he called boldly.

"I'm offered two hundred!" repeated Mr. Wood. "That is something like it. Now who will raise that?" He looked around, smiling.

There was a moment of silence. Then the auctioneer swung into an enthusiastic description of the boat, even making a few statements Tom knew were not completely true. He begged for an advance, but none was made, though Tom's heart seemed in his throat, so afraid was he that he would not get the *Carlopa*.

"Two hundred—two hundred!" droned on Mr. Wood. "I am offered two hundred. Will any of you go any higher?" He paused a moment, and Tom's heart beat harder than ever. "If not," resumed the speaker taking a quick glance up the hill at the boat's current owner, "I will declare the bidding closed. Are you all done? Once—twice—three times. Two hundred dollars. Going—going—gone!" He clapped his hands.

"The boat is sold to Thomas Swift for two hundred dollars. If he'll step up I'll take his money."

There was a laugh as Tom, blushing, advanced with several men patting him on the back. He passed Andy Foger who had worked his way over near him.

"You got the boat," sneered the bully, "and I suppose

you think you got ahead of me."

"Keep quiet!" begged Sam.

"I won't!" exclaimed Andy. "He outbid me just out of spite, and I'll get even with him. You see if I don't!"

Tom looked Andy Foger straight in the eyes and slowly shook his head, but did not answer. The red-haired youth could only hold the stare for about five seconds before he blinked, turned aside followed by his crony, and stalked off toward his automobile.

"I congratulate you on your bargain," said Mr. Wood as Tom proceeded to make out a check. "Fine piece of machinery you got at a real bargain price!"

As Tom made arrangements to collect the boat awhile later, he gave little thought to the threat Andy Foger had made, but the time was coming when he was to remember it well.

# TOM SWIFT and His Motorboat

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## CHAPTER III

### A TIMELY WARNING

"WELL, ARE YOU satisfied with your bargain, Tom?" asked Mr. Wood when the formalities about transferring the ownership of the motorboat had been completed.

"Oh, yes, I calculated to pay just what I did."

"I'm glad you're satisfied, for Mr. Hastings told me to be sure the purchaser was satisfied. Here he comes now. He wasn't at the auction."

An elderly gentleman was approaching Mr. Wood and Tom. Most of the throng was dispersing, but the young

inventor noticed that Andy Foger and Sam Snedecker stood to one side, regarding him closely.

"So you got my boat," remarked the former owner of the craft. "I hope you will be able to fix it up."

"Oh, I think I shall," answered the new owner of the *Carlopa*. "If I can't, my father will help me."

"Yes, you have an advantage there. Are you going to keep the same name?" and Mr. Hastings leaned forward and seemed quite interested in what answer the lad would make.

"I think not," replied Tom. "It's a fine name, but I want something that tells more what a fast boat it is. I'm going to make some changes that will increase the speed."

"That's a good idea. Call it the *Swift*. Sort of a pun, that, but it sounds right."

"Folks would say I was stuck up if I did that," retorted the youth quickly. "I think I shall call it the *Arrow*. That's a good, short name, and—"

"It's certainly speedy," interrupted Mr. Hastings. He paused a moment, looking at Tom. "Well now, since you're not going to use the name *Carlopa*, would you mind if I took it for my new boat? I have a fancy for it."

"Not in the least," said Tom. "Do you want the letters from each side of the bow to put on your new craft?"

"It's very kind of you to offer them. Since you will have no need for them, I'll be glad to take them off."

"Come down to my boat," invited Tom, using the word "my" with a proper pride, "and I'll take off the brass letters. I have a screw driver in my motorcycle tool bag."

As the former and present owners of the *Arrow* walked down toward the dock where it was moored the young inventor gave a startled cry.

"What's the matter?" asked Mr. Hastings.

"That man! See him at my motorboat?" cried Tom. He pointed to the craft in the lake. A man was in the cockpit and seemed to be doing something to the forward bulkhead, which closed off the compartment holding the gasoline tank.

"Who is he?" asked Mr. Hastings, while Tom started on a run toward the boat.

"I don't know," answered the auctioneer. "Some man who bid on the boat at the auction, but who didn't go high enough."

As Tom neared the craft the man sprang out, ran along the lakeshore for a short distance and then disappeared up the hill and in the bushes which bordered the estate of Mr. Hastings. Tom hurriedly entered the *Arrow*.

"Did he do any damage?" asked Mr. Hastings.

"I guess he didn't have time," responded Tom. "But he was tampering with the lock on the door of the forward compartment. What's in there?"

"Nothing but the gasoline tank. I keep the bulkhead sliding door locked on general principles. I can't imagine what the fellow would want to open it for. There's nothing of value in there. Perhaps he isn't right in his head. Was he a vagabond? Did you see his face?"

"No, he was well dressed, and he seemed very nervous during the auction, as if he was disappointed not to have secured the boat. Yet what could he want in that compartment? Have you the key to the lock, Mr. Hastings?"

"Yes, it belongs to you now, Mr. Swift," and the former owner handed it to Tom, who quickly unlocked the compartment. He slid back the door and peered within, but all he saw was the big galvanized tank.

"Nothing in there he could want," commented the former owner of the craft.

"No," agreed Tom in a low voice wishing he had a flashlight so that he could better see inside the compartment. "I can't see what he wanted to open the door for." But the time was to come, and not far off, when Tom was to discover quite a mystery connected with the forward compartment of his boat, and the solution of it was fated to bring him into no small danger.

"It certainly is odd," went on Mr. Hastings after Tom had secured the screw driver from his motorcycle tool bag.

He aided the lad in removing the letters from the bow of the boat "Are you sure you don't know the man?"

"No, I never saw him before. At first I thought his voice sounded like one of the members of the Happy Harry gang, but when I looked squarely at him I could not see a bit of resemblance. Besides, that gang would not venture again into this neighborhood." He explained that he meant the men that had stolen the boat.

"No, I imagine not. Perhaps he was only some curious, meddlesome person. I have frequently been bothered by such individuals. They want to see all the working parts of an automobile or motorboat, both of which I own, and they don't care what damage they do by investigating."

Tom did not reply, but he was pretty certain that the man in question had more of an object than mere curiosity in tampering with the boat. However, he could discover no solution just then, and he completed the work of taking off the letters.

"What are you going to do with your boat, now that you have it?" asked Mr. Hastings. "Can you run it down to your dock in the condition in which it is now?"

"No, I shall have to go back home, get some tools and

fix up the motor. It will take half a day, at least. I will come back this afternoon and, have the boat at my house by night. That is if I may leave it at your dock here."

"Certainly, as long as you like."

The young inventor had many things to think about as he rode toward home, and though he was somewhat puzzled over the actions of the stranger, he forgot about him in anticipating the pleasure he would have when the motorboat was in running order.

"I'll take Dad off on a cruise about the lake," he decided. "He needs a rest. He's been working hard and worrying over the theft of the turbine motor model. I'll take Ned Newton for some rides, too, and he can bring his camera along and get a lot of pictures. Oh, I'll have a great time this summer!"

Tom was riding swiftly along a quiet country road and was approaching a steep hill, which he could not see until he was close to it, owing to a sharp turn.

As he was about to swing around the turn and coast swiftly down the steep incline he was startled by hearing a voice calling to him from the bushes at the side of the road.

"Hold on, dar! Hold on, Mistah Swift!" cried a colored man, suddenly popping into view. "Doan go down dat hill."

"Why, it's Eradicate Sampson!" exclaimed Tom, quickly shutting off the power and applying the brakes. "What's the matter, Rad? Why shouldn't I go down that hill?"

"Beca'se, Mistah Swift, dere's a pow'ful monstrous tree trunk right across de road at a place whar yo' cain't see it till yo' gits right on top ob it. Ef yo' done hit dat dar tree on yo' lickity-split machine, yo' shuh would land in kingdom come. Doan go down dat hill!"

Tom leaped off his machine and approached the man. Eradicate Sampson did odd jobs in the neighborhood of Shopton, and more than once Tom had done him favors in repairing his lawn mower or his wood-sawing machine. In turn Eradicate had recently given Tom a valuable clue as to the hiding place of the patent model thieves.

"How'd the log get across the road, Rad?" asked Tom.

"I dunno, Mistah Swift. I see it when I come along wid mah mule, Boomerang. I tried t' git it outer de way, but I couldn't. Too hebby fer dat one mule. Den I left Boomerang an' mah wagon at de foot ob de hill an' I come up heah t' git a long pole t' pry de log outer de way. I didn't t'ink nobody would come along, case dis road ain't much trabeled."

"I took it as a short cut," said the lad. "Come on, let's take a look at the log."

Leaving his machine at the top of the slope, the young

inventor accompanied the black man down the hill. At the foot of it, well hidden from sight of anyone who might come riding down, was a big log. It was all the way across the road. Tom could see the tell-tale signs that the log had been recently dragged into position.

"That never fell there," exclaimed Tom. "That never rolled off a load of logs, even if there had been one along, which there wasn't. That log was put there!"

"Does yo' t'ink dat, Mistah Swift?" asked Eradicate, his eyes getting big.

"I certainly do, and, if you hadn't warned me, I might have been killed."

"Oh, I heard yo' lickity-split machine chug-chuggin' along when I were in de bushes, lookin' for a pryin' pole, an' I hurried out to warn yo. I knowed I could leave Boomerang safe, 'cause he's asleep."

"I'm glad you did warn me," went on Tom solemnly. As he went closer to the log, he uttered an exclamation.

"That has been dragged here by an automobile!" he cried. "It's been done on purpose to injure someone. Come on, Rad, let's see if we can't find out who did it."

Something on the ground caught Tom's eye. He stooped and picked up a nickel plated wrench.

"This may come in handy as evidence," he murmured.

## TOM SWIFT and His Motorboat

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### CHAPTER IV

#### TOM AND ANDY CLASH

EVEN A CASUAL observer could have told that an auto had had some part in dragging the log to the place where it blockaded the road. In the dust were many marks of the big rubber tires and even the imprint of a rope, which had been used to tow the tree trunk, along with a set of footprints.

"What fo' yo' t'ink anyone put dat log dere?" asked the black man as he followed Tom. Boomerang, the mule—so called because Eradicate said you never could tell what he was going to do—opened his eyes lazily, wiggled his ears

in greetings to Tom, and closed them again.

"I don't know why, Rad, unless they wanted to wreck an automobile or a wagon. Maybe tramps did it for spite."

"Maybe someone done it to make yo' hab trouble, Mistah Swift."

"Oh, I hardly think so. I don't know of anyone who would want to make trouble for me. Besides, how would they know I was coming this way—"

Tom suddenly checked himself. The memory of the scene at the auction came back to him and he recalled what Andy Foger had said about 'getting even.'

"Which way did dat auto go?" resumed Eradicate.

"It came from down the road," answered Tom, not completing the sentence he had left unfinished. "They dragged the log over to the foot of the hill and left it. Then the auto went down this way." It was easy for a lad of such sharp observation as Tom to trace the movements of the vehicle.

"Den if it's down heah, maybe we cotch 'em," suggested the black man.

The young inventor did not answer at once. He was hurrying along, his eyes on the telltale marks. He had proceeded some distance from the place where the log was when he uttered a cry. At the same moment he hurried from the road toward a thick clump of bushes that

were in the ditch alongside of the highway. Reaching them, he parted the leaves and called out, "Here's the auto, Rad!"

The colored man ran up, his eyes wider open than ever. There, hidden amid the bushes, was a large touring car.

"Whose is dat?" asked Eradicate.

Tom did not answer. He pushed through the underbrush, noting where the broken branches had been bent upright after the forced entrance of the car, the better to hide it. The young inventor was seeking some clue to discover the owner of the machine. To this end he climbed up in the tonneau and was looking about when someone burst in through the screen of bushes and a voice cried: "Here, you get out of my car!"

"Oh, is it your car, Andy Foger?" asked Tom calmly as he recognized his squint-eyed rival. "I was just beginning to think it was. Allow me to return your wrench," and he held out the one he had picked up near the log. "The next time you drag trees across the road," went on the lad in the tonneau, facing the angry and dismayed Andy, "I'd advise you to post a notice at the top of the hill, so persons riding down will not be injured."

"Notice—road—hill—logs!" stammered Andy, turning red under his freckles.

"That's what I said," replied Tom coolly.

"I—I didn't have anything to do with putting a log across any road," mumbled the bully. "I—I've been off toward the creek."

"Have you?" asked Tom with a peculiar smile. "Do you believe that the police will believe that?"

Andy turned quite white.

"I thought you might have been looking for the wrench you dropped near the log. You should be more careful and so should Sam, who's hiding outside the bushes," went on our hero, for he had caught sight of the form of Andy's crony.

"I—I told him not to do it!" exclaimed Sam as he came from his hiding place.

"Shut up!" exclaimed Andy desperately.

"Oh, I think I know your secret," continued the young inventor. "You wanted to get even with me for outbidding you on the motorboat. You watched which road I took, and then you drove a shorter way to get ahead of me. You hauled the log across the foot of the hill, hoping, I suppose, that my machine would be broken. But, let me tell you, it was a risky trick. Not only might I have been killed, but so would anyone else who happened to drive down the slope over the log, whether in a wagon or automobile. Fortunately Eradicate discovered it in time and warned me. I ought to have you arrested, but you're

not worth it. A good thrashing is what a sneaky bully like you deserve!"

"You haven't got any evidence against us," sneered Andy confidently, his old bravado coming back.

"I have all I want," replied Tom. "Eradicate heard Sam just admit it all." Seeing the boy blanch again, Tom continued. "You needn't worry. I'm not going to tell the police. Not today. But you've got to do one thing or I'll make you sorry you ever tried this trick. Eradicate will help me, so don't think you're going to escape."

"You get out of my automobile!" demanded Andy. "I'll have you arrested if you don't."

"I'll get out because I'm ready to, but not on account of your threats," retorted Tom. "Here's your wrench. Now I want you and Sam to start up this machine and haul that log out of the way."

"Suppose I won't do it?" snapped Andy.

"Then I *will* have you arrested, besides thrashing you into the bargain! You can take your choice of removing the log so travelers can pass or having a good hiding. You and Sam. Eradicate, you take Sam and I'll tackle Andy."

"Don't you dare touch me!" cried the bully trying to back away, but there was a whine in his tones.

"You let me alone or I'll tell my father!" added Sam. "I—I didn't have nothin' to do with it, anyhow. I told Andy it



would make trouble, but he made me help him."

"Say, what's the matter with you?" demanded Andy indignantly of his crony. "Do you want to get us—"

"I wish I'd never come with you," wailed Sam, who was beginning to be frightened.

"Come now. Start up that machine and haul the log out of the way," demanded Tom again.

"I won't do it!" retorted the red-haired lad impudently.

"Yes, you will," insisted our hero, and he took a step toward the bully. They were out of the clump of bushes now and in the roadside ditch.

"You let me alone," almost screamed Andy, and in his baffled rage he rushed at Tom, aiming a blow.

The young inventor quickly stepped to one side. As the bully passed him, Tom sent out a neat left-hander that connected with Andy's jaw.

With a grunt, Andy Foger went down in a heap on the grass.

## TOM SWIFT and His Motorboat

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### CHAPTER V

#### A TEST OF SPEED

WHETHER TOM or Andy was the most surprised at the happening would be hard to say. The former had not meant to hit so hard and he certainly did not intend to knock the squint-eyed youth down. Andy's momentum had greatly increased the power of Tom's punch. The latter's fall was due, as much as anything, to his senseless, rushing tactics and to the fact that he slipped on the green grass. The bully was up in a moment, however, but he backed away knowing better than to try battling with Tom again.

Instead he stood out of reach and spluttered, "You just wait, Tom Swift! You just wait! My father—"

"Well, I'm waiting," responded the other calmly. "Or is it that you can't do anything unless your father is there to help you? Or, your cronies? Sam? You feel like standing up for Andy?"

All that could be heard from the other boy was a squeaking gasp.

"I'll get even with you," went on Andy. "You think you're smart because you got the better of me, but I'll get square! You took me by surprise!"

"Look here!" burst out Tom determinedly, taking a step toward his antagonist, at which Andy quickly retreated, "I don't want any more of that talk from you, Andy Foger. That's twice you've made threats against me today. You put that log across the road, and if you try anything like it for your second attempt I'll make you wish you hadn't. That applies to you, too, Sam," he added, glancing at the other lad.

"I—I ain't gone' to do nothin'," declared Sam. "I told Andy not to put that tree—"

"Keep still, can't you!" shouted the bully. "Come on. We'll get even with him, that's all," he muttered as he went back into the bushes where the auto was. Andy cranked up and he and his crony getting into the car were

about to start off.

"Hold on!" cried Tom. "You'll take that log from across the road or I'll have you arrested for obstructing traffic, and that's a serious offense."

"I'm goin' to take it away!" growled Andy. "Give a fellow a minute can't you?"

He cast an ugly look at Tom, but the latter only smiled.

Eradicate, without making any fuss, maneuvered Boomerang and his own wagon to block the retreat of Andy's auto should they youth decide to escape before performing his task.

It was no easy task for Sam and Andy to pull the log out of the way, as they could hardly lift it to slip the rope under. They finally managed it and, by the power of the car, hauled it to one side. Rad moved his wagon just enough so that the car could squeeze by. Andy yelled at the mule to move and the animal, in answer, picked up one hoof as if to give the car a good kick.

They speed off.

"I d'clar t' gracious, dem young fellers is most as mean an' contrary as mah mule Boomerang is sometimes," observed Eradicate giving the mule an affectionate pat. "Only Boomerang ain't quite so mean as dat."

"I should hope not, Rad," observed Tom. "I'm ever so much obliged for your warning. I guess I'll be getting,

home now. Come around next week; we have some more work for you."

"'Deed an' I will," replied the colored man. "I'll come around an' eradicate all de dirt on yo' place, young Mistah Swift. Yais, sah, I's Eradicate by name, and dat's my perfession—eradicatin' dirt. Much obleeged, I'll call around. Giddap, Boomerang!"

The mule lazily flicked his ears, but did not stir, and Tom, knowing the process of arousing the animal would take some time, hurried back up the hill to where he had left his motorcycle.

Eradicate was still engaged on the task of trying to arouse his steed to a sense of its duty when the young inventor flashed by on his way home.

"So, you own a broken motorboat," observed Mr. Swift when Tom had related the circumstances of the auction. "Now you have it, what are you going to do with it?"

"Fix it, first of all," replied his son. "It needs considerable tinkering up, but nothing I can't do, if you'll help me."

"Of course I will. I should have some spare time as I get this latest invention nearer to completion. Do you think you can get any speed out of it?"

"Well, I'm not so anxious for speed. I want a good, comfortable boat, and the *Arrow* will be that. I've named

it, you see. I'm going back to Lanton this afternoon, take some tools along, and repair it enough that I can drive the boat over to here. I'll tie it up at our little dock next to the rowboat. Then I'll get at it and fix it up. I've got a plan for you, Dad."

"What is it?" asked the inventor, his rather tired face lighting up with interest.

"I'm going to take you on a vacation trip."

"A vacation trip?"

"Yes, you need a rest. You've been working, too hard over that gyroscope invention."

"Yes, Tom, I think I have," admitted Mr. Swift. "But I am very much interested in it, and I think I can get it to work. If I do it will make a great difference in the control of airplanes. It will make them more stable able to fly in almost any condition. But I certainly have puzzled my brains over some features of it."

Tom asked his father to tell him more about it. Barton Swift reminded Tom that many of his latest inventions had been developed for governmental purposes and were, therefore, somewhat secret.

"But, I can tell you this, Son. The Army now has about fifty aircraft of several makes and plan to outfit them to be observation craft in case of any problems in Europe. The problem is that the pilots of these craft must either fly so

low to the ground that they could be in danger of being targets for the opposition, or they can only fly in clear and calm weather.”

“Why?”

“Otherwise, the pilots become disorientated and can set the craft onto its side or even upside down without realizing their predicament until it is too late.

My gyroscope will always give them an indication of exactly what is level flight and how far off of that ideal they are. This could save many lives. But, you were talking about your plans for me. I don't quite see what you mean.”

“You need a rest, Dad,” said Mr. Swift's son kindly. “I want you to forget all about patents, invention, machinery and even the gyroscope for a week or two. When I get my motorboat in shape I'm going to take you and Ned Newton around the lake for a cruise. We can camp out, or, if we had to, we could sleep in the boat. I'm going to put a canopy on it and arrange some bunks. It will do you good and perhaps new ideas for your gyroscope may come to you after a rest.”

“Perhaps they will, Tom. I am certainly tired enough to need a vacation. It's very kind of you to think of me in connection with your boat. But if you're going to get it this afternoon you'd better start if you expect to get back by night. I think Mrs. Baggert has lunch ready.”

After the meal Tom selected a number of tools from his own machine shop and carried them down to the dock on the lake, where his two small boats were tied.

“Aren't you going back on your motorcycle?” asked his father.

“No, Dad, I'm going to row over to Lanton, and, if I can get the Arrow fixed, I'll tow my rowboat back.”

“Well, that you won't be in any danger from Andy Foger—I must speak to his father about him. However, I believe that you will not have enough time if you row.”

“I am certain that I can get there in only an hour instead of the forty minutes it takes by the roads. I would have to leave my motorcycle there and go back for it later,” he explained.

His father agreed.

“Well, I am still going to have words with Andy Foger's father!”

“Please don't, Dad,” exclaimed the young inventor quickly. “I can fight my own battles with Andy. He's a bully but he is also a coward with no real stomach for a fight. I don't fancy he will bother me again right away.”

Tom found it more of a task than he had anticipated to get the motor in shape to run the *Arrow* back under her own power. The magneto was out of order—something he had neglected to bring new copper wire for—and the

batteries needed recharging. The spark coil had short-circuited and took considerable time to repair. But by using some new dry cells and a length of copper wire which Mr. Hastings gave him, he was soon rewinding the small coil on the magneto, or small dynamo which produces the spark that exploded the gasoline in the cylinders, and had enough power to start the motor. Tom checked everything and found that—even though the wire he had been provided was far too heavy a gauge to be truly effective—he had a fine, usable spark from the ignition system.

Then, adjusting the spark timer and throttle on the engine and seeing that the gasoline tank was filled, the lad tried to start up his motor. Mr. Hastings helped him, but after a few turns of the flywheel there were no explosions.

Tom unbolted the small air filter and examined the carburetor—the device where fuel is mixed with air to produce an explosive mixture—and saw that it was in moderately bad condition. Using pliers and his screwdriver, he unbent the flutter valve that controlled the amount of air and then adjusted the setting screw to get the correct amount of the gasoline/oil mix from the tank. With a cough and a small backfire, the motor started off as if it had intended to do so all the while and was only taking its time about it.

"The machine doesn't run as smooth as it ought to,"

commented Mr. Hastings. "I am sorry for its poor state, Tom."

"It needs a thorough overhauling," agreed the owner of the *Arrow*. "I'll take everything apart and get to it tomorrow," and with that Mr. Hastings cast off the mooring rope and Tom swung out into the lake, towing his rowboat after him.

"A motorboat of my own!" exulted Tom as he twirled the steering wheel and noted how the craft answered her helm. "This is great. It's all a bit sluggish but I'll bet I can take care of that!"

He steered up the lakeshore and drove almost a mile, remaining within a hundred feet or so in case the motor quit. He wanted to see how the engine behaved. Then, turning around, went up it a mile or more before heading for his own dock, planning on arriving just before dinner time.

"With some changes and adjustments I can make this a speedy boat," thought Tom. "I'll get right at it. I imagine I could make a good showing against Mr. Hastings' new *Carlopa*, though his boat's got four cylinders and mine has only two."

Tom was proceeding leisurely along the lakeshore, near his home, with the motor throttled down to test it at low speed, when he heard someone shout. Looking toward the bank, Tom saw a man waving his hands.

"I wonder what he wants?" thought Tom as he turned the small wheel to send his craft to shore. He heard the answer a moment later, for the man on the bank cried, "I say, my young friend, do you know anything about automobiles? Of course you do or you wouldn't be running a motorboat. Bless my very existence, but I'm in trouble! My machine has stopped on a lonely road and I can't seem to get it started. I happened to hear your boat and I came here to hail you. Bless my coat pockets but I am in trouble! Can you help me? Bless my soul and gizzard!"

"Mr. Damon!" exclaimed Tom, shutting off the power, for he was now near shore. "Of course I'll help you, Mr. Damon," for the young inventor had recognized the eccentric man. Tom had purchased his motorcycle from Mr. Damon and it was that same man who had helped him in rounding up the thieves.

"Why, bless my shoelaces, if it isn't Tom Swift!" exclaimed Mr. Damon, who seemed very fond of calling down blessings upon himself or upon articles of his dress or person.

"Yes, it is me," admitted Tom with a laugh.

"And in a motorboat, too! Bless my pocketbook, but did that run away with someone who sold it to you cheap?"

"No, not exactly," and the lad explained how he had come into possession of it. By this time he was ashore and

had tied the *Arrow* to an overhanging tree. Tom proceeded to where Mr. Damon had left his stalled automobile. The eccentric man was wealthy and his physician had instructed him to ride about in the car for his health. Tom soon located the trouble. The carburetor had become clogged. Using a pipe cleaner the older man provided from his jacket pocket, Tom soon had it back in working order again.

"Well, now that you have a boat, I don't suppose you will be riding about the country on the motorcycle so much," commented Mr. Damon as he got into his car. "Bless my spark plug! But if you ever get over to Waterfield, where I live, come and see me. It's handy to get to by water."

"I'll come some day," promised the lad.

"Bless my lapels, but I hope so," went on the eccentric individual as he prepared to start his car.

Tom completed the remainder of the trip to his house without incident and his father came down to the small dock to see the motorboat. He agreed with his son that it was a bargain and that it could easily be put in fine shape.

The youth spent all the next day and part of the following working on the craft.

He overhauled the ignition system, which was the jump-spark style, then cleaned and rewired the magneto

with the proper thin copper wire necessary to create the appropriate spark. Next he set to opening and completely rewiring the spark coil. As with the magneto, Tom used the thinnest wire he had so that he could add additional windings; perhaps as much as twenty percent more. This would, he knew, give his overhauled motor a hotter and more efficient spark. That, coupled with other refinements he intended to make were sure to increase both the motor's power and well as the overall speed of the boat.

Following his lunch, Tom cleaned and adjusted the gasoline and compression taps so that they fitted better. He removed the cylinder heads and looked at the piston tops. As he feared, incomplete combustion had scorched the them. Fortunately, he believed this to be superficial and not to the detriment of the motor.

Using brand new copper tubing he replaced the fuel line between the gasoline tank in the bow and the engine near the rear of the boat.

The tank was in the forward compartment. Upon inspecting this, he concluded that a change in design was necessary. He saw how the big galvanized iron box was barely held in place. Tom took out the old wooden braces and reinstalled them closer together, putting in a few new ones.

"Now the tank will not vibrate so when I'm going at full

speed," he explained to his father later.

He had so many improvements in mind that he had to stop and make a mental list of them all. With more than twenty things to do he decided to prioritize them and just complete his top five.

Tom removed and replaced the thin and flimsy ropes that the manufacturer had used in the steering system. In their place were shining pulleys and steel cable that Tom coated in thick axle grease to protect it from moisture. The also tightened the system and made it more responsive to the turning of the wheel. Now a single turn was sufficient for full rudder shift where three or more had been necessary before.

He dismantled the rudder from the back of the boat. It was made of heavily varnished wood with a simple metal wrap around the edges. In the two years the boat had been in the water, some had leaked under the varnish—probably where the builders had used nails to attach the metal wrap—and the wood was warped.

It took Tom only twenty minutes to cut and grind a new all-metal rudder from a sheet of galvanized steel he had in his workshop. Though it weighed a few pounds more than the original, Tom had given it an altered shape, one that he was certain would provide greater maneuverability.

That back on the craft, Tom was looking for what to tackle next when he heard his father's voice.

"Is that where the strange man was tampering with the lock the day of the auction?" asked Mr. Swift pointing to the bow compartment.

"Yes, but I don't see what he could want in this compartment, do you Dad?"

The inventor got into the boat and looked carefully into the rather dark space where the tank fitted. He went over every inch of it. Pointing to one of the thick wooden blocks that supported the front of the tank, asked, "Did you bore that hole in there, Tom?"

"No, it was there before I touched the braces. But it isn't a hole. Or rather, someone bored it and stopped it up again with a wooden plug. It doesn't weaken the brace any."

"No, I suppose not. I was just wondering whether that was one of the new blocks or an old one."

"Oh, an old one. I'm going to paint them, too, so in case the water leaks in or the gasoline leaks out the wood won't be affected. A gasoline tank should vibrate as little as possible, if you don't want it to leak. I guess I'll paint the whole interior of this compartment white, then I can see way into the far corners of it."

"I think that's a good idea," commented Mr. Swift. "Be sure to clean out any residual fuel before you do else the paint will not stick. So, what's next?"

"Next, I'd like to get her out of the water so I can give the hull a good cleaning and, if necessary, a new coat of varnish," his son replied.

However, that night as he lie in bed, Tom had a new thought about the hull. He got up and made a quick note in a book he kept for just such occasions, then went to sleep.

It was four days after his purchase of the boat before Tom was ready to make a long trip in it. Up to that time he had gone on short spins not far from the dock, in order to test the engine and to make adjustments. He found it was working fairly well, most likely better than when it had been new, but he decided with a new kind of spark plugs for the two cylinders that he could get more speed out of it.

Finally the forward compartment was painted, a general cleaning given to the hull inside and out, and Tom was ready to put his boat to a good test.

"Come on, Ned," he said to his chum early one evening after Mr. Swift had said he was too tired to go out on a trial run. "We'll see what the *Arrow* will do now."

From the time Tom started up the motor and set the throttle, it was evident that the boat was going through the water at a rapid rate. For a mile or more the two lads sped along. Then Ned exclaimed, "Something's coming behind us."



Tom turned his head and looked. Then he called out:

"It's Mr. Hastings in his new *Carlopa*. I wonder if he wants a race?"

"Guess he'd have us all the way," suggested Ned.

"Oh, I don't know. I can get a little more speed out of my boat."

Tom waited until the former owner of the *Arrow* was up to him.

"Want a race?" asked Mr. Hastings good-naturedly.

"Sure!" agreed Tom, and he shoved the spark timer ahead to produce quicker explosions.

The *Arrow* seemed to leap forward. For a time, the *Arrow* was ahead of the *Carlopa*, but with a motion of his hand to his own spark lever Mr. Hastings also increased his speed. In a moment the two boats were on even terms and then the larger and newer one forged ahead. Tom had expected it, but he was a little disappointed.

"That's doing first rate," complimented Mr. Hastings as he passed them. "Better than I was ever able to make her do even when she was new, Tom." He gave a mock salute to the boys and turned away on a new course.

This made the present owner of the *Arrow* feel somewhat consoled. He and Ned raced on for a few miles, the *Carlopa* in the meanwhile disappearing from view

around a bend. Then Tom and his friend turned around and made for the Swift dock.

"She certainly is a dandy!" declared Ned. "I wish I had one like it."

"Oh, you'll have plenty of rides in this," went on his friend. "When you get your vacation, you and Dad and I are going on a tour," and he explained his plan, which, needless to say, met with Ned's hearty approval.

Just before going to bed some hours later, Tom decided to go down to the dock to make sure he had shut off the gasoline stopcock leading from the tank of his boat to the motor. It was a calm, early summer night, with a new moon giving a little light, and he went down to the lake in his slippers. As he neared the boathouse he heard a noise.

"Water rat," he murmured, "or maybe muskrats. I must set some traps."

As Tom entered the boathouse he started back in alarm, for a bright light flashed up, almost in his eyes.

"Who's here?" he cried, and at that moment someone sprang out of his motorboat, scrambled into a rowing craft which the youth could dimly make out in front of the dock and began to pull away quickly.

"Hold on there!" cried the young inventor. "Who are you? What do you want? Come back here!"

The person in the boat returned no answer. With his

heart beating overtime Tom lit a lantern and made a hasty examination of the *Arrow*. It did not appear to have been harmed, but a glance showed that the door of the gasoline compartment had been unlocked and was open. Tom jumped down into his craft.

"Someone has been at that compartment again!" he murmured. "I wonder if it was the same man at the auction? What can he want, anyhow?"

The next moment he uttered an exclamation of startled surprise and picked up something from the bottom of the boat. It was a bunch of keys, with a tag attached, bearing the owner's name.

"Andy Foger!" murmured Tom. "So this is how he was trying to get even! "

## TOM SWIFT and His Motorboat

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### CHAPTER VI

#### TOWING SOME GIRLS

WITH A sense of anger mingled with an apprehension lest some harm should have been done to his boat, the owner of the *Arrow* went carefully over it. He could find nothing wrong. The engine was fine and all that appeared to have been accomplished by the unbidden visitor was the opening of the locked forward compartment. That this had been done by one of the many keys on Andy Foger's ring was evident.

"What could have been his reasons?" mused Tom. "I would think if he wanted to put a hole in the boat he

would have done it amidships, where the water would have a better chance to come in. Or perhaps, he wanted to flood it with gasoline and—"

The idea of fire was in Tom's mind, and he did not finish his half-completed thought.

"That may have been it," he thought after a hasty examination of the gasoline tank, to make sure there were no leaks in it. "To get even with me for outbidding him on the boat, Andy may have wanted to destroy the *Arrow*. Of all the mean tricks, that's about the limit! Wait until I see him. Now I've got evidence against him," and Tom looked at the key ring. "I could probably have him arrested for this."

Going outside the boathouse, Tom stood on the edge of the dock and peered into the darkness. He could hear the faint sound of someone rowing across the lake, but there was no light to be seen.

"If I hadn't found his keys, I might have thought it was Happy Harry instead of Andy," murmured Tom.

He went back up to the house after carefully locking the boat compartment and detaching the coil wire from the engine. Without that, the motor in the *Arrow* could not be started.

"That will prevent them from running away with my boat, anyhow," decided Tom. "And I'll tell Garret Jackson

to keep a sharp watch tonight." Jackson was the engineer at Mr. Swift's workshop.

Tom told his father what had happened and Mr. Swift was properly indignant. He wanted to go at once to see Mr. Foger and complain of Andy's act, but Tom asked that he wait.

"I'll attend to Andy myself," said the young inventor. "He's desperate, I guess, or he wouldn't try to set the place on fire. Wait until I show him these keys."

"Why not turn those keys in to the police and just give Andy back the name badge. He will have to account for himself to the officials," Mr. Swift suggested.

Tom declined, but thanked his father for the advice.

Bright and early the next morning he was down at the dock inspecting the boat. The engineer, who had been on watch part of the night, reported that there had been no disturbance. As if to verify this, Tom found everything all right. "I wonder if I'd better go over and accuse Andy now or wait until I see him and spring this evidence on him?" thought our hero. He decided it would be better to wait. "This should make Andy sweat a bit." He took his father out for a spin on the lake after breakfast.

The older man was impressed at his son's abilities to repair the boat. "But I must go back now and work on my gyroscope invention," said Mr. Swift when about two

hours had been spent on the lake. He sighed and tired sigh. "I *am* making good progress with it."

"You need a vacation," said Tom, "I'll be ready to take you and Ned in about two weeks. He will have two weeks off then and, we'll have some glorious times together."

That afternoon Tom removed the spark plugs and saw an immediate reason why he still did not have as much power as he believed he should. The steel electrode tip and grounding piece showed signs of corrosion.

"Water!" he exclaimed. "I have water getting in along with the gasoline and oil mixture. Now, what can I do about that?" He sat in thought for many minutes until an idea formed.

Tom stuffed small bits of rag into the holes so that nothing might enter the cylinders and then raced for his shop.

He first used an electrically operated buffing wheel to remove all of the corrosion. He reasoned that there might still be some inside of the ceramic casing, but there was nothing to do about that at the present time. He took the plugs over to his father's main shop.

"Dad? Do you have one minute?" he asked.

He explained his dilemma, and his father pondered the problem. "Well, for starters I would say you need to do something about the water in your tank. I would suppose

that any boat would run afoul of such problems. Perhaps you might come up with a solution that you could patent." He and Tom talked about several possibilities.

Next, Tom inquired, "Is there some sort of metal coating that I might add to these plugs to keep further corrosion from happening?"

While there were numerous metals that might be used, Mr. Swift could only suggest a couple, the most obtainable being platinum. "But, it is prohibitively expensive. You could go broke trying to protect those old-fashioned plug. I dare say that they were meant for automobiles and not water craft. The hardware store in Thessaly or Mansburg may have something in their catalogs."

Tom rode his motorcycle into town that afternoon. Not only did the shop in Shopton have several possibilities from a catalog, they had exactly two of one type designed to seal out all possible intrusion of moisture. The fittings were of proper size so Tom purchased them along with several other items he required.

Once back home, he set the proper gap on the new style spark plugs and screwed them into the cylinders of his motor. He started the motor and found that he had considerably increased the revolutions of the engine due to a better explosion being obtained. He removed and polished the brass contact piece inside the distributor. This rotated in time with the motor and sent the spark

first to one cylinder and then the other at the exact moment needed to maximum efficiency. It was this device that Tom could also manually set forward or backward slightly to adjust the spark timing. He also made some minor adjustments to his steering setup and the next day he went out alone for a long run.

Heading up the lake, Tom was soon in sight of a popular excursion resort that was frequently visited by church and Sunday school organizations in the vicinity of Shopton. He saw a number of rowboats of varying sizes and a small motorboat circling around opposite the resort and remarked, "There must be a picnic at the grove today. Guess I'll head over and take a look."

The lad was soon in the midst of quite a flotilla of rowboats, most of them manned by pretty girls or in charge of boys who were giving sisters—their own or some other boy's—a trip on the water. Tom throttled his boat down to slow speed and looked with pleasure on the pretty scene. His boat attracted considerable attention, for motor craft were not numerous on Lake Carlopa.

As he passed one boat, containing three very pretty young ladies, Tom heard one of them exclaim:

"There he is now! That's Tom Swift."

Something in the tones of the voice attracted his attention. He turned and saw a brown-eyed girl smiling at him. She bowed and asked, blushing the while, "Well,

have you stopped any more runaway horses lately?"

"Runaway horses—why—what? Oh, hello. It's Miss Nestor!" exclaimed the lad, recognizing the young lady whose steed he had frightened one day when he was on his bicycle. The horse had run away and Miss Mary Nestor, of New York City, was in grave danger.

"Have you given up the bicycle for the motorboat?" went on the young lady, giving Tom a dazzling but coy smile.

"Yes," replied Tom with a smile, shutting off the power, "and I haven't had a chance to save any girls with it."

The two boats had drifted close together, and Mary introduced her two companions to Tom.

"Would you like to come in and take a ride?" he asked.

"Is it safe?" asked Jennie Haddon, one of the lovely trio.

"Of course it is, Jennie, or he wouldn't be out in it," said Mary hastily. "Come on, let's get in. I'm just dying for a motorboat ride."

"What will we do with our boat?" asked Katie Carson.

"Oh, I can easily tow that behind," replied the youth coming right up along the side of their boat. "Get right in and I'll take you all around the lake."

"Not too far," stipulated Mary. "We must be back for lunch which will be served in about an hour. Our church

and Sunday school are having a picnic."

"Maybe Mr. Swift will come and have some lunch with us," suggested Miss Carson, blushing prettily.

"Nothing would give me greater pleasure," answered Tom, and then he laughed at his formal reply, the girls joining in.

"We'd be glad to have you," added Jennie Haddon. She stood up and made to move into Tom's boat. "Oh!" she suddenly screamed, and sat back down, "the boat's tipping over!"

"Oh, no," Tom hastened to assure her. He grabbed hold of the girls' small boat to steady it. "It just tilts a bit, with the weight of so many on one side. It couldn't capsize if it tried."

In another moment the three had stepped over and into the roomy cockpit, and Tom had tied the empty rowboat to a cleat on the stern. He was about to start up when from another boat, containing two little girls and two slightly larger boys, came a plaintive cry, "Oh, mister, give us a ride!"

"Sure!" agreed Tom pleasantly. "Just fasten your boat to the other rowboat and I'll tow you."

One of the boys rowed their craft over and did this, then with three pretty girls as his companions in the *Arrow* and towing the two boats, Tom started off.

The girls were very much interested in the craft and asked all sorts of questions about how the engine operated. Tom explained as clearly as he could how the gasoline exploded in the cylinders, about the electric spark and about the propeller. Then, when he had finished, Jennie remarked naively, "Oh, Mr. Swift, you've explained it beautifully, and I'm sure if our teacher in school made things as clear as you have that I could get along fine. I understand all about it, except... I don't see what makes the engine go."

"Oh," said Tom faintly, and he wondering what would be the best remark to make under the circumstances, when Mary Nestor created a diversion by looking at her watch and exclaiming, "Oh, girls, it's lunch time! We must go ashore. Could you kindly put about, Mr. Swift—I hope that is the proper term—and—land us—is that right?" and she looked archly at Tom.

"That's perfectly right," he admitted with a laugh and a glance into the girl's brown eyes. "I'll put you ashore at once," and he headed for a small dock.

"And come yourself to take lunch with us," added Jennie Haddon.

"I'm afraid I might be in the way," stammered Tom. "I—I have a pretty good appetite, and—"

"I suppose you think that girls on a picnic don't take much lunch," said Mary with a grin. "But I assure you that

we have plenty, and that you will be *very* welcome," she added warmly.

"Yes, and I'd like to have him explain over again how the engine works," went on Jennie. "I am so interested."

Tom helped the girls out, receiving their thanks as well as those of the children in the second boat. But as he walked with the young ladies through the grove he made a mental note that he would steer clear of explaining again how a gasoline engine worked.

"Now come right over this way to our table," invited Mary. "I want you to meet Papa and Mamma. They've just come up from New York City for a visit."

Tom followed her. As he stepped from behind a clump of trees he saw, standing not far away, a figure that seemed strangely familiar. A moment later the figure turned and Tom saw Andy Foger confronting him.

At the sight of Tom the bully turned beet red and walked quickly away.

Tom's fingers touched the ring of keys in his pocket. "Just wait, Andy Foger," he thought. "Just you wait!"

## TOM SWIFT and His Motorboat

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### CHAPTER VII

#### A BRUSH WITH ANDY

SO UNEXPECTED was his encounter with Andy that the young inventor hardly knew how to act, especially since he was a guest of the young ladies. Tom did not want to do or say anything to embarrass them or make a scene, yet he did want to have a talk, and a very serious talk, with Andy Foger.

Mary Nestor must have noticed Tom's sudden start at his glimpse of Andy, for she asked, "Did you see someone you knew, Mr. Swift?"

"Yes," replied Tom, "I did—er—that is—" He paused in some confusion.

"Perhaps you'd like—that is prefer—to go with them instead of taking lunch with silly girls who don't know anything about engines?" she persisted. He could see in her face that she did not want this to happen.

"Oh, no indeed," Tom hastened to assure her. "He—that is—the person I saw wouldn't care to have me lunch with him," and the youth smiled grimly. "And please, I would like it if you would call me Tom." He felt a blush come over his face as he said this.

"Would you care to bring him over to our table?" inquired Miss Carson. "We have plenty for him."

"No, I think that would hardly do," continued the lad, who tried not to smile at the picture of the red-haired and squint-eyed Andy Foger trying to behave with the girls. The young ladies fortunately had not noticed the bully, who was out of view by this time.

Tom was presented to Mr. and Mrs. Nestor, who told him how glad they were to meet the young man who had been instrumental in saving their daughter from injury, if not death. Tom was a bit embarrassed, but bore the praise as well as he could. He was very glad when a diversion, in the shape of lunch, began.

After a meal on wooden picnic tables under the trees in

the grove, Tom took the girls and a couple of their friends out in his motorboat again. They covered several miles around the lake before returning to the picnic ground.

Goodbyes were said all around. Mary was last and seemed to hold on to Tom's hand a bit longer than the rest as she gently shook it. "I look forward to seeing you and whatever mode of transportation you might have in the future, Mr.—that is, Tom," she told him.

As Tom was starting toward home in his boat, intending to head down shore for a way, his thoughts switched back and forth between the fetching Mary Nestor and then wondering what had become of Andy. The latter won out and caused Tom to try to think of a reason why the bully should attend anything as "tame" as a church picnic.

As he pondered this, the object of his thoughts came strolling through the trees down to the shore of the lake. The moment he saw Tom the red-haired lad started to pull back, but the young inventor, steered quickly to the shore, Then, leaping nimbly out of his boat, called out, "Hold on there, Andy. I want to see you!" and there was menace in Tom's tone.

"Well, I don't want to see you!" retorted the other sulkily and turned as if to leave. "I've got no use for you."

"No more have I for you," was Tom's quick reply. "But I want to return you these keys. You dropped them in my boat the other night when you tried to set it afire. If I ever



catch you—"

"My keys? Your boat? On fire?" gasped Andy, so plainly astonished that Tom believed his surprise was genuine.

"Yes, *your* keys. With your name on them. You were a little too quick for me or I'd have caught you at it. The next time you pick a lock, don't leave your keys behind you," and he held out the jingling ring.

Andy Foger advanced slowly. He took the bunch of keys and looked at the tag.

"These *are* mine," he said slowly, as if there was some doubt about it.

"Of course they are," declared Tom. "I found them where you dropped them—in my boat."

"Do you mean over at the auction?"

"No, I mean down in my boathouse, where you sneaked in the other night and tried to do damage.

"The other night!" cried Andy. "I never was near your boathouse any night and I never lost my keys there! I lost these the day of the auction, on Mr. Hastings' property, and I've been looking for them ever since."

"So, how do you explain that you could start your auto that day?"

Andy looked confused but then brightened. "I keep a

spare key inside of my wallet. I used that one."

"Didn't you sneak in my boathouse the other night and try to do some mischief? Didn't you drop them then?"

"No, I didn't," retorted Andy earnestly. "I lost those keys at the auction, and I can prove it to you. Look, I advertised for them in the weekly Gazette."

The red-haired lad pulled a crumpled paper from his pocket and showed Tom a "penny" advertisement offering a reward of "two dollars for a bunch of keys on a ring, supposed to have been lost at the auction on Mr. Hastings' grounds in Lanton." The finder was to return them to Andy Foger and gave his address.

"Does that look as if I lost the keys in your boathouse?" demanded the bully sneeringly. "I wouldn't have advertised them that way if I'd been trying to keep my visit quiet. Besides, I can prove that I was out of town several nights. I was over to a musical performance in Mansburg one night and I didn't get home until two o'clock in the morning because my auto broke down. Ask Ned Newton. He saw me at the theater."

Andy's manner was so earnest that Tom could not help believing him. There was the evidence of the advertisement. Clearly, the squint-eyed youth had not been the mysterious visitor to the boathouse and had not unlocked the forward compartment. But if it was not him, who could it have been and how did the keys get there?

These were questions which racked Tom's brain.

"You can ask Ned Newton," repeated Andy. "He'll prove that I couldn't have been near your place, if you don't believe me."

"Oh, I believe you all right," answered Tom, for there could be no doubting Andy's manner, even though he and the young inventor were not on good terms. "But how did your keys get in my boat?"

"I don't know, unless you found them, kept them and dropped them there," was the insolent answer.

"You know better than that," exclaimed Tom. "If I had wanted to get you into trouble I could have easily turned these in to the police."

Andy blanched but recovered quickly. "Well, I owe you a reward of two dollars for giving them back to me," continued the bully grudgingly. "Here it is," and he hauled out some bills.

"I don't want your money!" fired back Tom. "But I'd like to know who it was that was in my boat."

"And I'd like to know who it was took my keys," and Andy stuffed the money back in his pocket. Tom did not answer. He was puzzling over a strange matter and he wanted to be alone and think. He turned aside from the red-haired lad and walked toward his motorboat.

"I'll give you a surprise in a few days," Andy called after

him, but Tom did not turn his head nor did he inquire what the surprise might be.

Mr. Swift was somewhat puzzled when his son related the outcome of the key incident. He agreed with Tom that someone might have found the ring and kept it, and that the same person might have been the one whom Tom had surprised in the boathouse.

"But it's idle to speculate on it," commented the inventor. "Andy might have talked one of his cronies to act for him in harming your boat, and the key advertisement might have been only a pre-arranged part of a ruse."

"I hardly think so," answered his son, shaking his head. "Andy isn't that clever, by a long shot. It strikes me as being very curious, and I'm going to see if I can't get to the bottom of it."

But a week or more passed and Tom had no clue. In the meanwhile he was working away at his motorboat, installing several improvements.

One of these was a better pump, which circulated the water around the cylinders, and another was a new system of lubrication for the shaft between the motor and the propeller under forced feed.

"Keeping that well lubricated ought to give me a little more speed," reasoned Tom, who was not yet satisfied

with his craft. He also improved the cylinder head oiling system, which could inject additional oil to keep the motor running more efficiently than simply relying on the small amounts of oil that was mixed with the gasoline in the big tank.

With the assistance of his father, Ned and Garret Jackson, Tom pulled the boat from the water and onto a pair of low stands he built from scraps of wood. He wanted to clean and possibly revarnish the bottom of the hull.

He was slightly alarmed to see that, like with the rudder, water had seeped under the varnish and was affecting the condition of the wood. He spent two days using sheet after sheet of sanding paper and removed the thick coating. He also sanded down the places where the wood had warped so that the entire hull was smooth.

Then, in a flash of inspiration, Tom remembered the polymer he had concocted and used to coat his motorcycle protective helmet. It set to a hard and very smooth surface and seemed quite capable of adhering to almost anything.

He mixed a small batch of the natural rubber, cellulose, gutta-percha and solvent concoction over heat, then applied it to a piece of scrap wood. Once the solvent evaporated, the polymer was set, and Tom took the piece down to the lake. He weighted it down with a rock and set

in in a few feet of water.

The next day, Tom checked his experiment. Drying it off he immediately saw that it had remained hard and stiff, and that no water could be seen to have seeped inside of it.

He spent the remainder of the day mixing batch after batch and applying it to the hull of the boat where it would meet with water. He enlisted the aid of his father and their engineer to shift the boat slightly so that he could apply his coating to the places where the stands covered, and soon was well on his way to completing the job.

At the end of the day he stepped back to admire the work. It looked smooth and even shinier than the old varnish had. He ran his hands over the surface feeling the smoothness. And, though it added almost ten pounds to the weight of the boat, Tom felt certain that the smoothness would more than make up for the slight additional weight.

“If this doesn’t give me a bit more speed, I don’t know what might,” he said to his father at dinner that evening.

“Now, Tom,” Mrs. Baggert said to him, “don’t you think it is about time to stop playing with that boat of yours and get to having some fun with it?” Mrs. Baggert was a fine housekeeper and a very nice woman. She was practically a member of the family, having been with Barton and Tom

for more than ten years.

He smiled at the kindly woman. "I want to make it into the best boat ever to ply Lake Carlopa. She's going to be," he said, almost as if making a promise.

The next morning he was back at the boathouse. The hull was completely dry so he had asked his father and Garret Jackson to assist him. Ned was at work so could not be used.

The three slid the boat off of its makeshift stands and into the water. It looked very good. Tom's polymer coating came up about three inches above the waterline and was bordered by a bright blue stripe that had been painted onto the wood before it had been varnished at the factory.

He had opted to keep the stripe and had even touched it up where his sanding had thinned the paint out.

Both of the men admired his work. "She looks even sleeker than before, Son," his father told him. "Well done!"

"Guess I'll take it out for a spin. Thanks for the help!"

Soon, he was alone in the *Arrow*, taking a long route up the lake when, as he passed a wooded point that concealed from view a sort of bay, he heard the puffing noises of another motorboat.

"Maybe that's Mr. Hastings," thought Tom. "If I raced

with him now, I think the *Arrow* could give a better account of herself."

The young inventor looked at the boat as it came into view. He needed only a glance to see that it was not the *Carlopa*. Then, as it came nearer, Tom saw a familiar figure in it—a red-haired, squint-eyed chap.

"Andy Foger!" exclaimed Tom. "He's got a motorboat! This must be the surprise he mentioned."

The boat was rapidly approaching him, and he saw that it was painted a vivid red. Soon, he could make out the name on the bow, *Red Streak* painted in gold. Andy was steering the craft toward him at a fast rate.

"You needn't think you're the only one on this lake who has a gasoline boat!" called Andy boastfully as he turned the craft close enough to cause waves to rock Tom's boat. "This is mine. It's a new model and the fastest thing afloat around here. I drive all around you. Do you want to race?"

It was a "dare," and Tom never backed down from such things when he could reasonably be assured of a fair contest. Though he had his doubts that Andy would play completely fair, he swung his boat around and pulled alongside of Andy. Staring the other in the eyes, and causing Andy to glance away with discomfort, Tom answered, "Yes, I'll race you. Where to?"

"Down opposite Kolb's dock and back to this point,"

was the answer. "I'll give you a head start, as my engine has three cylinders. I'm certain that your small two-cylinder motor can't keep up. This is a racing boat."

"I don't need any head start," declared Tom. "You will only cry foul if I win that way. I'll race you on even terms. Go ahead!"

Both lads adjusted their timers to get more speed. The water began to curl away from the sharp prows, the motors exploded faster and faster.

The race was on between the *Arrow* and the *Red Streak*.

## TOM SWIFT and His Motorboat

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### CHAPTER VIII

#### OFF ON A TRIP

GLANCING WITH critical eyes at the craft of his rival, Tom saw that Andy Foger had a very fine boat. The young inventor also realized that if he was to come anywhere near winning the race he would have to get the utmost speed out of his engine. The new boat the bully drove was designed primarily for racing, while Tom's was an all-around pleasure craft, though capable of something in the speed line.

"I'll be giving you a tow in a few minutes, as soon as my engine gets warmed up!" sneered Andy.

"Maybe," said Tom, and then he crouched down to make as little resistance as possible to the wind. Andy, on the contrary, sat boldly upright at the auto steering wheel of his boat.

Tom had a fleeting thought to add some sort of tonneau cover to the back of his boat to reduce the resistance the wind made as it swirled into and around the open back end of the boat. That would have to wait.

On rushed the two motor craft, their prows exactly even and the propellers tossing up a plume in the water behind them. Both boats were acquiring greater speed after the both lads had adjusted the spark timers on their motors. Even a minute later the boats were still racing side by side, seemingly on even terms.

The *Red Streak* had a very sharp prow, designed to cut through the water. It was of the type known as an automobile layout. That is, the engine was located forward, under a sort of removable cover and right next to the driver. The steering wheel shaft went through the forward bulkhead to the right side, like the wheel of an automobile in England, and the gasoline flow and sparking levers were arranged to come out of the side of the engine cover. Andy's boat also included a reversing lever, by which the propeller blades could be set at neutral, or arranged so as to drive the boat backward.

Altogether the *Red Streak* was a very fine boat and had

most likely cost double or even triple the price of Tom's, even when the latter was brand new.

All these things the young owner of the *Arrow* thought of as he steered his craft over the course. It wasn't that Tom gave into jealousy, it was just that he realized that Andy's father's money had bought the red-haired boy a craft that was more elegant and certainly one that should be faster than his own.

"I hardly think I can win," Tom remarked to himself in a whisper. "His boat is too speedy for this one. I have a chance, though, for his engine is new, and is not fully worn in. He really shouldn't be driving it this hard. I don't believe he understands it as well as I do mine. Then, too, I am sure I have a better ignition system."

But if Tom had any immediate hopes of defeating Andy, they were doomed to disappointment, for about two minutes after the race started the *Red Streak* began to forge slowly ahead.

"Come on!" cried the red-haired lad. "I thought you wanted a race."

"I do," Tom yelled back. "We're a long way from the dock yet, and we've got to come back."

"You'll be out of it by the time I get to the dock," declared Andy.

Indeed it began to look so, for the other boat was now a

full length ahead of Tom's craft and there was open water between them.

But our hero knew a thing or two about racing, though he had not long been a motorboat owner. He adjusted the automatic oiler on the cylinders to give more lubrication, as he intended to get more speed out of his engine. Then he opened the gasoline cock a trifle more and set his timer forward a few notches to get an earlier spark. He was not going to set it to maximum speed just yet; he first wanted to see how the motor of the *Arrow* would behave under these conditions.

To his delight he saw his boat slowly creeping up on Andy's. The latter, with a glance over his shoulder, saw it too, and he advanced his spark. His craft forged ahead, but the rate of increase was not equal to Tom's.

"If I can keep up to him I suppose I ought to be glad," thought the young inventor, "for his boat is surely ahead of mine in its speed rating."

Through the water the sharp bows cut. There were only a few witnesses to the race, but those who were out in boats saw a wonderful sight as the two speedy craft came on toward the dock, which was the planned turning point.

Andy's boat reached it first, and swung about in a wide circle for the return. Tom's smaller boat and his improved rudder design proved a good combination as he was able to make his turn in less time and distance than Andy.

Tom decided it was time to make his boat do its best, so he set the timer at the limit, and the spark, coming more quickly, increased the revolutions.

Up shot the *Arrow* and, straightening out after the turn, Tom's craft crept along until it passed the stern of the *Red Streak*. Andy looked back in dismay. Then he tried to get more speed out of his engine. His actions caused the screw to revolve a little faster, and Tom noted that he was again being left behind. Then, Andy's motor began to misfire. At first it was only occasionally, then the misses became more frequent.

The owner of the *Red Streak* with one hand on the steering wheel, tried to adjust the motor to get rid of the trouble, but he only made it worse. Andy's boat began to fall back and Tom's to creep up. Frantically Andy worked the gasoline and sparking levers, but without avail. At last one cylinder went completely out of service and smoke began to come out of the exhaust pipe in the stern.

The two boats were now on even terms and were racing along side by side toward the wooded point which marked the finish.

"I'll beat you yet!" exclaimed Andy fiercely.

"Better hurry up!" retorted Tom.

But the young inventor was not to have it all his own way. With a freakishness equal to that with which it had

ceased to work, the dead cylinder came to life again, and the *Red Streak* moved ahead. Soon Andy's boat had the lead of a length and the finish of the race was less than a half mile ahead. The squint-eyed lad turned and shouted, "Told you I'd beat you! Want a tow now?"

It began to look as though Tom would need it, but he still had something in reserve. One of the improvements he had put in the *Arrow* was a new auxiliary ignition system. This he now decided to use.

With a quick motion Tom threw over the switch that put it into operation. A hotter, "fatter" spark was at once produced. Adjusting his gasoline cock so that a little more of the fluid would be drawn in, making a "richer" mixture, the owner of the *Arrow* felt the craft shoot forward as if, like some weary runner, a second breath had occurred.

Andy frantically tried to get more speed out of his motor. He opened the muffler bypass, and the explosions sounded loudly over the lake. But it also caused exhaust to fill the boat. It was no use. A minute later the *Arrow*, which had slowly forged ahead, passed the bow of the *Red Streak* a hundred feet before finishing point, and Tom won the race.

"Well, was that fair?" our hero called to Andy, who had quickly shut off some of his power as he saw his rival's daring trick. "Did I beat you fair?"

"You wouldn't have beaten me if my engine hadn't gone

funny," grumbled Andy, chagrin showing on his face. "Wait until my motor runs smoother and I'll give you a big handicap and beat you. My boat's faster than yours. It ought to be. It cost two thousand dollars and it's a racer."

"Maybe it doesn't like racing," commented Tom as he swung the prow of his craft down the lake toward his home. But he knew there was some truth in what Andy had said. The *Red Streak* was a technically a faster boat, and, with proper handling, could have beaten the *Arrow*. That was where Tom's superior knowledge came in useful.

"Just you wait, I'll beat you yet," called Andy to Tom, but the latter made no answer. He was satisfied.

Mr. Swift was much interested that night in his son's account of the race.

"I had no idea yours was such a speedy boat," he said.

"Well, it wasn't originally," admitted Tom, "but the improvements I put on it made it so. I especially believe my new coating accounted for some of its speed. But, Dad, when are we going on our tour? You look more worn out than I've seen you in some time, except when the turbine model was stolen. Are you worrying over your gyroscope invention?"

"A fair bit, Tom. I can't seem to hit on just what I want. It's a difficult problem. But, I feel that the solution is so very near at hand."



"I tell you what let's do, Dad. Let's drop everything in the inventive line and go off on a vacation. I'll take you up the lake in my boat and you can spend a week at the Lakeview Hotel at Sandport. It will do you good. You can take a notebook and consider any number of possibilities for your gyroscope. You always tell me to take a step back when I get stumped."

"But what will you do, Tom?"

"Oh, Ned and I will cruise about during the day. We can camp out in the boat when we tie up at the hotel and take you along any time you want to go. We're going to be fine in the boat, even if it rains. I've ordered a canopy with side curtains and will take that along. Ned and I don't care for the hotel life in the summer. Will you go?"

Mr. Swift considered a moment. He did need a rest, for he had been working hard and his brain was weary with thinking of many problems. His son's plans sounded very attractive.

"Yes. I think I will accept," said the inventor with a smile. "When can we start, Tom?"

"In about four days. Ned will start his vacation then and I'll have the canopy attached. I'll start to work on it tomorrow when it is suppose to be delivered. Then we'll go on the trip."

Sandport was a summer resort at the extreme southern

end of Lake Carlopa, and Mr. Swift sent a telegram to the Lakeview Hotel there to engage a room for himself and to secure a mooring position for Tom's boat. In the meanwhile, Tom began to put the canopy on his boat and arrange for the trip, which would take nearly a whole day. Ned was delighted with the prospect of a camping tour and helped Tom to get ready during his off hours.

They packed a small tent, a large jug of drinking water and plenty of supplies, including some food, along with spare parts Tom felt might be required. They did not need to carry many rations, as the shores of the lake were lined with small towns and villages where food could be purchased.

Finally all was ready for the trip. Ned Newton stayed at Tom's house the final night so they could all be off early in the morning. The day was all that could be desired, Tom noted, as he and his chum hurried down to the dock before breakfast to put their blankets in the boat. As the young inventor entered the craft he uttered an exclamation.

"What's the matter?" asked Ned.

"I was sure I locked that sliding door of that forward compartment," was the reply. "Now it's open." He looked inside the space occupied by the gasoline tank and cried out, "One of the braces is gone! There's been someone in my boat, and they tried to damage her."

"Is there much damage?" asked Ned anxiously.

"No, not really," replied Tom. "I can easily put a new block under the tank. In fact, I don't really need all I have. But why should anyone take one out? That's what I want to know."

The two looked carefully around the dock and boat for a sign of the missing block or any clues that might show who had been tampering with the *Arrow*, but they could find nothing.

"Maybe the block fell out," suggested Ned.

"It couldn't," replied Tom. "It was one of the new ones I put in myself and it was screwed in fast. You can see where it's been pried loose. I can't understand it," and Tom thought rapidly of the mysterious occurrences of late: the strange man at the auction; and the person he had surprised one night in the boathouse.

"Well, it won't delay our trip," resumed the young inventor. "Maybe there's a bogeyman around here, and it will do us good to get away a few days. Come on, we'll have breakfast, get Dad and start out."

A little later the *Arrow* was puffing away down the lake in the direction of Sandport.

## TOM SWIFT and His Motorboat

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### CHAPTER IX

#### MR. SWIFT IS ALARMED

"DON'T YOU feel better already, Dad?" asked Tom that noon as they stopped under an overhanging tree for lunch on the shore of the lake. "Ask Ned if you don't look more contented and less worried."

"I believe he does," agreed the other lad.

"Well, I must say I certainly have enjoyed the outing so far," admitted the inventor with a smile. "And I haven't been thinking about my gyroscope. I *do* think I'll take another sandwich, Tom, and a few more olives as well."

"That's the way to talk!" cried the son. "Your appetite is improving, too. If Mrs. Baggert could see you she'd be pleased."

"Oh, yes, Mrs. Baggert. I do hope she and Garret will look after the house and shops well," said Mr. Swift, and the old, worried look came like a shadow over his face.

"Now don't be thinking of that, Dad," advised Tom, "Of course everything will be all right. Do you think some of those thieves will return and try to get some of your other inventions?"

"I don't know, Tom. Those men were unscrupulous scoundrels, and you can never tell what they might do to revenge themselves on us for defeating their plans."

"Well, I guess Garret and Mrs. Baggert will look out for them," remarked his son. "Don't worry. I even asked Rad Sampson to keep his eyes and ears open."

"Yes, Mr. Swift. Please don't worry. It's bad for the digestion," added Ned. "We have an assistant manager at the bank who worried so much that he developed a peptic ulcer and is most miserable from it." Seeing Tom's disapproving face, he changed the topic. "If you don't mind, Tom, I'll have some more coffee and another sandwich myself."

"Nothing the matter with your appetite, either," commented the young inventor as he passed the coffee

pot and the plate.

They were soon cleaned back up and on their way again, the *Arrow* making good time along the water. Tom was at the engine, making several minor adjustments to it, while Ned steered. Mr. Swift reclined on one of the cushioned seats under the shade of the canopy. The young owner of the *Arrow* looked over the stretch of water from time to time for a possible sight of Andy Foger, but the *Red Streak* was not to be seen.

The Lakeview Hotel was reached late that afternoon and the boat was tied up to the dock by an attendant while Tom and Ned accompanied Mr. Swift to see him comfortably established in his room.

"Won't you stay to dinner with me?" invited the inventor to his son and the latter's chum. "Or do you want to start right in on camp life?"

"I guess we'll stay to eat and remain at the hotel dock tonight," decided Tom. "We got here a little later than I expected, and Ned and I hardly have time to go very far and establish a camp before dark. We'll live a life of ease tonight and begin to be 'wanderlusters' and get back to nature tomorrow."

In the morning Tom and his chum, full of enthusiasm for the pleasures before them, started off promising to come back to the hotel in a few days to see how Mr. Swift felt. The trip had already done the man good and his face

wore a brighter look.

Tom and Ned, in the speedy *Arrow*, cruised along the lakeshore all that morning. At noon they went ashore, made a temporary camp and arranged to spend the night there in the tent. After this was erected they got out their fishing tackle and passed the afternoon fishing and having such good luck that they provided their own supper without having to depend on canned foods. Later they enjoyed swimming in the cool water.

They lived this life for three days, traveling for several hours and making a new camp each night. With only good weather to be found, they did not have to sleep in the boat to keep dry. On the afternoon of the third day Tom took a critical glance at the sky and remarked, "I shouldn't be surprised if it rained tomorrow, Ned."

"Me either. It does look sort of hazy, and the wind has been picking up."

"What do you say to heading back for the hotel today? I imagine Dad will be glad to see us."

"That suits me. We can start camp life again after the storm passes."

They started for Sandport that afternoon. When they were within about two miles of the hotel dock Tom saw, just ahead of them, a small motorboat.

Ned observed it too. "Suppose that's Andy looking for

another race?"

"No, the boat's too small to be his. We'll head over that way and see who it is."

The other craft did not appear to be moving very rapidly and the *Arrow* was soon overtaking it. As the two chums came nearer they could hear the puffing of the motor. Tom listened with critical ears.

"That machine isn't working at all right," he remarked to his chum.

At that moment there sounded a loud explosion from the other boat, a large billow of smoke and a shrill cry of alarm.

"That's a girl in that boat!" exclaimed Ned. "Maybe she's hurt."

"No, the motor only backfired," observed Tom. "But we'll go over and see if we can help her. Perhaps she doesn't understand how to operate it. Girls don't seem to know much about machinery."

A little later the *Arrow* shot up alongside the other craft, which had come to a stop. The two lads could see a girl bending over the motor, twirling the flywheel and trying to get it started. "Can I help you?" asked Tom, shutting off his motor.

The young lady glanced up. Her face was red and she seemed somewhat angry. At the sight of the young

inventor she relaxed her shoulders and uttered an exclamation of relief.

"Why, Mr. Swift!" she cried. "Oh, Tom. I'm in such trouble. I can't make this foolish machine work. I'm afraid it's broken; it practically exploded."

"Mary Nestor!" blurted out Tom, more surprised to see his distressed acquaintance again than she was at seeing him. "I didn't know you ran a motorboat," he added.

"I don't," said she simply and helplessly. "That's the trouble, it won't run."

"What brought you so far down the lake?" went on Tom.

"Momma and Poppa have left for New York City, so I am staying with friends who have a cottage near the Lakeview Hotel. They have a motorboat and I got Dick Blythe—he's the owner of this thing—to show me how to run it. I thought I knew, and I started out a little while ago. At first it went beautifully, but a few minutes ago it blew up, or—or something dreadful happened."

"Nothing very dreadful, I guess," Tom assured her. "I think I can fix it. May I come aboard?" Mary waved her hand to indicate his welcome.

He got into the other boat and soon saw what the trouble was. The carburetor had been set out of adjustment and the gasoline was not feeding properly. The young inventor soon had it in order, and, testing the

motor, found that it worked perfectly.

"Oh, I can't thank you enough," cried Mary with a flash from her brown eyes that made Tom's heart beat double time. "I was afraid I had damaged the boat, and I knew Dick, who is a sort of second cousin of mine, would never forgive me." She reached out to steady herself, placing a delicate hand on Tom's arm. His heart raced even faster.

"There's no harm done," Tom assured her. "But you had better keep near us on your way back, that is, if you are going back."

"Oh, indeed I am. I was frightened when I found I'd come so far away from shore. And then, when that explosion took place—well, you can imagine how I felt. Oh, yes... I will keep near you. Are you stopping near here? If you are, I wish you'd come and see me, you and your friend," she added.

Realizing that he had failed to do so, Tom introduced his chum.

"So, will you both come?"

"We would be very glad to," answered our hero, and he told how he happened to be in the neighborhood. "I'll give you a few lessons in managing a boat—if you like," he added.

"Oh, will you? That will be lovely! If we don't tell Dick about it, I'll surprise him some day by showing him how

well I can run his boat."

"Good idea," commented Tom.

He started the motor for Mary, having stopped it after his first test. Then, with the *Dot*, which was the name of the small boat, she following the larger *Arrow* all the way back to the hotel.

"You should have asked me to take her little boat, Tom, and then you might have managed some private conversation with her in the *Arrow*," Ned teased his friend. He had seen the exchanges of glances between Tom and Miss Mary Nestor. Indeed he had.

The young lady turned off near the Lakeview's dock to head to the cottage where she was staying. The lads tied up at the hotel boathouse.

"Now it really looks as if we are in for a storm," remarked Tom as he and his friend walked toward the hotel. "I wonder how Dad is? I hope the outing is doing him good."

"There he comes now," observed Ned, and, looking up, Tom saw his father approaching. The young inventor was at once struck by the expression on his father's face. Mr. Swift looked worried and Tom hastened forward to meet him.

"What's the matter Dad?" he asked as cheerfully as he could. "Have you been worrying over the gyroscope again,

against my express orders?" and he laughed a little.

"No, Tom, it's not the gyroscope that's worrying me."

"What is it then?"

"Those scoundrels are around again, Tom!" and Mr. Swift glanced apprehensively about him.

"You mean the men who stole the turbine model?"

"Yes. I was walking in the woods near the hotel yesterday and I saw that Amberson Morse. He did not see me as I turned aside quickly, but I had a good glimpse of him. He was talking to another man."

"What sort of a man?"

"Well, an ordinary enough individual, but I noticed that he had tattooed on the little finger of his left hand a blue ring."

"Happy Harry, the tramp!" exclaimed Tom. He knew that he could not tell even his father about the double life of the man to which he referred. "What can he and Morse be doing here?"

"I don't know, Tom, but I'm worried. I wish I was back home. I'm afraid something may happen to some of my inventions. I want to go back to Shopton, Tom."

"Nonsense, Dad. Don't worry just because you saw some of your former enemies. Everything is all right at home. Mrs. Baggert and Garret Jackson will look after

things. They promised to telephone the hotel should anything be amiss. If you like, I can find out for you how matters are."

"How, Tom?"

"By taking a run back there in my motorboat. I can do it tomorrow and get back by night, if I start early. Then you will not worry."

"All right, Tom. I wish you would. Come up to my room and we will talk it over. I'd rather have you go than call on the telephone. You can't tell if the operator or anybody else might be listening, and I don't like to talk of my business over the wire if I can avoid it."

## TOM SWIFT and His Motorboat

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### CHAPTER X

#### A CRY FOR HELP

"DAD, TELL me all about it," requested Tom when he and Ned were in Mr. Swift's apartment at the hotel, safe from the rain that was falling and any prying ears that might be about. "How did you happen to see Amberson Morse and Happy Harry?"

"Well, Tom," began the inventor, "there isn't much to tell. I was out walking in the woods yesterday, and when I was examining a peculiar clump of bushes I heard voices. I looked out and there I saw the two men."

"Morse and the tramp. Right?"

"Yes. At first I thought they were tailing me, but I am sure that they had not seen me, and I can't see how they could know I was in the neighborhood. So I quietly made my way back to the hotel."

"Could you hear what they were saying?"

"Not all, but they seemed angry over something. The man with the blue ring on his finger asked the other man whether Murdock had been heard from."

"Who is Murdock?"

"I don't know, unless he is another member of the gang or one of them going under an assumed name."

"It may be that. What else did you hear?"

"Morse replied that he hadn't heard from him, but that he suspected Murdock was playing a double game. Then the tramp—Happy Harry—asked this question: 'Have you any clue to the sparkler?' And Morse answered: 'No, but I think Murdock hid it somewhere and is trying to get away with it without giving us our share.' Then the two men walked away, and I came back to the hotel," finished Mr. Swift.

"Sparkler," murmured Tom. "I wonder what that can be?"

"That's a slang word for diamonds," suggested Ned who

was known to read detective novels.

"So it is. In that case, Dad, I think we have nothing to worry about. Those fellows must be going to commit a diamond robbery or perhaps one has already taken place."

The inventor seemed relieved at this theory. His face brightened and he said, "If they are going to commit a robbery, Tom, we ought to notify the police."

"But if they said that 'Murdock,' whoever he is, had the sparkler and was trying to get away with it without giving them their share. Wouldn't that indicate that the robbery had already taken place?" asked Ned.

"That's so," agreed Tom. "But it won't do any harm to tell the hotel detective that suspicious characters are around, no matter if the crime has been committed. He can be on the lookout and notify the police if he sees fit."

Mr. Swift agreed that bringing in the hotel detective was a good idea.

"I don't think we have anything to worry about, Dad. Still, if you like, I'll gladly take a run back to the house to see that everything is all right. I'm sure it turn out that we have nothing to be alarmed over."

"Well, I will be more relieved if you do," said the inventor. "However, suppose we have a good supper now and you boys can stay at the hotel tonight. Then you and



Ned can start off early in the morning."

"All right," agreed Tom, but there was a thoughtful look on his face and he appeared to be planning something that needed careful attention to details.

After supper that night Tom took his chum to one side and asked: "Would you mind very much if you didn't make the trip to Shopton with me?"

"No, Tom, of course not, if it will help you any. Do you want me to stay here?"

"I think it will be a good plan. I don't want to leave Dad alone if those scoundrels are nearby. Of course he's able to look after himself, but sometimes he gets absent minded from thinking too much about his inventions."

"Of course. I'll stay here at the hotel. This is just as good a vacation as I could wish."

"Oh, I don't mean all the while. Just a day or so—until I come back. I may be here again by tomorrow night and find that my father is needlessly alarmed. Of course, something may have happened at home and I would be delayed. If I should be, I'd feel better to know that you are here."

"Then I'll stay, and if I see any of those men—"

"You'd better steer clear of them," advised Tom quickly. "They are dangerous customers."

"All right. Then I'll go over and give Miss Nestor lessons on how to run a motorboat," was the smiling response. "I fancy that if we combine what she and I know, we can make out pretty well."

"Hold on there!" cried Tom in mock alarm. "No trespassing, you know."

"Oh, I'll just say I'm your agent," promised Ned with a grin. "You can't object to *that*."

"No, I suppose not. Well, do the best you can. She is certainly a nice girl."

"Yes, but you do seem to turn up at most opportune times. Luck is certainly with you where she is concerned. First you save her in a runaway wagon—"

"After I accidentally started it," interrupted Tom.

"Oh. Yes. Timing and the correct position of the sun and of your bicycle and the horse and all that. Coincidence at its finest," Ned stated, barely able to keep a straight face.

"Yes. Totally a coincidence. You can't believe that I would plan something such as that. Why— I would never put Mary's welfare in danger—" Tom stopped, realizing that his protestations only served to convince Ned that his feeling for the pretty girl ran deep.

"Then, you happen upon her in time to take her for a ride in your motorboat. And, lastly, you come to her relief when she is stalled in the middle of the lake. You certainly

are blessed with good timing, you lucky dog!"

"Aw, Ned. I know you won't try to impress her. Now let's get to bed early, as I want to get a good start."

Tom awoke to find a nasty, drizzling rainstorm in progress, and the lake was almost hidden from view by a swirling fog. Still he was not to be daunted from his trip to Shopton by the weather, and, after a substantial breakfast, he bade his father and Ned goodbye and started off in the *Arrow*.

The canopy he had installed was an efficient protection against the rain, a celluloid window in the forward hanging curtains affording him a view so that he could steer. "It would surely benefit from something that could wipe away the rain and moisture," he thought aloud.

Through the mist puffed the boat, the motor being throttled down to medium speed since Tom was not as familiar with this southern part of the lake as he would like to have been. He did not want to run aground or into another craft or floating piece of wood.

He was thinking about what his father had told him of the presence of the men and vainly wondering what might be their reference to the "sparkler." His thoughts also dwelt on the curious removal of the wood brace block from under the gasoline tank of his boat.

"I won't be surprised if I find out Andy Fogger did that,"

he mused.

"Some day he and I will have it all out, and then maybe he'll let me alone. Well, I've got other things to think about now. The hotel detective will keep a lookout for the men around the hotel after the warning I gave him, and I'll see that all is right at home."

The fog was lifting somewhat and Tom put on more speed. As he was steering the boat along near shore he heard, off to the woods at his right, the report of a gun. It came so suddenly that he jumped involuntarily. A moment later there sounded, plainly through the damp air, a cry for help.

"Someone's hurt—shot!" cried the youth aloud.

He turned the boat in toward the bank. As he shut off the power from the motor he heard the cry again, "Help! Help! Please help!"

"I must go ashore!" he exclaimed. "Probably someone is badly wounded by a gun."

He paused for a moment as the fear came to him that it might be some of the patent thieves. Dismissing that idea as the *Arrow's* prow touched the soft mud and gravel, Tom sprang out, drew the boat up a little way, fastened the rope to a tree and hurried off into the dripping woods in the direction of the voice that was calling for aid.

# TOM SWIFT and His Motorboat

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## CHAPTER XI

### A QUICK RUN

"WHERE ARE YOU?" shouted Tom. "Are you hurt? Where are you?"

Uttering these words after he had hurried into the woods a short distance, the young inventor paused for an answer. At first he could hear nothing but the drip of water from the branches of the trees. Then, as he listened intently, he became aware of a groan not far away.

"Where are you?" cried the lad again. "I've come to help you. Where are you?"

He had lost what little fear he may have had that it might be one of the unscrupulous gang, and came to the conclusion that he might safely offer help.

Once more the groan sounded and it was followed by a faint voice speaking, "Here I am, under the big oak tree. Oh, whoever you are, help me quickly! I'm bleeding to death!"

With the sound of the voice to guide him, Tom swung around. The appeal had come from the left and, looking in that direction, he saw a large oak tree through the mist. Leaping over the underbrush toward it he caught sight of the wounded man at its base. Beside him lay a gun and there was a bloody wound in the man's right arm.

"Who shot you?" cried Tom, hurrying to the side of the man. "Was it some of those patent thieves?" Then, realizing that a stranger would know nothing of the men who had stolen the model, Tom prepared to change the form of his question. But, before he had an opportunity to do this, the man, whose eyes were closed, opened them, and, as he got a better sight of his face, Tom uttered a cry.

"Why, it's Mr. Duncan!" exclaimed the lad. He had recognized the rich hunter, whom he had first met in the woods that spring shortly after Happy Harry, the tramp, had disabled Tom's motorcycle. Duncan later appeared in a different guise, that of a friend of Mr. Damon. At that time he went by the name Munson and had been

instrumental in the capture of the patent thieves that had stolen one of Tom's father's inventions. It had turned out that he was a government agent assigned to watch out for Tom's father's interests.

"Mr. Duncan," the young inventor repeated, "how did you get shot?"

"Is that you, Tom Swift?" asked the gunner. "Help me, please. I must stop this bleeding in my arm. I'll tell you about it afterward. Wind something around it tight—your handkerchief should do."

The man sighed weakly and his eyes closed again. The lad saw the blood spurting from an ugly wound.

"I must make a tourniquet," the youth exclaimed. "That will check the bleeding until I can get you to a doctor."

Tom took out his knife and cut off Mr. Duncan's sleeves below the injury. Then he saw that the bullet had torn away some of the large muscles in the upper arm. The hunter seemed to have fainted and the youth worked quickly. Tying his handkerchief above the wound and inserting a small stone under the cloth, so that the pebble would press on the main artery, Tom put a stick in the handkerchief and began to twist it.

This tightened the linen around the arm, and in a few seconds the lad was glad to see that the blood had stopped spurting out with every beat of the heart. Giving the

tourniquet an extra twist to completely stop the flow of blood, Tom fastened the stick in place by a bit of cloth.

"That's—that's better," murmured Mr. Duncan a moment later. "Now if you can go for a doctor—" He had to pause for breath.

"I won't leave you here alone while I go for a doctor," declared Tom. "I have my motorboat on the lake. Do you think I could get you down to it and take you home?"

"Perhaps—maybe. I'll be stronger in a moment, now that the bleeding has stopped. But no—not home—frighten my wife. Take me to the sanitarium if you can—sanitarium up the lake, a few miles from here."

The unfortunate man, who had tried to sit upright, had to lean back against the tree again. Tom understood what he meant in spite of the broken sentences. Mr. Duncan did not want to be taken home in the condition he was then in, for fear of alarming his wife. He wanted to be taken to the sanitarium, and Tom knew this was a well-respected resort for the treatment of various diseases and surgical cases. It was about five miles away and on the opposite shore of the lake.

"Water—a drink!" murmured Mr. Duncan.

Seeing that his patient would be all right, for a few minutes at least, Tom hurried to his motorboat, got a cup and his water jug and he hastened back to the hunter.

Several cups of the fluid revived the man now that the bleeding had almost completely stopped. Mr. Duncan seemed much stronger.

"Do you think you can get to the boat, if I help you?" asked Tom.

"Yes, I believe so. To think of meeting you again, and under such circumstances! It is providential."

"Did someone shoot you?" inquired Tom, who could not get out of his head the notion of the men who had once assaulted him.

"No, I—well, I shot myself," answered Mr. Duncan as he got to his feet with Tom's help. "I was out with my gun, practicing just as I was that day when I met you in the woods. I stooped down to crawl under a bush and the weapon went off, the muzzle being close against my arm. I can't understand how it happened. I fell down and called for help. Then I guess I must have fainted, but I came to when I heard you talking to me. I shouldn't have come out today as it is so wet, but I had some new shot shells I wished to try in order to test them before the hunting season. But if I can get to the sanitarium, I will be well taken care of. I know one of the doctors there."

Tom looked at the man's clothing where the bullet had pierced the cloth and skin beneath it. There was no sign of burning as would be expected from a gunshot at such supposed close range. In addition, the man's own gun was

a shot shell type good for hunting birds. The bullet that had done so much damage to his arm could never have come from that gun. He questioned Mr. Duncan regarding this.

Duncan turned painfully to face the youth. "You must promise me, Tom, that you will not contradict my story. It is vitally important that no other version of the story be circulated. Can you understand this?"

Tom considered the matter for a few seconds. He realized that Duncan would be unable to maintain his secret and true identity should it be believed that he had fallen foul of a murder attempt. "I guess so. Let's get you to the medical facility."

With Tom leading him and acting as a sort of support, the journey to the motorboat was slowly made. Making as comfortable a bed as possible out of the seat cushions, Tom assisted Mr. Duncan to it, and then starting the engine he sent his boat out from shore at half speed. Even though he was in a hurry, the fog was still thick and he did not want to run upon a rock.

"Do you know where the sanitarium is?" asked the wounded hunter.

"Roughly," answered Tom a little doubtfully, "but I'm afraid it's going to be hard to locate it in this fog."

"There's a compass in my coat pocket," said Mr.

Duncan. "Take it out and I'll tell you how to steer. You ought to carry a compass if you're going to be a sailor."

Tom was beginning to think so himself and wondered that he had not thought of it before. He found the one the hunter had, and placing it on the seat near him, he carefully listened to the wounded man's directions. Tom easily comprehended and soon had the boat headed in the proper direction. After that it was comparatively easy to keep on the right course, even in the fog.

But there was another danger, however, and this was that he might run into another boat. True, there were not many powered boats on Lake Carlopa, but there were a few dozen, and one of that few might be out in spite of the bad weather.

"Guess I'll not run at full speed," decided Tom. "I wouldn't like to crash into the *Red Streak*. We'd both sink."

So he did not run his motor at the limit and sat at the steering wheel, peering ahead into the fog for the first sight of another craft.

"Tom?" the man's weak voice came from behind him.

"Yes, sir. What can I do?"

"Tom. You must be told something. Something that could have dire circumstances, but I fear that without the knowledge, you may find yourself in trouble. Our

acquaintance, Happy Harry?"

Tom nodded, knowing that the tramp using that name was also an agent for the U.S. War department. He used a disguise and false name to infiltrate the group of unscrupulous patent thieves. He had revealed his true identity to Tom recently and had sworn the youth to keep his secret.

"You must be wary of him, Tom. We have lost contact with him and there is some belief that he has decided to double-cross the government and become a true member of the group of thieves he has been operating with."

Tom was alarmed. Happy Harry had done damage to Tom's motorcycle and had waylaid the boy as Tom strove to deliver, and later to recover, his father's turbine engine. But, he had explained his actions to Tom and the young inventor had taken the man at his word.

Now, things appears to be very different.

Tom peered ahead, checking to see if there might be any obstacle or vessel that might be a hazard. Nothing appeared in the following minute.

He turned to look at Mr. Duncan and was alarmed at the pallor of his face. The man's eyes were closed and he was breathing in a peculiar manner.

"Mr. Duncan," cried Tom, "are you worse?"

There was no answer. Leaving the helm for a moment,

Tom bent over the injured hunter. A glance showed him that the tourniquet had slipped and the wound was bleeding again. He shut off the motor so that he might give his whole attention to wounded man. But something seemed to be wrong. No matter how tightly he twisted the stick the blood did not stop flowing. The lad was frightened. In a short time the man could bleed to death.

"I've got to get him to the sanitarium in record time!" exclaimed Tom. "Fog or no fog, I've got to run at full speed! I've got to chance it!"

Making the bandage as tight as he could and fastening it in place, the young inventor sprang to the motor and set it in motion. Then he went to the wheel. In a few minutes the Arrow was speeding through the water as it had never done before, except when it had raced the *Red Streak*. "If I hit anything—goodbye!" thought Tom grimly. "Why didn't I think to pack an aid kit in the boat?"

His hands were tense on the rim of the steering wheel and he was ready in an instant to swing her to one side or even as he sat straining his eyes to see through the curtain of mist. Now and then he glanced at the compass to keep on the right course, and from time to time he looked at Mr. Duncan. The hunter was still unconscious.

How Tom made that trip he hardly remembered afterward. Through the fog he shot, expecting any moment to crash into some other boat.

He did pass close to a rowing craft in which sat a lone fisherman, but a turn of the wheel sent the *Arrow* safely past, and the startled fisherman, whose frail craft was set to rocking violently by the swell from the motorboat, sent an objecting cry through the fog after Tom. But Tom did not reply. On he raced, getting the last atom of power from his motor.

He feared Mr. Duncan would be dead when he arrived, but when he saw the dock of the sanitarium looming up out of the mist and shut off the power to slowly run up to it, he placed his hand on the wounded man's heart and found it still beating.

"He's alive, anyhow," thought the youth. His craft bumped up against the dock and a man in the boathouse on the dock was sent on the run for a physician.

Mr. Duncan was quickly taken up to the sanitarium on a stretcher and Tom followed.

"You must have made a record run," observed one of the physicians a little while afterward, when Tom was telling of his trip while waiting in the office to hear the report on the hunter's condition.

"I guess I did," muttered the young inventor "only I didn't think so at the time. It seemed as if we were only crawling along."

## TOM SWIFT and His Motorboat

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### CHAPTER XII

#### SUSPICIOUS CHARACTERS

UNDER THE skill of the physicians at the lake sanitarium Mr. Duncan's wound was quickly attended to and the bleeding, which Tom had partly checked, was completely stopped.

The sanitarium was able to provide the man with one pint of blood of his own type, This, along with some medicines that had been administered worked and soon the hunter regained a little of his strength. About an hour after he had been brought to the resort, Tom was admitted to his room. The young inventor found Mr.



Duncan propped up in bed, with his injured arm bandaged.

"Is the injury a bad one?" asked Tom, entering softly.

"Not as bad as I feared," replied the hunter, while a trained nurse placed a chair for the lad at the bedside. "I will be in pain for some time and may not regain absolute function, but I will be able to do my work. If it had not been for you, though, I'm afraid to think of what might have happened."

"I am glad I chanced to be going past when you called," replied the lad.

"Well, you can imagine how thankful I am," resumed Mr. Duncan. "I'll thank you more properly at another time. I hope I didn't delay you on an important trip."

"It's not of much consequence," responded the youth. "I was only going to see that everything was all right at our house," and he explained about his father being at the hotel and mentioned his worryment. "I will go on now unless I can do something more for you," resumed Tom. "I will probably stay at our house all night tonight instead of trying to get back to Sandport."

"I'd like to send word to my wife about what has happened," said the hunter. "If it would not be too much out of your way, I'd appreciate it if you could stop at my home in Waterford and tell her, so she will not be alarmed

at my absence."

"I'll do it," replied our hero. "There is no special need of my hurrying. I have brought your gun and compass up from the boat. They are down in the office."

"Will you do me another favor?" asked Mr. Duncan quickly.

"Of course."

"Then please accept that gun and compass with my compliments. They are both of excellent make, and I don't think I shall use that gun this season. My wife would be superstitious about it. As for the compass, you'll need one in this fog, and I can recommend mine as being accurate."

"Oh, I couldn't think of taking them," said Tom, but he sensed that there may be more to the man's offer.

He leaned over the man and whispered, "Does the gun need to be out of your possession for the same reasons that it can not possibly be the one that was used to shoot you?" He backed up and looked at Mr. Duncan.

Motioning Tom forward, he said, "You are a wise young man, Tom. I am almost ashamed that I attempted to delude you. And, yes. For various reasons that gun should now disappear, at least from my vicinity. It is yours to either use or to toss in the lake. All I ask is that you be the last person who owns or uses that gun."

Tom realized that there was so much more than he

knew regarding the matter, and so he agreed to the man's wishes.

"But, the compass. Surely you can use that yourself."

"I can and would, but you need some sort of reward for helping me. Perhaps you can make it waterproof and then use it in your fine motorboat?"

Eyes sparkling in anticipation, for he had been wishing for a gun such as Mr. Duncan owned and also needed a compass, Tom agreed.

"If you don't take them I shall feel very much offended," the hunter said loudly enough for the nurse to hear from across the room, "and my nurse here will tell you that sick persons ought to be humored. Hadn't they?" and he appealed to the pretty young woman, who was smiling at Tom.

"That's perfectly true," she said, showing her white, even teeth. "I think, Mr. Swift, I shall have to order you to take them."

"All right," agreed Tom, "only it's too much for what I did."

"It isn't half enough," remarked Mr. Duncan solemnly. "Just explain matters to my wife, without mentioning the blood if you will, and tell her the doctor says I can be out in week. Tell her I'm not going hunting or practicing shots again." He nodded to Tom. They understood each other.

A little later Tom, with the compass to guide him on his course through the fog, was speeding his boat toward Waterford. Now and then he glanced at the fine shotgun which he had so unexpectedly acquired.

"This will come in dandy this fall!" he exclaimed. "I'll go hunting quail and partridge as well as wild ducks. This compass is just what I need, too."

Mrs. Duncan was at first very much alarmed when Tom started to tell her of the accident, but she soon calmed down as the lad went more into details of his treatment rather than the accident. He stated how comparatively out of danger her husband now was. She insisted that Tom remain to lunch. Now that he had made up his mind he would need to devote two days instead of one to the trip to his house, he consented.

The fog lifted that afternoon and Tom, rejoicing in the sunlight which drove away the storm clouds, speeded up the *Arrow* until she was skimming over the lake like a shaft from a bow.

"This is more like it," he exclaimed. "I'll soon be at home, find everything all right and telephone to Dad. Then I'll sleep in my own room and start back in the morning."

When Tom was within a few miles of his own boathouse he heard behind him the "putt-putt" of a motor craft. Turning, he saw the *Red Streak* fairly flying along at some

distance from him.

"Andy certainly is getting good speed out of her now," he remarked. "He'd beat me if we were racing, but the trouble with his boat and engine is that he really doesn't understand how to run it. I wonder if he'll want to race now?"

But the red-haired owner of the racing boat evidently did not intend to offer Tom a race. The *Red Streak* went on down the lake, passing the *Arrow* about half a mile away. Then the young inventor saw that Andy had two other lads in the boat with him.

"Sam Snedecker and Pete Bailey, I guess," he murmured. "Well, they're a trio of similar small minds. The farther off they are the better I like it."

Tom once more gave his attention to his own boat. He was going at a fair speed, but not the limit, and he counted on reaching home in about a half hour. Suddenly, when he was just congratulating himself on the smooth-running qualities of his motor, which had not missed an beat, it stopped.

"Hello!" exclaimed the young inventor in some alarm. "What's up now?"

He quickly shut off the gasoline and went back to the motor. There are so many things that may happen to a gasoline engine that it would be difficult to name them all

offhand, and Tom, who had not had all that much experience, was at a loss to find what had stopped his machinery. He tried the spark and found that by touching the wire to the top of the cylinder when the proper connection was made, that he had a hot spark. The compression seemed all right and the supply pipe from the gasoline tank was in perfect order. Still the motor would not go. No explosion resulted when he turned the flywheel over, not even when he primed the cylinder by putting a little gasoline in through the cocks on the cylinder heads.

"That's funny," he remarked to himself as he rested from his labors and contemplated the "dead" motor. "First time it has gone back on me." The boat was drifting down the lake, and, at the sound of another motor craft approaching, Tom looked up and saw the *Red Streak*, containing Andy Foger and his cronies. They had observed the young inventor's plight.

"Want a tow?" sneered Andy as he slowed down and swung near to Tom's boat.

"What'll you take for your second-hand boat that won't run?" asked Pete. "Give you ten, ha-ha!"

"Better get out of our way or you might be run down," added Sam.

Tom was too angry and chagrined to reply, and the *Red Streak* swept on.

"I'll make her go, if it takes all night!" declared Tom energetically. Once more he tried to start the motor. It coughed and sighed, as if in protest, but would not explode.

Tom opened the compartment forward to make sure he had sufficient fuel. He was reminded about the missing brace and told himself to remember to make a new one before going back to the hotel.

The tank proved to be more than half full. He sat, stumped for a minute. Then Tom cried, "The spark plugs! That's where the trouble is, I'll bet. Why didn't I think of that before?"

It was the work of but a minute to unscrew the spark plugs from the tops of the cylinders. He found that both had such accumulations of carbon on them that no spark could ever have reached the mixture of gasoline and air.

"I'll put new ones in and clean these once I get home," he decided, for he carried the original plugs that had come with the boat as spare plugs for emergencies. Inside of five minutes, with the clean plugs in place, the motor was running almost as well as before.

"Now for home!" cried Tom, "I still can't race that Andy Foger now, but as soon as I have finished vacationing with Ned and Dad I sure will!"

Tom looked around and discovered that the *Red Streak*

was not in sight. A little later, Tom had pulled the Arrow into the boathouse, locked the door and was on his way up to the mansion.

"I suppose Mrs. Baggert and Garret will be surprised to see me," he remarked. "Maybe they'll think we don't trust them by coming back in this fashion to see that everything is safe. But then, I suppose Dad is naturally nervous about some of his valuable machinery and inventions. I think I'll find everything all right, though."

Tom went up the main path and swung off to a side one, which was a short cut to the house. As he neared the back of the Swift property he saw in the dusk, for it was now early evening, a movement in the bushes that lined the walk.

"Hello, Garret!" exclaimed the lad, taking it for granted it was the engineer employed by Mr. Swift.

There was no reply, and Tom, with a sudden suspicion, sprang toward the bushes. The shrubbery was more violently agitated as he reached the screen of foliage. With a start, he saw a man spring up from the ground and take to his heels.

"Hey! Who are you? What do you want?" yelled Tom. "Stop!"

Hardly had he spoken when another man sprang out from behind a big apple tree. It was light enough so that

the lad could see his face, and a glimpse of it caused him to cry out, "Happy Harry, the tramp!"

Before he could call again the two men had disappeared.

## TOM SWIFT and His Motorboat

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### CHAPTER XIII

#### TOM IN DANGER

"GARRET! Garret Jackson!" cried Tom as he struggled through the hedge of bushes and ran after the men. "Where are you, Garret? Come on and help me chase these men!"

But there came no answer to Tom's hail. He could not hear the sound of the retreating footsteps of the men now and concluded that they had made their escape. Still he would not give up, but dashed on, slipping and stumbling. Now and then he collided with a tree or bush.

"What can they be doing here?" thought Tom in great anxiety. "Are they after some more of Dad's inventions because they didn't get his turbine motor?"

"Hello! Who's there? Who are you?" called a voice suddenly.

"Oh, Garret! Where have you been?" asked the young inventor, recognizing the tones of his father's engineer. "I've been calling you. Some of those scoundrels are around again!"

"Why if it isn't Tom!" sang out the engineer cheerfully. "However in the world did you get here? I thought you were at Sandport."

"I'll explain later, Garret. Just now I want to catch those men, if I can."

"Which men?"

Tom was exasperated at the man's inability to focus on the problem. "Listen, Garret! Happy Harry and another man. I saw them hiding down by the orchard path. Come on, they're right ahead of us."

Though they hunted as well as they were able to in the fast-gathering darkness, there was no trace of the intruders. They had to give up. Tom, after going to the boathouse to make certain that the *Arrow* was all right, returned to the house, where he told the engineer and housekeeper what had brought him back and how he had

surprised the two men.

"Is everything all right, Garret?" he concluded. "Dad is nervous and frightened. I'll need to telephone him at the hotel tonight and let him know, for I promised to come back immediately. I can't, though, until tomorrow."

"Everything is all right as far as I know," answered Jackson. "I've kept a careful watch and the burglar alarm has been in working order. I set it very night. Mrs. Baggert and I haven't been disturbed a single night since you went away. It's curious that the men should be here the very night you come back. Could they have followed you?"

"I hardly think so. They couldn't know I was coming."

"You can't tell what those fellows know," commented the engineer. "But, anyhow, I don't suppose they could have gotten here from Sandport as soon as you did."

"Oh, yes they could, in their automobile," declared Tom. "But I still don't believe they knew I was coming. They knew we were away, however, and maybe thought it would be a good time to steal something. Are you sure nothing has been taken?"

"Perfectly sure, but you and I can take a look around the shop."

They made a hasty examination, but found nothing disturbed and no signs that anyone had tried to break in.

"I think I'll telephone Dad that everything is all right," decided Tom. "It is as far as his inventions are concerned. If I tell about seeing the men it will only worry him. I can explain that part better when I see him. But when I go back, Garret, you will have to be doubly on your guard, since those men are in the neighborhood."

"I will, Tom. Don't worry."

Mr. Swift was soon informed by his son over the telephone that nothing in the shops had been disturbed, and the inventor received the news with evident satisfaction. He requested Tom to come back to the hotel in the morning, in order that the three of them might go for a ride about the lake in the afternoon, and Tom decided to make an early start.

The night passed without incident, though Tom, who kept the gun Mr. Duncan had given him in readiness for use, got up several times thinking he heard suspicious noises. After an early breakfast, and having once more cautioned the engineer and housekeeper to be on their guard, Tom quickly cleaned his best spark plugs, installed them, refilled the tank and started back in the *Arrow*.

As it would not be much out of his way, the young inventor decided to cut across the lake and stop at the sanitarium, to inquire about Mr. Duncan. He thought he could speed the *Arrow* up sufficiently to make up for any time he might lose. With this in mind, he headed out

toward the middle of Lake Carlopa. The engine was working splendidly with the new spark plugs, and Tom was pondering several possible methods of getting more revolutions out of the motor. He had about come to the conclusion that a new propeller might be the first answer for his purpose when he heard the noise of an approaching boat.

He looked up quickly and exclaimed, "Andy again, and Pete and Sam are with him. It's a wonder he doesn't go off on a trip instead of cruising around so near home. Guess he's afraid he'll get stuck."

Idly, Tom watched the *Red Streak* cutting through the water at a fast rate, throwing up curling foam on either side of the sharp bow. "He seems to be heading this way," mused Tom. "Well, I'm not going to race with him today."

Nearer and nearer came the speedy craft, straight for the *Arrow*. The young inventor shifted his helm in order to get out of Andy's course, but to his surprise he saw that the red haired lad changed the direction of his own boat.

"Guess he wants to see how close he can come to me," thought Tom. "Maybe he wants to show how fast he's going."

The *Red Streak* was now so close that the features of the occupants could easily be distinguished. There were vicious grins on the faces of Andy and his cronies.

"Get out of the way or we'll run you down!" cried the bully. "We've got the right of way."

"Don't you try it!" shouted Tom in some alarm, not afraid of Andy, but the *Red Streak* was dangerously near, and he knew Andy was not a skillful helmsman. The boat was now headed directly at the *Arrow* and coming on speedily. Andy was bending over the wheel and Tom had begun to turn his, in order to get well out of the way of the insolent, squint-eyed lad and his friends.

Suddenly Andy uttered a cry and leaped up.

"Look out! Look out!" he yelled. "My steering gear has broken! I can't change my course. Look out!"

The *Red Streak* was bearing right down on Tom's boat.

"Shut off your power! Reverse, you moron!" shouted Tom.

Andy seemed confused and did not know what to do. Sam sprang to the side of his crony, but he knew even less about a motorboat. It looked as if Tom would be run down.

But the young inventor did not lose his head. He put his wheel hard over and then, giving full fuel to his motor, sent it full speed forward. He acted not a moment too soon. An instant later the other boat shot past the stern of the *Arrow*, hitting it a severe but glancing blow. Tom's boat quivered from end to end and he quickly shut off the

power. By this time Andy had succeeded in slowing down his craft. The young inventor hastily looked over the side of the *Arrow*. One of the rudder fastenings had been torn loose.

"What do you mean by running me down?" shouted Tom angrily.

"I—I didn't do it on purpose," returned Andy contritely. "I was seeing how near I could come to you when my steering gear broke. I haven't damaged you."

"My rudder's broken," went on Tom "and I've got to put back to repair it. I ought to have you arrested for this!"

"I'll pay for the damage," replied Andy, and he was so frightened that he was white, in spite of his tan and freckles.

"That won't do me any good now," retorted Tom. "It will delay me a couple of hours. If you try any tricks like that again, I'll complain to the authorities and you won't be allowed to run your boat on this lake."

Andy knew that his rival was in the right and did not reply. The bully and his cronies busied themselves over the broken steering gear. Tom, finding that he could make a safe speed to get back to his boathouse, turned his craft around and headed for there.

"I wonder if Andy will see that hole he caused in the side of his boat before he takes on much water. Oh, well!"



# TOM SWIFT and His Motorboat

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## CHAPTER XIV

### THE ARROW DISAPPEARS

PAYING NO heed to the occupants of the bully's boat, and feeling no great desire to tell the bully about the damage, Tom was soon at his dock. After all, Andy's foolishness and daring had been responsible for his accident. He backed the boat up to the dock and soon had a simple block and tackle conveniently arranged to hoist that end of his craft out of the water for repair. In a few minutes the stern of the *Arrow* was elevated enough that he could get at the rudder.

"Well, it's not as bad as I thought," he remarked when,

with critical eye, he had noted the damage done. "I can fix it in about an hour if Garret helps me."

Going up to the house to get some tools and to tell the engineer that he had returned, Tom looked out over the lake and saw Andy's boat moving slowly off.

"They've got her fixed up in some kind of shape," he murmured. "It's a shame for a chump like Andy to have a good boat like that. He'll run around with it for one season and then be on to something else. He has no respect for things since his father always buys them for him! He's getting altogether too reckless. First thing he knows, we will have a major clash and I'll pay back some of the old scores."

Mr. Jackson was much surprised to see the young inventor home again so soon, as was also Mrs. Baggert. Tom explained what had happened, and he and the engineer went to work repairing the damage done by the *Red Streak*.

As Tom had anticipated, the work did not take long, and, shortly before lunchtime the boat was ready to resume the interrupted trip to Sandport.

"Better stay and have lunch," fussed Mrs. Baggert. "You can hardly get to the hotel by night, anyhow, and maybe it would be better not to start until tomorrow."

"No, I must get back tonight or Dad would be worried,"

declared Tom. "I've been gone longer now than I figured. If I have lunch here, I will need to do the last half of the trip after dark. It's possible as I know the way now and I have a compass and a good searchlight. Perhaps t would be better if you could make me a couple sandwiches."

The housekeeper wasn't too pleased but promised to have them to the dock within twenty minutes.

The *Arrow* was let down into the water again and tied outside the boathouse ready for a quick start. The housekeeper had not returned with his food so Tom walked up the path and into the house. The food Mrs. Baggert provided consisted of two apples, a piece of caramel cake with hard sauce and three sandwiches.

Tom peeked inside one of the paper-wrapped packets. "Oh. Well, thank you, Mrs. Baggert. Liver and onions. Umm, thanks." Even Tom couldn't miss hearing his own lack of enthusiasm.

He had forgotten that the woman believed that all ills could be cured using a good portion of liver and onions.

So it was with a feeling that he might arrive at the hotel than evening hungry indeed and with an almost forgiving spirit toward Andy Foger that our hero headed back down the path to the lake.

"Now for a quick run to Sandport," he said aloud. "I hope I don't see any more of those men and that Dad

hasn't been bothered by them. His suspicions about the house weren't completely unfounded. I did see the tramp and someone else sneaking around, but I don't believe they'll come back now."

Tom swung around the last corner in the path that led to the dock. As he came in sight of the water, he stopped and stared as if he could not believe what he saw. Or, rather, what he did not see. For there was no craft tied to the dock, where he had fastened his motorboat. He looked again, rubbed his eyes to make sure and then cried out, "The *Arrow* is gone!"

There was no doubt about it. The craft was not at the dock. Breaking into a run, Tom hastened to the boathouse. The *Arrow* was not in there, and a look across the lake showed only a few rowboats in sight.

"That's mighty strange," mused the youth. "I wonder—"

He paused suddenly in his thoughts.

"Maybe Garret took it out to try and see that it worked all right," he said hopefully. "He knows how to run a boat. Maybe he wants to see how the rudder behaves and is out in it now. But I should have thought he'd have said something to me if he was going out in it."

This was the one weak point in Tom's theory, and he felt it at once.

"I'll see if Garret is in his shop," he went on as he turned

back toward the house.

The first person he met as he headed for the group of small structures where Mr. Swift's inventive work was carried out was Garret Jackson, the engineer.

"I—I thought you were out in my boat!" stammered Tom.

"Your boat! Why would I be out in your boat?" and Mr. Jackson removed his pipe from his mouth and stared at the young inventor.

"Because it's gone!"

"Gone!" repeated the engineer, and then Tom told him. The two hurried down to the dock, but the addition of another pair of eyes was of no assistance in locating the *Arrow*. The trim little motor craft was nowhere to be seen.

"I can't understand it," said Tom helplessly. "I wasn't gone more than ten minutes, and yet—"

"It doesn't take long to steal a motorboat," commented the engineer.

"But I think I would have heard them start it," went on the lad. "Maybe it drifted off, though I'm sure I tied it securely."

"No, there's not much likelihood of that. There's no wind today and no currents in the lake. But it could easily

have been towed off by someone in a rowboat and then you would not have heard the motor start."

"I suppose so," agreed the youth. "That's probably how they did it. They sneaked up here in a rowboat and towed the *Arrow* off. I'm sure of it."

"And I'll wager I know who did it," exclaimed Mr. Jackson energetically.

"Who?" demanded Tom quickly.

"Those men who were sneaking around—Happy Harry and his gang. They stole the boat once from old Mr. Harkness and they'd do it again. Those men took your boat, Tom."

The young inventor shook his head.

"No," he answered, "I don't believe they did."

"Why not?"

"Well, because they wouldn't dare come back here when they knew we're on the lookout for them. It would be too risky."

"Oh, those fellows don't care for risk," was the opinion of Mr. Jackson. "Take my word for it, they have your boat. They have been keeping watch, and as soon as they saw the dock unprotected they sneaked up and stole the *Arrow*."

"I don't think so," repeated Mr. Swift's son.

"Who do you think took it then?"

"Andy Foger!" was the quick response. "I believe he and his cronies did it to annoy me. They have been trying to get even with me—at least Andy has—for outbidding him on this boat. He's tried several times, but he hasn't succeeded—until now. I'm sure Andy Foger has my boat," and Tom, with a grim tightening of his lips, swung around as though to start in instant pursuit.

"Where are you going?" asked Mr. Jackson.

"To find Andy and his cronies. When I locate them I'll make them tell me where my boat is."

"Hadn't you better send some word to your father? You can hardly get to Sandport now, and he'll be worried about you."

"That's so, I will. I'll telephone Dad that the boat—no, I can't do that either,. He'd only worry and maybe get sick. I'll just tell him I've had a little accident, that Andy ran into me and that I can't come back to the hotel for a day or two. Maybe I'll be lucky to find my boat in that time. That way Dad won't worry. When I see him, I can explain. That's what I'll do," and Tom was soon talking to Mr. Swift by telephone.

The inventor was very sorry his son could not come back to rejoin him and Ned, but there was no help for it. "Ned is keeping busy teaching some young lady how to

operate her small boat. He sends his regards, Tom.”

This dismayed Tom more than a little, but with as cheerful voice as he could muster, he promised to start for Sandport at the earliest opportunity.

"Now to find Andy and my boat!" Tom exclaimed as he hung up the telephone receiver.

## TOM SWIFT and His Motorboat

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### CHAPTER XV

#### A DISMAYING STATEMENT

TROUBLE IS sometimes good in a way; it makes a person resourceful. Tom Swift had seen his share of annoyances of late, but they had served a purpose. He had learned to think clearly and quickly. Now, when he found his boat stolen, he at once began to map out a plan of action.

"What will you do first?" asked Mr. Jackson as he saw his employer's son thinking.

"First I'm going to Andy Foger's house," declared the young inventor. "If he's home I'm going to tell him what I

think of him. If he's not, I'm going to find him."

"Why don't you take your sailboat and run down to his dock?" suggested the engineer. "It isn't as quick as your motorboat, but it's better than walking."

"So it is," exclaimed the lad. "I will use my cat-boat. I had forgotten all about it of late. I'm glad you mentioned it. The roads are so roundabout that it will be faster than my motorcycle as well."

He was soon sailing down the lake in the direction of the boathouse on the waterfront of Mr. Foger's property. It needed but a glance around the dock to show him that the *Red Streak* was not there, but Tom recalled the accident to the steering gear and thought perhaps Andy had taken his boat to some wharf where there was a repair shop and there left it to return home himself. But inquiry of Mrs. Foger, who was as nice a woman as her son was mean, gave Tom the information that his enemy was not at home.

"He telephoned to me that his boat was damaged," said Mrs. Foger gently, "and that he had taken it to get fixed. Then, he said, he and some friends were going on a little cruise and might not be back tonight."

"Did he say where he was going?" asked Tom, who did not tell Andy's mother why he wanted to see her son.

"No, and I'm worried about him. Sometimes I think

Andy is too—well, a bit too impetuous. I'm afraid he will get into trouble some day."

Tom, in spite of his trouble, could hardly forbear smiling. Andy's mother was totally unaware of the mean traits of her son and thought him a very fine young man. Tom was not going to enlighten her.

"I'm afraid something will happen to him," she went on. "Do you think there is any danger being out on the lake in a motorboat, Mr. Swift? I understand you have one."

"Yes, I have one," answered Tom. He was going to say he had once had one, but thought better of it. "No, if you know what you are doing there is very little danger—at this time of year," he added.

"I am very glad to hear you say so," went on Mrs. Foger with a sigh. "I shall feel more at ease when Andy is away now. When he returns home, I will tell him you called by and see he will return your visit. I am glad to see that the custom of paying calls has not died out among your generation. It is a pleasant habit, and I am glad to have my son conform to it. He *shall* return your kind visit."

"Oh, no, it's of no consequence," replied Tom quickly, thinking grimly that his visit was far from a friendly one. "There is no need to tell your son I was here. I will probably see him in the next day or two."

"Oh, but I will tell him," insisted Mrs. Foger with a kind

smile. "I'm sure he will appreciate it."

Tom was much doubt concerning this but did not express it and soon took his leave.

He cruised up and down the lake for the rest of the day looking in vain for a sight of Andy in his *Red Streak*, but the racing boat appeared to be well hidden.

"If I only could find where they've taken mine," mused Tom. "Darn it all, this is rotten!" and for the first time he began to feel discouraged.

"Maybe you'd better notify the police," suggested Mr. Jackson when Tom returned to the Swift house that night. "They might help locate it."

"I think I can do as well as the police," answered the youth. "If the boat is anywhere, it's on the lake, and the police have no water craft in which to make a search."

"That's so," agreed the engineer. "I wish I could help you, but I don't believe it would be wise for me to leave the house, especially since those men have been about."

"No, you must stay here," was Tom's opinion. "I'll take another day or two to search. By this time Andy and his gang will return and I can tackle them."

"Suppose they don't?"

"Well, then I'll make a tour of the lake in my sailboat and I'll run up to Sandport and tell Dad. He will wonder

what's keeping me. I'll know better next time than to leave my boat at the dock without taking out the connection at the spark coil so no one can start the motor. I should have done that at first, but you always think of those things afterward."

The boy began his search again the next morning and cruised about in little bays and inlets looking for a sight of the *Red Streak* or the *Arrow*, but he saw neither. Another call at Andy's house showed that the red-haired youth had not returned. Mrs. Foger was quite nervous over her son's continued absence, but Mr. Foger thought it was all right.

Another day passed without any results. The young inventor was getting so nervous, partly with worrying over the loss of his boat and partly on his father's account, that he did not know what to do.

"I can't stand it any longer," he announced to Mrs. Baggert the night of the third day. A telephone message had been received from Mr. Swift. The inventor wanted to know why his son did not return to the hotel to join him and Ned. "Well, what will you do?" asked the housekeeper.

"If I don't find my boat tomorrow, I'll sail to Sandport, bring home Dad and Ned and we three will go all over the lake. My boat must be on it somewhere. Lake Carlopa is so cut up that it could easily be hidden."

"It's strange that the Foger boy doesn't come home.

That makes it look as if he is guilty."

"Oh, I'm sure he took it all right," returned Tom. "All I want is to see him. It's strange that he stays away as long as he does. Sam Snedecker and Pete Bailey are with him, too. But their parents don't know where they went either."

Tom dreamed that night of finding his boat and that it was a wreck. He awoke, glad that the latter part was not true, but wishing that some of his night vision might come to pass during the day.

He started out right after breakfast. As usual, he headed for the Foger home. He almost hated to ask Mrs. Foger if her son had yet returned. She was so polite yet so anxious to know whether any danger threatened her son that Tom hardly knew how to answer her. He was saved that embarrassment on this occasion. As he was going up the walk from the lake to the residence he met the gardener and learned from him that Andy had not yet come back.

"But his mother had a message from him, I did hear," went on the man. "He's on his way. It seems he had some trouble."

"Trouble. What kind of trouble?" asked Tom.

"I don't rightly know, sir, but," and here the gardener winked his eye, "Master Andy isn't particular what kind of trouble he gets into. It just finds him!"

"That's right," agreed Tom. As he went down again to

where he had left his boat he thought, "Nor what kind of trouble he gets other people into. I wish I had hold of him for about five minutes!"

The sailboat swung slowly from the dock then heeled over to the gentle breeze. Tom headed for the middle of the lake. He was discouraged and tired of making plans only to have them fail.

As he looked across the stretch of water he saw a boat coming toward him. He shaded his eyes with his hand to see better, and then, taking out his pair of marine glasses, took a closer look. He uttered an exclamation.

"That's the *Red Streak* as sure as I'm alive!" he cried. "But what's the matter with her? They're rowing!"

He pushed the rudder over, ducked as the sail and boom swung over his head, and headed his boat toward the approaching one. There was no doubt about it. It was Andy's craft, but it was not speeding forward under the power of the motor. Slowly and laborious the occupants were pulling it along. As it was not outfitted to be rowed, their progress was very slow.

"They've had a breakdown," thought Tom with a rueful chuckle. "Serves 'em right! Now I'll tackle 'em and find out where my boat is. I'm about an inch away from having Andy Foger arrested!"

The sailing craft swiftly approached the motorboat.



Tom could see the three occupants looking at him, apprehensively as well as curiously, he thought.

"Guess they didn't think I'd keep after 'em," mused the young inventor, and a moment later he was beside the *Red Streak*.

"Well," cried Tom angrily, "it's about time you came back!"

"We've had a breakdown," remarked Andy, and he seemed quite humiliated. He was beginning to find out that he didn't know as much about a motorboat as he thought he did.

"I've been waiting for you," went on Tom.

"Waiting for us? What for?" asked Sam.

"What for? As if you didn't know!" blurted out the owner of the *Arrow*. "I want my boat, Andy Foger, the one you stole from me and hid! Tell me where it is at once or I'll have you arrested!"

"Your boat!" repeated the bully, and there was no mistaking the surprise in his tones.

"Yes, my boat! Don't try to bluff me like that."

"I'm not trying to bluff you. We've been away three days and just got back."

"Yes, I know you have. You took my boat with you, too."

"Are you crazy?" demanded Pete.

"No, but you fellows must have been to think you could take my boat and me not know it," and Tom, filled with wrath, grasped the gunwale of the *Red Streak* as if he feared it would suddenly shoot away.

"Look here!" burst out Andy, and he spoke sincerely, "we didn't touch your boat. Did we, fellows?"

"No!" exclaimed Sam and Pete at once, and they were very much in earnest.

"We didn't even know it was stolen, did we?" went on Andy.

"No," agreed his chums.

Tom looked unconvinced.

"We haven't taken your boat and we can prove it," continued the bully. "I know you and I have our quarrels, but I'm telling you the truth, Tom Swift. I never touched your boat."

There was no mistaking the sincerity of Andy. He was not a skillful deceiver. Tom, looking into his normally squint-eyes, which were now open unusually wide, could not but help believing him.

"We haven't seen it since the day we had the collision," added Andy, and his chums confirmed this statement. "Sorry about that, Tom. Really. We went off on a little cruise," continued the red-haired bully, "and broke down several times. We had bad luck. Just as we were nearing

home something went wrong with the engine again. I never saw such a poor motor. But we never took your boat, and we can prove it."

Tom was in despair. He had been so sure that Andy was the thief, that to believe otherwise was difficult. He looked at the disabled motor of the *Red Streak*, now visible with its cover removed, and viewed it with the interested and expert eye of a machinist, no matter if the owner of it was his enemy.

Then suddenly a brilliant idea came into Tom's head.

## TOM SWIFT and His Motorboat

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### CHAPTER XVI

#### STILL ON THE SEARCH

"YOU SEEM to have lots of trouble with your boat, Andy," said Tom after a few moments of rather embarrassed silence.

"I do," admitted the owner of the *Red Streak*. "I've had bad luck ever since I got it, but usually I've been able to fix it by looking in the book. This time I can't find out what the trouble is, nor can any of these fellows. It stopped when we were out in the middle of the lake and we had to row. I'm sick of motor boating."

"Suppose I fix it for you?" went on Tom.

"If you do, I can pay you."

"I wouldn't do it for pay—not the kind you mean," continued the young inventor.

"What do you mean then?" and Andy's face, which had lighted up, became glum again.

"Well, if I fix your boat for you, will you let me use it a little while?"

"You mean show me how to run it?"

"No, I mean take it myself. Look, Andy. My boat's been stolen, and I thought you took it to get even with me. You say you didn't—"

"And I *didn't* touch it," interposed the squint-eyed lad quickly.

"All right, I believe you. But somebody stole it, and I think I know who."

"Who?" asked Sam.

"Well, you wouldn't know them if I told you, but I suspect some men with whom Dad and I had trouble before," stated Tom referred to Happy Harry and his gang. "The men who stole it the first time. I think they have my boat on this lake, and I'd like to get another speedy craft to cruise about it and make a wider search. How about it, Andy? If I fix your boat, will you let me take

it to look for my boat?"

"Sure thing!" agreed the bully quickly, and his voice for once was friendly toward Tom. "Fix the engine so it will run, and you can use the *Red Streak* as long as you like. I don't want to go out in it for awhile."

"Oh, I probably wouldn't want it very long. I could cover the lake in about three days. I hope by that time I can locate the thieves. Is it a bargain?"

"Sure," agreed Andy again, and Tom got into the motorboat to look at the engine. He found that it would require some time to adjust it properly and that it would be necessary to take the motor apart.

"I think I'd better tow you to my dock," the young inventor said to Andy. "I can use some tools from the shop then, and by tonight I'll have the *Red Streak* in running order."

The breeze was in the right quarter, fortunately. With the motorboat dragging slowly behind, the *Arrow's* owner pointed the nose of the sailing craft toward his home dock.

When Tom reached his house he found that Mrs. Baggert had received another telephone message from Mr. Swift, inquiring why his son had not returned to Sandport.

"He says if you don't come back by tomorrow," repeated

the housekeeper, "that he'll come home by train. He's getting quite anxious, I believe."

"Shouldn't wonder," admitted Tom. "But I want him to stay there. If he would just put these things from his mind the change will do him good. I'll soon have my boat back, now that I can go about the lake swiftly, and then I'll join him. I'll tell him to be patient."

Tom talked with his father at some length, assuring him that everything was well at the Shopton house and promising to soon be with him. Mr. Swift agreed to wait another three days before setting out for home.

Then the young inventor began work on the motor of the *Red Streak*. He found it quite a job and had to call on Mr. Jackson to help him, for one of the pistons had to be removed and repaired and a number of adjustments made to the other cylinders.

Andy had decided to remain and watch as Tom worked, but Sam and Pete had set out for their homes on foot, both knowing that they were about to get into trouble for their long absences.

By that night the motor was fully mended and placed back in the boat. It was in better shape than it had been since Andy had purchased the craft.

"There," remarked Tom, "now I'm ready to hunt for those scoundrels. Will you leave your boat at my dock

tonight, Andy?"

"Yes, so you can start out early in the morning. I'm not going."

"Why not?" demanded Tom quickly.

"Well—er—you see I've had enough of motoring for a while," explained Andy. "Besides, I don't believe my mother would like me to go out on a chase after thieves. If we had to shoot I might hit one of them, and—"

"Oh, I see," answered Tom. Andy Foger was quite the brag and probably couldn't hit a large tree at ten feet. "But I don't like to take your boat alone. Besides, I don't fancy there will be much shooting. I know I'm not going to take a gun. In fact, the one Mr. Duncan gave me is in the boat. All I want is to get the *Arrow* back."

"That's all right," went on Andy. "You take my boat and use it as long as you like. I'll rest up a few days. When you find your boat you can bring mine back."

Tom understood. He was actually glad not to have Andy accompany him in the chase. He and the red-haired lad had never been good friends and probably never would be. So it would cause some discomfort for both to be together in a boat all day.

Then again Tom knew he could manage the *Red Streak* better alone. Of course, he did not want to mention this when he asked for the loan of the craft. Andy's own

suggestion had solved the difficulty. Tom had an idea that Andy felt a little timid about going in pursuit of the thieves, but knew it would not do and good to mention this, for the squint-eyed lad considered himself quite a fighter.

Early the next morning, alone in the *Red Streak*, Tom continued the search for his stolen boat. He started out from his home dock and mapped out a course that would take him well around the lake.

"I suppose I could take a run to Sandport now," mused the youth as he shot in and out of the little bays, keeping watch for the *Arrow*. "But if I do Dad will have to be told all about everything, and he'll worry. Then, too, he might want to accompany me. I can manage this better alone, and the *Red Streak* will run faster with only one person in. I ought to wind up this search in two days, if my boat is still on the lake. If those criminals have sunk her I'll make them pay for it."

Forward shot the speedy motorboat, in and out along the winding shoreline, with Tom in the bow at the steering wheel peering with eager eyes into every nook and corner where his craft might be hidden.

## TOM SWIFT and His Motorboat

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### CHAPTER XVII

"THERE SHE IS!"

ANTICIPATING that he would be some time on his search, the young inventor had gone prepared for it. He had a supply of provisions and had told Mrs. Baggert he might not be back that night. But he did not intend to sleep aboard the *Red Streak*,. Being a racing boat, it was not large enough to afford much room for passengers. Tom had planned to put up at some hotel near the lake in case his hunt should last beyond one night.

His check of the food provided showed him that Mrs. Baggert must have run out of liver, for the sandwiches

inside the pack were of jelly and apple butter and the like. Tom smiled when he discovered this.

All that morning he searched for the *Arrow*. A distant mill whistle sounding over Lake Carlopa told him it was noon.

"Lunch time," he announced to himself. "Guess I'll run up along shore in the shade and eat."

Selecting a place where the trees overhung the water, forming a quiet, cool nook, Tom sent the boat in there. Tying it to a leaning tree, he began his simple meal. Various thoughts filled his mind, but chief among them was the desire to overtake the thieves who had his boat. That had to be Happy Harry's gang; he was positive.

The lad nearly finished eating and was considering what direction he might best search in next when he heard, running along a road that bordered the lake, an automobile.

"Wonder who that is?" mused Tom. "It won't do any harm to take a look. It might be some of those thieves again. They probably still have their auto or Happy Harry couldn't have gotten from Sandport to Shopton so fast."

The young inventor slipped ashore from the motorboat, taking care to make no noise. Sneaking silently toward the road, he peered through the underbrush for a sight of the machine. It seemed to be going slowly. But before the

youth had a glimpse of it he was made aware who the occupant was by hearing someone exclaim, "Bless my shoe laces if this cantankerous contraption isn't going wrong again! I wonder if it's going to have another fit here in this lonely place. Bless my very existence! Hold on now, Bernice! Be nice!"

"Mr. Damon!" exclaimed Tom. Without realizing it, he had spoken aloud.

"Hold on there! Who's calling me out here in this forsaken locality? Bless my shirt studs! But who is that?" and the eccentric man who had sold Tom the motorcycle looked intently at the bushes.

"Here I am, Mr. Damon," answered the lad, stepping out into the road. "I knew it was you as soon as I heard, or rather, saw you."

"Bless my liver, but that's very true! I suppose you heard my unfortunate automobile chuff-puffing along. I declare I don't know what ails it. I got it on advice of my physician but, bless my gears, it's the auto that needs a doctor more than I do! It's continually out of order. Something is going to happen right away. I can tell by the way it's behaving."

Mr. Damon had taken the auto out of gear, and the engine was still running, though in a jerky, uncertain fashion which indicated to the trained ear of the young inventor that something was wrong.

"Well, perhaps I can fix it for you as I did before," ventured Tom.

"Bless my eyebrows and earlobes! Perhaps you can," cried the eccentric man hopefully. "You always seem to turn up at the right moment. How do you manage it?"

"I don't know. I remember the time you turned up just when I needed your help to capture Happy Harry and his gang. Now, by strange coincidence, I'm after them again."

"You don't say! My good gracious! Bless my hatband! But that's odd. There!" he exclaimed suddenly as the automobile engine stopped with a choking sigh, "I *knew* something was going to happen."

"Let me take a look," proposed the lad, and he was soon busy peering into the interior of the machine. At first he could not find the trouble. But being a persistent youth, Tom went at it systematically and located two problems. The clutch cable was not adjusted to provide full meshing within the gearbox, and the carburetor float feed needed fixing. The young inventor was not long in making the slight repairs and then he assured Mr. Damon that his automobile would run properly.

He took a long, hard look at the gasoline float. He realized that it was the solution for one of his own boat's problems. Once he had the craft back, Tom intended to do something with his idea.

"Bless my very existence, but what a thing it must be to have a head for mechanics!" exclaimed the odd man gratefully. "Now it would be beyond me to adjust a nutmeg grater if it got out of order. I dare say you could fix it in no time."

"Yes," answered Tom, "I could and so could you, for there's nothing about it to fix. This was all simple adjustments. You can go ahead with your drive now if you wish."

"Thank you. It just shows how ignorant I am of machinery. I imagine something will go wrong in another mile or two. But may I ask what you are doing here? I presume you are in your motorboat, sailing about for pleasure. And didn't I understand you to say you were after those evil chaps again? Bless my watch fob, but I was so interested in my machine's ills that I didn't think to ask you."

"Yes, I am after those thieves again."

"In your motorboat, I presume. Well, I hope you catch them. What have they stolen now?"

"My motorboat," said Tom and could not help but smile at the irony of the situation. "That's why I'm after them, but I had to borrow another boat to chase them with."

"Bless my soul! You don't say! How did it happen?"

Tom related as much of the story as was necessary to

put Mr. Damon in possession of the basic facts. He ended up with, "I don't suppose you have seen anything of the men in my boat, have you?"

Mr. Damon seemed strangely excited. He had entered his auto, but as the lad's story progressed the odd gentleman had descended back to the ground. When Tom finished he exclaimed, "Don't say a word now—not a word. I want to think, and that is a process which requires a little time. Don't speak a word now. Bless my left hand, but I think I might help you!"

He frowned, stamped first one foot, then the other, looked up at the sky, as if seeking inspiration there, and then down at the ground, as if that would help him to think. Then he clapped his hands smartly together and cried out, "Bless my shoe buttons!"

"Have you seen them?" asked Tom eagerly.

"Was your boat one with a bright blue line painted on the side?" asked Mr. Damon in turn.

"It was!" and the lad was now almost as excited as was his friend.

"Then I've seen it and, what's more, only this very morning! Bless my spark plugs, I *have* seen it!"

"Tell me, please!" pleaded the young inventor.

Mr. Damon, calming himself after his effort, resumed, "I was out for an early spin in my auto," he said, "and was

traveling along a road that borders the lake, perhaps fifteen miles south of here. I heard a motorboat puffing along near shore, and, looked through the trees. I saw a boat containing three men. It had a blue stripe down the side, and that's why I noticed it, because I recalled that your boat was named the *Dart*, or some-such."

"*Arrow*," corrected Tom.

"The *Arrow*. Oh, yes, I knew it was something like that. Well of course at the time I didn't think that it was your boat, but I associated it in my mind with yours. Do you catch my meaning?"

Tom did and said so, wishing Mr. Damon would hurry and get to the point. But the eccentric character had to do things in his own way and at his own speed.

"Exactly," he resumed. "Well, I didn't know that was your boat, but I watched the men out of curiosity. I was struck with their behavior. They seemed to be quarreling, quite seriously, indeed. From what I could hear, two of them seemed to be remonstrating with the third one for having taken some piece of something from a forward compartment. I believe that is the proper term."

"Yes!" Tom almost shouted. "But where did they go? What became of them? What was the man doing to the forward compartment—where the gasoline tank is?"

"Exactly. I was trying to remember what was kept there.



That's it, the gasoline tank. Well, the boat kept on down the lake, and I don't know what became of the men. But about that piece of wood. It seems that one of the men said the other removed a block from under the tank and the others objected. That's why they were quarreling."

"That's very strange," exclaimed the lad. "There must be some mystery about my boat that I don't understand. But that will keep until I get the boat itself. Goodbye, Mr. Damon. I must be off."

"Where to?"

"Down the lake after those thieves. I must lose no time," and Tom started to go back to where he had left the *Red Streak*.

"Hold on!" cried Mr. Damon. "I have something to propose, Tom. Two heads are better than one, even if one doesn't know how to adjust a nutmeg grate. Suppose I come along with you? I can point out the direction the men took, at any rate."

"I'll be very glad to have you," answered the lad, who felt that he might need help if there were three of the thieves in his craft. "But what will you do with your automobile?"

"I'll just run it down the road a bit where a friend of mine has a stable. I'll leave it in there and join you. Will you let me come? Bless my eyeglasses, but I'd like to help

catch those scoundrels again!"

"I'll be very glad to have you. Go ahead, put the auto in the barn and I'll wait for you."

"I have a better plan than that," replied Mr. Damon. "Run your boat down to that point," and he indicated one about a mile down the lake. "I'll be there waiting for you, and we'll lose no time. I can cover the ground faster in my auto than you can in your boat. Plus, it will put us closer to those rascals by a full mile."

Tom saw the advantage of this and was soon under way, while he heard the puffing of his friend's car disappearing down the shore. On the trip to the point Tom puzzled over the strange actions of the one man in taking one of the braces from under the gasoline tank.

"I'll wager he did it before," thought the lad. "It must be the same person who was tampering with the lock of the forward compartment the day I bought the boat. But why—that's the question—why?"

He could find no answer to this so he gave up. His desire now was to get on the trail of the thieves thanks to the clue Mr. Damon had given him. The latter was waiting for him on the point, and so nimble was the man, in spite of his size and age, that Tom was not delayed more than the fraction of a minute before he was under way again.

"Now keep well in toward shore," advised Mr. Damon.

"Those fellows don't want to be observed any more than they can help, and they'll sneak along the bank, They were headed in that direction," and he pointed it out. "I hope you won't think I'm in the way. Besides, if you get your boat back, you'll want someone to steer it, while you run this one. I can do that, bless my very existence!"

"I am very glad of your help," replied the lad, but he did not take his eyes from the water in front of him. He was looking for a sign of his boat with the men in it.

For three hours or more Tom and Mr. Damon cruised in and out along the shore of the lake, going farther and farther down the body of water. Tom was beginning to think that he might reach Sandport without catching sight of the thieves. He was just wondering if, after all, he might not better stop off and see his father when, above the puffing of the motor in the *Red Streak*, he heard the putt-putt sounds of another boat.

"Listen!" cried Mr. Damon, who had heard it at the same time.

Tom nodded. He slowed the *Red Streak's* motor to idle so they might hear better.

"They're just ahead of us," whispered his companion.

"If it is them," was the lad's reply.

"Speed up and we'll soon see," suggested Mr. Damon, and Tom shoved the fuel control over. The *Red Streak*

forged ahead. The sound of the other boat came more plainly now. It was beyond a little point of land. The young inventor steered out to get around it and leaned eagerly forward to catch the first glimpse of the unseen craft. Would it prove to be the *Arrow*?

The putt-putt became louder now. Mr. Damon was standing up, as if that would, in some mysterious way, help. Then suddenly the other boat came into view.

Tom saw it in an instant and knew it for the *Arrow*.

"There she is!" he cried.

# TOM SWIFT and His Motorboat

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## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE PURSUIT

FOR AN INSTANT following Tom's exultant cry the men in the boat ahead did not seem to aware that they were being pursued. Then, as the motor noises from the *Red Streak* sounded over the water, they turned to see who was coming up behind them. There was no mistaking the attitude of the young inventor and his companion. They were leaning eagerly forward, as if they could reach out and grasp the criminals who were fleeing before them.

"Put on all the speed you can, Tom!" begged Mr. Damon. "We'll catch the scoundrels now. Speed up the

motor! Oh, if I only had my automobile now. Bless my gears, but one can go so much faster on land than on water."

The lad did not reply, but thought, with grim humor, that running an automobile over Lake Carlopa would be no small feat. Mr. Damon, however, understood what he meant.

"We'll catch them! We'll nab 'em!" he cried. "Speed her up, Tom."

The youth was doing his best with the motor of the *Red Streak*. He was not as well acquainted with it as he was with the one in the *Arrow*, but he knew even better than Andy Foger how to make it do efficient work. It was a foregone conclusion that the *Red Streak*, if rightly handled, could beat the *Arrow*. But there were several points in favor of the thieves. The motor of Tom's stolen boat was in perfect order, and even an amateur, with some knowledge of a boat, could make it do nearly its best.

On the other hand, the *Red Streak's* machinery needed "nursing." The thieves had a good start, and that counted for much. But Tom counted on two other factors. One was that Happy Harry and his gang would probably know little about the fine points of operating a motor. They had shown this in letting the motor of the boat they had first stolen get out of adjustment. Next, Tom knew the ins and

outs of a gasoline engine to perfection. So the chase was not so hopeless as it seemed.

"Can you catch them?" asked Mr. Damon anxiously.

"I'm going to try," answered the boy.

"They're heading out to the middle of the lake!" cried the eccentric man.

"If they do, I can cut them off!" murmured Tom as he turned the wheel over. Having made his own steering so much better, Tom realized how sluggish it was in Andy's boat.

Whoever was steering the *Arrow* knew better than to send it on a course that would allow the pursuing boat to cut across and shorten the distance between them. After sending the stolen craft far enough out from shore to clear points of land that jutted out into the lake, the leading boat steered straight ahead.

"A stern chase and a long one!" murmured Mr. Damon. "Bless my rudder, but those fellows are not going to give up easily."

"I guess not," murmured Tom. "Will you steer for a while, Mr. Damon?"

"Of course I will. If I could get out and pull the boat after me to make it go faster, I would. As I always lose my breath when I run, perhaps it's just as well that I stay in here."

Tom thought so too, but his attention soon turned to the engine. He adjusted the timer to get a little more speed out of the boat. He also paid close attention to its oiling system.

"Either we're going a bit faster," called Mr. Damon encouragingly, "or else they're slacking."

Tom turned to look ahead to see if this was so. It was hard to judge whether he was overhauling the *Arrow*. As it was with any stern chase, it is always difficult to judge the actual distances. But a glimpse along shore showed him that they were slipping through the water at a faster speed.

"They're up to something!" suddenly exclaimed Mr. Damon a moment later. "I believe they're going to fire on us, Tom. They are pointing something this way."

Tom stood up and gazed earnestly at his boat, which now seemed to be slipping away from them. One of the occupants was hunkered down in the stern, and had some sort of shiny object pointed at the *Red Streak*. For a moment Tom thought it might be a gun. Then the man shifted position and he saw what it really was.

"My pair of marine glasses," cried the lad. "They're trying to see who we are."

"I guess they know well enough," rejoined Mr. Damon. "Can't we go any faster, Tom?"

"I'm afraid not. But we'll catch them sooner or later. They can't go very far in this direction without running ashore. Then we'll have them. Oh! They're cutting across the lake now."

"They may escape us if it gets dark. Probably that's what they're hoping for. They want to keep ahead of us until nightfall."

The young inventor thought of this too, but there was little he could do. The motor was running at top speed. It could be made to go faster, Tom knew, with a better ignition system, but that was out of the question now.

The man with the glasses had moved forward again and resumed his seat. All efforts of the trio seemed to be concentrated on the motor of the *Arrow*. They, too, wished to go faster.

Tom firmly believed that they did not possess the skills to accomplish it. In about ten minutes when he took another long and careful look, he was delighted to see that the distance between the boats had decreased.

"We're catching them! We're creeping up on them!" cried Mr. Damon. "Keep it up, Tom."

There was nothing to do but wait. The boat ahead shifted her course a little and was turning in toward the shore. Abandoning their evident intention of keeping straight down the lake, the thieves seemed now bent on

something else.

"I believe they're going to run ashore and get out!" cried Mr. Damon.

"That's just what I want," declared the lad. "I don't care about the men. I want my boat back!"

The occupants of the *Arrow* were looking behind them again, and Happy Harry shook his fist at Tom.

"Ah, wait until I get hold of you!" cried Mr. Damon, shouted through his hands, held in a megaphone manner. "I'll make you wish you'd not come back here, you scoundrels!" He turned to Tom. "Bless my overcoat! Catch them if you can, Tom. I am good and ready for them!"

Tom smiled grimly. There was now no doubt about the intention of the fleeing trio. The shore was looming up ahead and the *Arrow* was headed straight for it. Tom sent Andy's boat in the same direction.

He was rapidly overhauling the escaping boat now, as they had slowed down in order to not crash against the shore. A minute later the *Arrow* grated onto the beach of the lake. The men leaped out, one of them pausing an instant in the bow.

"Don't you damage my boat!" cried Tom involuntarily, for the man seemed to be hammering something.

The fellow leaped over the side, holding something in

his hand.

"There they go! Catch them!" yelled Mr. Damon.

"Let them go!" answered the lad as the men ran toward the wood as he slowed the *Red Streak's* speed "I just want my boat. I'm afraid they might have damaged her. One of them tore something from the bow."

At the same instant the two companions of the fellow who had paused in the forward part of the *Arrow* saw that he held something in his hand. With yells of rage they jumped toward at him but he, shaking his fist at them, plunged into the bushes and could be heard breaking his way through, his companions in hot pursuit.

"They're arguing among themselves," commented Mr. Damon as high and angry voices could be heard from the woods. "It sounds like a complete break down of their team. Good! But there is some mystery here, Tom."

"I don't doubt it, Mr. Damon, but my first concern is for my boat. I need to see if they have damaged her."

Tom had run so closely in shore with the *Red Streak* that he had to reverse the propeller to avoid damaging the craft against the bank. In a mass of foam he stopped her in time, and then springing ashore, he hurried to his motorboat.

# TOM SWIFT and His Motorboat

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## CHAPTER XIX

### A QUIET CRUISE

"HAVE THEY done any damage?" asked Mr. Damon as he stood in the bow of the *Red Streak*.

Tom did not answer for a moment. His trained eye was looking over the engine.

"They yanked off the sparking wire instead of stopping the motor with the switch," he answered at length. When he had taken a look into the forward compartment he added, "And they've ripped out two more of the braces I put in. Why in the world would they do that?"

"That's must be what one man had that the others were so agitated about," was Mr. Damon's opinion.

"Probably," agreed Tom. "But what could he or they want with wooden braces?"

That was a puzzler for Mr. Damon, but he answered, "Perhaps they wanted to damage your boat and those two men were mad because the other did it first?"

"Taking out the braces wouldn't do much damage. I can easily put others in. All it would do would be to cause the tank to sag down and perhaps cause a leak in the fuel pipe. But that is a strange thing to do. No, I think there's some mystery that I haven't gotten to the bottom of yet. But I'm going to."

"Good!" exclaimed Mr. Damon. "I'll help you. But can you run your boat back home?"

"Not without fixing it a bit. I must brace up that tank and put in a new high-tension wire from the spark coil. I can do it here, but I'd rather take it to the shop. Besides, we have the two boats to run back. I must return Andy's to him, and I don't see how I can do it very well unless you can operate one, Mr. Damon."

"You must pardon me, but I can't do it. Bless my slippers, but I would be sure to run run onto a rock! The best plan will be for you to tow your boat and I'll ride in it and steer. I can do that much, anyhow. You can drive the

*Red Streak.*"

Tom agreed that this would be a good plan. So, after temporarily bracing up the tank in the *Arrow*, it was shoved out into the lake and attached to Andy's craft.

"Aren't you going to make a search for those men?" asked Mr. Damon when Tom was ready to start back.

"No, I think it would be useless. They are far away by this time, and I don't fancy chasing them through the woods, especially with night coming on. Besides, I won't leave these boats."

"No doubt you are right, but I would like to see them punished. And I am curious enough to wish to know what object that scoundrel could have in ripping out the blocks that served as a brace for the tank."

"I feel the same way myself," commented the lad, "especially since this is the second time it's happened. But that will have to wait, I guess."

A minutes later the start back began with Mr. Damon steering the *Arrow* skillfully enough so that it did not drag on the towing boat. They had worked out a simple set of hand signals so that Tom could notify the older man in case he needed to stop, allowing the man time enough to steer so that no collision would occur.

His course took him not far from the lake sanitarium, where Mr. Duncan had been brought. Desiring to know



how the wounded man was getting on, the youth proposed that they make a halt, explaining to Mr. Damon his reason.

"Yes, and while you're about it you'd best telephone your father to say that you will join him tomorrow," suggested the other. "I know what it is to fret and worry. You can fix your boat up in time to go to Sandport tomorrow, can't you?"

"Yes, I'm glad you reminded me of it. I'll telephone from the sanitarium, if they'll let me."

Mr. Duncan was not at the institution, Tom was told, his injury having healed sufficiently and the at the man's insistence, they allowed him to go home. Tom readily secured permission to use the telephone, and was soon in communication with Mr. Swift. While not telling him all the occurrences that had delayed him, Tom gave his father and Ned Newton enough information to explain his absence.

Then the trip to back toward Shopton was resumed in the two boats.

"What are you going to do about your automobile?" asked Tom as they neared the point where the machine had been left.

"Never mind about that," replied Mr. Damon. "It will do it good to have a night's vacation. I will go on to your

house with you to refresh myself, then perhaps I can get a train back to my friend's home so that I can claim my car."

"Won't you stay all night with us?" invited the young inventor. "I'd be glad to have you."

Mr. Damon agreed, and Tom put on more speed. Within two hours the *Red Streak* was opposite his own dock. The *Arrow* was run in the boathouse and Tom hastily told Mrs. Baggert and the engineer what had happened. Then he took Andy's boat to Mr. Foger's dock and warmly thanked the red-haired lad for the use of his craft.

"Did you find your boat?" asked Andy eagerly. "How did the *Red Streak* run?"

"I got my boat and yours runs fine," explained Tom.

"Good! I'll race you again some day," declared Andy. He offered Tom a ride home in his automobile, but Tom felt he could make better time walking along the shorefront.

Mr. Damon enjoyed his visit at the Swift house, for Mrs. Baggert cooked one of her best suppers for him. Tom and the engineer spent the evening repairing the motorboat, Mr. Damon looking on and exclaiming, "Bless my shoe leather" or some other part of his clothing or anatomy or mechanical components at practically every stage of the

work.

Garret wanted to know all about the men and their doings, but he could figure no reason for their strange actions regarding the braces under the gasoline tank.

In the morning Tom once more prepared for an early start for Sandport. Mr. Damon reconsidered his plans and rode as far with him as the place where the automobile had been left. There he took leave of the young inventor, promising to call on Mr. Swift in the near future.

"I hope you arrive at the hotel where your father is without any more accidents," remarked the automobilist. "Bless my very existence, but you seem to have the most remarkable series of adventures I ever heard of!"

"They are rather odd," admitted Tom. "I don't know that I particularly care for them. But, now that I have my boat back I guess everything will be all right."

Without further incident he arrived at the Lakeview Hotel in Sandport that evening and found his father and Ned very glad to see him. Of course he now had to explain everything to them. With his son safely in mind, Mr. Swift expressed his concerns, but was not so nervous over the recital as he might have been had Tom not told the tale in person.

"Now for some nice, quiet trips," remarked Tom when he had finished his account. "I feel as if I had cheated you

out of part of your vacation, Ned, staying away as long as I did."

"Well, of course we missed you," answered his pal. "But your father and I had a good time."

"Yes, and I invented a new attachment for a kitchen boiler," added Mr. Swift. "I had the idea for it when I was provided a tour of the hotel kitchen one day. I wanted to see what kind of a range they used."

"I guess there's no stopping you from inventing," replied his son with a laugh and a hopeless shake of the head. "But don't let it happen again when you go away to rest."

"Oh, I only just thought of it," said Mr. Swift. "I haven't worked the details out yet."

Tom turned to his friend. Taking a deep breath, he inquired, "And, did you and Mary— uh— Miss Nestor complete your boating lessons?"

Ned looked at Tom. Though he might have wished to make the other squirm a bit, he knew the feelings that Tom was starting to have for the pretty New York socialite. So, he answered, "Well, yes, but didn't show her everything she needs to know. I thought that you had better do that. You do know much more about boats than I do."

Tom's shoulders relaxed and he thanked his friend.

Tom's father took in the more subtle meaning of their exchange and smiled to himself.

Then he wanted to know about everything at home and he was particularly anxious to know if the Happy Harry gang had done any damage.

"Nothing. And I don't believe they will," Tom assured him. "Garret and Mrs. Baggert will be on guard. Plus, the last Mr. Damon and I saw of them, they seemed to have more pressing things in mind."

The next few days were pleasant ones for Tom, his father and Ned Newton. They cruised about the lake the first day and went fishing and camping in the woods. Even Mr. Swift spent one night in the tent and said he liked it very much. For a week the three led an ideal existence, going about as they pleased, Ned taking a number of photographs with his new camera. The *Arrow* proved herself a fine boat, and Tom and Ned, when Mr. Swift did not accompany them, explored the seldom-visited parts of Lake Carlopa.

Tom had one morning when he and Mary Nestor crossed paths and he offered to take her out in her cousin's boat to see if Ned had taught her sufficiently.

"Oh, I'm certain that he tried his absolute best, Tom," she said, lowering her eyes, "but I would greatly appreciate it if you could make sure that I have been able to retain what he told me and to fill in any missing

knowledge or skills."

They spend several hours on the lake, remaining within sight of the hotel.

Tom had Mary show him what she had learned. She seemed to be a natural learner as she made only a few, small false steps which he gently corrected.

Twice, their hands touched as both reached for the same part of the boat or small outboard motor. Each time, Tom's breath seemed to stop and his heart beat much faster. He noticed that Mary Nestor appeared to have similar reactions to their brief contacts.

But soon the lesson was over and they returned to the dock area. Mary thanked Tom and suggested that she welcomed their next meeting. Walking on air, Tom met up with his father and Ned in the hotel restaurant.

The three went out in the *Arrow* the day and were discussing the necessity of returning home soon when Ned spoke.

"I will hate to give up this life and go to slaving in the bank again," he complained. "I wish I was an inventor."

"Oh, we inventors don't have such an easy time," said Mr. Swift. "You never know when trouble is coming," he said prophetically.

A little later they were at the hotel dock. When Tom had tied up his boat the three walked up the path to the broad

veranda that faced the lake. A boy in a hotel uniform met them.

"Someone has just called you on the telephone, Mr. Swift," he reported.

"Someone wants me? Who is it?"

"I think he said his name is Jackson, sir, Garret Jackson, and he says the message is very important."

"Tom, something has happened at home!" exclaimed the inventor as he hurried up the steps. "I'm afraid there's bad news."

Unable to still the fear in his heart, Tom followed his father.

## TOM SWIFT and His Motorboat

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### CHAPTER XX

#### DISTRESSING NEWS

WITH A HAND that trembled so he could scarcely hold the receiver of the telephone, Mr. Swift placed it to his ear.

"Hello! Hello!" he cried into the transmitter. "Yes, this is Mr. Swift—yes, Garret. What is it?"

Then came a series of clicks, which Tom and Ned listened to. The inventor spoke again.

"What's that? The same men? Broke in early this evening? Oh, no! Of course, we'll come at once."

There followed more meaningless clicks, which Tom wished he could translate. His father hung up the receiver, turned to him and exclaimed, "We've been robbed again!"

"Robbed again! How, Dad? Who?"

"By that same gang, Garret thinks. This evening, when he and Mrs. Baggert were in the house the burglar alarm went off. The indicator showed that the electrical shop had been entered, so he hurried there. He saw a light inside and the shadows of persons on the windows. Before he could reach the shop, however, the thieves heard him coming and ran away. Oh, Tom, I should never have come away!"

"But did they take anything, Dad? Perhaps Garret frightened them away before they had a chance to steal any of your things. Did you ask him that?"

"I didn't need to. He said he made a hasty examination before he called me, and he is sure a few of my electrical inventions are missing. Some of them are devices I never have had patented. If I lose them I will have no recourse."

"But just what ones are they? Perhaps we can send out a police alarm tonight."

"Garret couldn't tell that," answered Mr. Swift as he paced to and fro in the hotel office. "He doesn't know all the tools and machinery I have in there. But it is certain

that some of my most valuable things have been taken."

"Never mind. Don't worry, Dad," and Tom tried to speak soothingly, for he saw that his father was much excited. "We may be able to get them back. How does Garret know the same men who stole the turbine model broke in the shop this evening?"

"He saw them. One was Happy Harry, he is positive. The others he did not know, but he recognized the tramp from our description of him."

"Then we must tell the police at once."

"Yes, Tom. We should telephone. I'm so bothered that perhaps you can do it. I'll give you a description of the things. No, I can't do that either. I don't know what was stolen. We must go home at once to find out. It's a good thing the motorboat is here. Come, let's start at once. What is my bill here?" and the inventor turned to the hotel proprietor, who had come into the office. "I have suffered a severe loss and must leave at once."

"I am very sorry, sir. I'll have the bill ready for you in a few minutes."

"All right. Tom, is your boat ready for a quick trip?"

"Yes, Dad, but I'm not certain it is wise to take off at night with three in. Of course it should be perfectly safe, but there's a risk, and I don't like to take it."

"Don't worry about the risk on my account, Tom. I'm

not afraid. I must get home and see of what was taken."

The young inventor was in a quandary. He wanted to do as his father requested and to aid him all he could, yet he knew that an all-night trip in the boat on the lake would be dangerous. Not only from the chance of running on an unknown shore or into a hidden rock, but because Mr. Swift was not physically fitted to stand the journey.

"Come, Tom," exclaimed the aged inventor impatiently, "we must start at once!"

"Won't morning do as well, Dad?"

"No, I must start now. I could not sleep worrying over what has happened. We will start—"

At that instant there came a low, rumbling peal of thunder. Mr. Swift started and peered from a window. There came a flash of lightning and another vibrant report from the storm-charged clouds.

"There is your bill, Mr. Swift," remarked the proprietor, coming up, "but I would advise you to not start tonight. There is a bad storm in the west, and it will reach here in a few minutes. Storms on Lake Carlopa, especially at this open and exposed end, are not pleasant, I assure you."

"But I must get home!" insisted Tom's father.

The lace curtain over the window blew almost straight out with a sudden breeze, and a flash of lightning so bright that it reflected even in the room where the

incandescent electrics were glowing made several others jump.

Then came a mighty crash, and with that the flood-gates of the storm were opened, and the rain came down in torrents. Tom breathed a sigh of relief. The problem was solved for him. It would be impossible to start tonight, and he was glad of it, much as he wanted to get on the trail of the thieves.

There was a scurrying on the part of the hotel attendants to close the windows, and the guests who had been enjoying the air out on the porches came running in. With a rush, a roar and a muttering, as peal after peal of thunder sounded, the deluge continued.

"It's a good thing we didn't start," observed Ned.

"I should say so," agreed Tom. "But we'll get off the first thing in the morning, Dad."

Mr. Swift did not reply, but his nervous pacing to and fro in the hotel office showed how anxious he was to be at home again. There was no help for it, however, and, after a time, finding that to think of reaching his house that night was out of the question, the inventor calmed down somewhat.

Tom suggested that his father return to his room. Once the man had left the office, Tom used the hotel's phone to contact the Shopton police. He wanted them to know of

the robbery, even in there were no solid details. Secretly he hoped that whatever agents the U.S. government might have in the area would get word of the incident.

The storm continued nearly all night. Tom could bear witness, for he did not sleep well, nor did his father. And when he came down to breakfast in the morning Mr. Swift plainly showed the effects of the bad news. His face was haggard and drawn and his eyes red-rimmed and dull from lack of sleep.

"Well, Tom, we must start early," he said nervously. "I am glad it has cleared off. Is the boat all ready?"

"Yes, and it's a good thing it was under shelter last night or we'd have to bail it out now, and that would delay us."

An hour later they were under way, having telephoned to the engineer at the Swift home that they were coming. Garret Jackson reported that he had notified the Shopton police of the robbery, but that little could be done until the inventor could give a description of the stolen articles.

"And that will do little good, I fear," remarked Tom. "Those fellows have evidently been planning this for some time and will cover their tracks well. I'd like to catch them, not only to recover your things, Dad, but to find out the mystery of my boat and why the man took the tank braces."

## TOM SWIFT and His Motorcycle

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### CHAPTER XXI

#### BALLOON ON FIRE

UP LAKE Carlopa speeded the *Arrow*, those on board watching the banks slip past as the motorboat rapidly cut through the water.

"What time do you think we will reach home, Tom?" asked Mr. Swift.

"Oh, about four o'clock, if we don't stop for lunch."

"Then we'll not stop," decided the inventor. "We'll eat what we have on board. I suppose you have some rations?" and he smiled, the first time since hearing the

bad news.

"Oh, yes, Ned and I didn't eat everything on our camping trips," and Tom was glad to note that the fine weather which followed the storm was having a good effect on his father. "There are some canned goods."

"We certainly had a good time," remarked Ned. "I don't know when I've enjoyed a vacation so."

"It's too bad it had to be cut short by this robbery," commented Mr. Swift. Now that he was heading home, he appeared to have recovered some of his composure.

"Oh, well, my vacation would be up in a few days more," went on the young bank employee. "It's just as well to start back now. I will have a full weekend to rest up from my vacation."

Tom took the shortest route he knew, keeping as close to shore as he dared. Now he was as anxious to get home as his father. On and on sped the *Arrow*. As fast as it was, it seemed slow to Mr. Swift, who, like all nervous persons, always wanted to be at their destination instantly.

Tom headed his boat around a little point of land, and was urging the engine to the top notch of speed when he saw, darting out from shore, a tiny craft which somehow seemed familiar to him. He recognized a peculiar put-putter of the motor.

"That's the *Dot*," he remarked in a low voice to Ned,

"Miss Nestor's cousin's boat."

"Is she in it now?" asked Ned.

"Yes," answered Tom quickly.

"You've got good eyesight," remarked Ned dryly, "to tell a girl at that distance. It looks to me like a boy."

"No, it's Mary—I mean Miss Nestor," the youth quickly corrected himself, and a close observer would have noticed that he blushed a bit under his coat of tan.

Ned laughed, Tom blushed still more, and Mr. Swift, who was in a stern seat, glanced up quickly.

"It looks as if that boat wanted to hail us," the inventor remarked.

Tom was thinking the same thing. Although he had changed his course slightly since sighting the *Dot*, the little craft was steering over so as to meet him. Wondering what Mary could want, and being only too willing to have a chat with her, the young inventor shifted his helm. In a short time the two craft were within hailing distance.

"How do you do?" called Miss Nestor, as she slowed down her motor. "Don't you think I'm improving, Mr. Swift?"

"What's that? I—er—I beg your pardon, but I didn't catch that," exclaimed the aged inventor quickly, coming out of a sort of daydream. "I beg your pardon." He



thought she had addressed him.

Miss Nestor blushed and looked questioningly at Tom.

"Miss Nestor. This is my father," he explained as he introduced his parent. Ned needed none having met Miss Nestor before. "Indeed you have improved very much," went on the young inventor. "You seem able to manage the boat all alone."

"Yes, I'm doing pretty well. Dick lets me take the *Dot* whenever I want to, and I thought I'd come out for a little trial run this morning. I'm getting ready for the races. I suppose you are going to enter them?" and she steered her boat alongside Tom's, who throttled down his powerful motor so as not to pass the girl's craft.

"Races? I hadn't heard of them," he replied.

"Oh, indeed there are to be fine ones under the auspices of the Lanton Motor Club. Mr. Hastings, from whom you bought that boat, is going to enter his new *Carlopa*, and Dick has entered the *Dot*... in the baby class of course. But I'm going to pilot it. That's why I'm practicing."

"I hope you win," remarked Tom. "I hadn't heard of the races, but I think I may enter. I'm glad you told me. Do you want to race now?" and he laughed as he looked into the brown eyes of Mary Nestor.

"No, indeed, unless you give me a start of several miles on a course of only a few hundred yards."

They kept together for a little time longer. Tom knew his father would be restless at their slow speed, so he told Mary of their need of haste. Setting his timer and giving the motor more fuel, he soon left the *Dot* behind. The girl called a laughing goodbye and urged him not to forget the races, which were to take place in about two weeks.

"I suppose Andy Foger will enter his boat," commented Ned.

"Naturally," agreed Tom. "It's a racer. If he's gotten over his rowing adventures he'll probably think it can beat anything on the lake. But if he doesn't manage his motor differently, it won't."

The distance from Sandport to Shopton had been more than half covered at noon, so the travelers slowed to a snail's pace ate lunch in the boat. Finished, Tom set the *Arrow* forward at almost top speed. Mr. Swift was looking anxiously ahead to catch the first glimpse of his dock and Tom was adjusting the machinery as finely as he dared to get out of it the maximum speed.

Ned, who happened to be gazing skyward and wondering at the perfect beauty of the blue sky after the storm, uttered a sudden exclamation. Then he arose and pointed at some object in the air.

"Look!" he cried, "A balloon! It must have gone up from some fair."

Tom and his father looked up. High in the air over their heads was an immense balloon. It was of the hot-air variety, used by performers to make ascensions from fair grounds and circuses. Below it dangled a trapeze upon which could be observed a man, only he looked more like a doll than a human being.

"I wouldn't like to be as high as that," remarked Ned.

"I would," answered Tom as he slowed down the better to watch the balloon. "I'd like to go up in an airship, and I intend to some day."

"I believe he's going to jump!" suddenly exclaimed Ned. "He's going to do something, anyhow."

"Probably come down in a parachute," said Tom. "They generally do that."

"No! No!" cried Ned. "He isn't going to jump. Something has happened! The balloon is on fire! He'll be burned to death! Or crash!"

## TOM SWIFT and His Motorboat

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### CHAPTER XXII

#### THE RESCUE

HORROR STRICKEN, they all gazed aloft. From the mouth of the balloon there shot a tongue of fire, and it was followed by a cloud of black smoke. The big bag was getting smaller and seemed to be descending, while the man on the trapeze was hanging downward by his hands to get as far as possible away from the terrible heat.

"Jump! Jump!" cried Mr. Swift, leaping to his feet and motioning to the man on the trapeze. It is doubtful that the performer heard him. Certainly he could not see the frantic motions of the inventor. "Why doesn't he jump?"

Mr. Swift went on piteously to the two lads. "He'll surely be burned to death if he hangs on there!"

"It's too far!" exclaimed Tom. "He's too high up in the air. It looks like only a short distance from here. He would be killed if he dropped now."

"He should have a parachute," added Ned. "Most of the men do when they go up in a balloon. Why doesn't he come down in that? I wonder how the balloon caught fire?"

"Maybe he doesn't have a parachute," suggested Tom, while he slowed down the motorboat still more so as to remain very nearly under the blazing balloon. "Or, it is inside his basket where he can't reach it."

"Yes, he has!" cried Ned. "See, it's hanging to one side of the big bag. He ought to cut loose. He could save himself then. Why doesn't he?"

The balloon was slowly twisting about, gradually settling toward the surface of the lake, but all the while the flames were becoming fiercer and the black clouds of smoke increased in size.

"There, see the parachute?" went on Ned.

The twisting of the bag had brought into view the parachute which would have enabled the man to safely drop to the surface of the lake. Without it he would have hit the water with such force that he would be killed as

surely as if he had struck the solid earth. But the boys and Mr. Swift also saw something else, and this was that the balloon was on fire on the same side where the parachute was suspended.

"Look! Look!" shouted Tom, bringing his boat to a stop. "That's why he can't jump! He can't reach the parachute!"

By this time the balloon had settled so low that the actions of the man could be plainly seen. That he was in great agony and fear from the terrific heat over his head was evident. He shifted about on the trapeze bar, now hanging by one hand, trying to get his body a little farther below the blaze. When one arm tired, he would hang by the other. If the balloon would only come down more quickly it would get to within such a short distance of the water that the man could safely make the drop. But the immense canvas bag was settling so slowly. The heat from the fire made it still very buoyant. Considerable time would elapse before it would be near enough to the water to make it safe for the unfortunate man to let go the trapeze.

"Oh, if we could only do something!" cried Tom. "We have to stay here, but we are virtually helpless and may watch him burn to death. It's awful!"

The three in the boat continued to gaze upward. They could see the man making frantic efforts to reach his parachute from time to time. Once a little current of air

blew the flames and smoke to one side and it looked as though he had a chance. He pulled himself up and then edged along the bar in an attempt to grasp the ring of the parachute. He almost had hold of that and also a cord to which was tied a knife. This cord, when pulled, would sever the rope that bound it to the balloon, and he would be comparatively safe, so he could drop to the lake. But, just as he was about to grasp the ring and cord, the smoke came swirling down on him and the hungry flames seemed to put out their fiery tongues to devour him. He slid back and once more hung by his hands.

"I thought he was saved then," whispered Tom, and even the whisper sounded loud in the silence. But, he knew that the man and balloon were now near enough to the water that the parachute would have no time in which to open. The man seemed doomed.

Several men came running along the shore of the lake now. They saw the occupants in the *Arrow* and called out, "Why don't you save him? Go rescue him!"

"What can we do?" asked Ned quietly of his two friends. He did not try to answer the men on shore, who probably did not know what they were saying.

The motorboat had drifted from a spot under the unfortunate balloonist. At a word from his father the young inventor started the engine and steered the craft back directly under the blazing bag again.

"If he does drop, we may be able to pick him up," said Mr. Swift. "I wish we could save him!"

A cry from Ned startled Tom and his father, and their eyes, that had momentarily been directed away from the burning bag high in the air, were again turned toward it.

"The balloon is falling apart!" exclaimed Ned. "It's all up with him now!"

Indeed it seemed so. Pieces of the burning canvas were falling all around the man. He kept his wits about him enough to use the basket over his head as a protective barrier to keep most of them away. But, several pieces, trailing smoke and sparks, seemed to be drifting onto his hands, head and shoulders. It would be only a few second before he would have to let go.

He swung from side to side on the bar, shifting skillfully with his hands and dodging the larger particles of blazing canvas. When some small sparks fell on his clothing he beat them out with one hand, while with the other he clung to the trapeze.

There was scarcely any wind or the ordeal might have been more bearable. A breeze could have carried the smoke and fire to one side. As it was, most of the smoke and flames went straight up. A breeze would have carried the sparks away instead of letting them fall on him.

Nearer and nearer to the surface of the lake sank the

balloon. By this time the crowd on the bank had increased and there were shouted opinions as to what was best to do. But little could be done. If the man could hold out until he got near enough to the water to let go he might be saved, but the balloon was falling at an agonizingly slow rate. The performer realized this, and made another desperate attempt to reach the parachute. He missed and had to drop back, hanging below the slender bar.

Suddenly a puff of wind fanned the faces of those in the motorboat. They looked to see if reached as high as was the balloonist. Tom saw the big bag sway to one side and the flames broke out more fiercely as they caught the draught. The balloon moved slowly down the lake. The good news was that the falling sparks and ash were now missing the trapped man by many feet.

"Let's go. Keep after it, Tom!" urged his father. "We may be able to save him!"

Tom increased the speed of his boat and Ned, who was currently at the wheel, gave it a slight twist. Then, with a suddenness that was startling, the blazing canvas airship began to drop swiftly toward the water.

"Now he can jump! He's near enough to the water now!" cried Tom.

But a new danger arose. True, the balloon was rapidly approaching the surface of the lake and in a few seconds more would be within such a short distance that a drop

should not be fatal. But the burning bag was coming straight down. Once the man was in the water, the fiery canvas would be on top of him in mere seconds.

In such an event he would either be burned to death or so held down that drowning must quickly follow.

"If there was only wind enough to carry the balloon beyond him after he jumped he could do it safely!" cried Ned.

Tom said nothing. He was measuring, with, his eye, the distance the balloon had yet to go and also the distance away the motorboat was from where it would probably land.

"He can do it!" exclaimed the young inventor.

"How?" asked his father.

For answer Tom grabbed the newspaper he had purchased at the hotel that morning. Rolling it quickly into a rough megaphone, he called out, "Swing away from the basket. Drop into the lake! We'll pick you up before the bag falls on you! Go now!"

The balloonist heard and understood. So did Ned and Mr. Swift. Tom's quick wit had found a way to save the man.

As the blazing bag settled toward the surface of the water, the man took one final look upward to the burning mass above him and began to swing back and forth. After

just three swings the aeronaut let go his hold. Like a shot he came down in a forward arc, holding his body rigid and straight. He knew how to fall into water.

Tom Swift was ready for him. No sooner had the lad called his directions through the megaphone than the young inventor had cranked up his engine and the boat shot forward.

"Steer so we can pick him up!" Tom cried to Ned, who was at the wheel. "Pass by him in a curve with him on the left. As soon as I grab him, spin the wheel over and get out from under the balloon."

It was a risky thing to do, but Tom had it all planned out. He made a loop of the boat's mooring rope. Hurrying to the bow he leaned over as far as he could, holding the rope in readiness. His idea was to have the balloonist grab the loop and then be dragged out of danger by the speedy motorboat.

With the balloonist hitting the water, Tom saw that the collapsed bag had slowed its decent, but would be on top of the man in only a few seconds.

Ned steered the boat to the side of the man's impact. He concluded that the aeronaut would strike out in that direction when he came up.

The *Arrow* passed directly under the blazing balloon and cries of fear from the watchers on shore could be

heard.

"There he is!" cried Mr. Swift, pointing to a head that had popped up just twenty feet away. Tom and Ned saw him at the same instant. Ned shifted his wheel and the young inventor bent over, holding out the rope for the man to grasp. An instant more and the speeding motorboat pulled along side of him. He grabbed the rope and Tom, aided by Mr. Swift, began to lift him out of the water.

"Quick! To the right, Ned!" yelled Tom, for the heat of the descending mass of burning canvas descended like a furnace blast.

Ned needed no urging. With a swirl of the screw the *Arrow* shot herself out of the way, carrying the aeronaut with her. A moment later the burning balloon, or what there was left of it, settled down into the lake, hissing angrily, and completely covering the spot where, a few seconds before, the man and the boat had been.

They had saved him in the nick of time.

# TOM SWIFT and His Motorboat

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## CHAPTER XXIII

### PLANS FOR AN AIRSHIP

"Slow her down, Ned!" cried Tom, for the *Arrow* was shooting so swiftly through the water that the young inventor found it impossible to pull up the balloonist. Ned hurried back to the motor, and, when the boat's way had been checked, it was an easy matter to pull the dripping and almost exhausted man into the craft.

"Are you much hurt?" asked Mr. Swift anxiously, for Tom was too much out of breath with his exertion to ask any questions. For that matter the man was in almost as bad a plight. He was breathing heavily, as one who had

run a long race.

"I—I guess I'm all right," he panted. "Only burned a little on my hands. That—that was a close call!"

The boat swung around and headed for shore, on which was quite a throng of persons. Some of them had cheered when they saw the plucky rescue.

"I'm afraid we can't save your balloon," gasped Tom as he looked at the place where the canvas was still floating and burning.

"No matter. It wasn't worth much. That's the last time I'll ever go up in a hot-air balloon," said the man with more energy than he had before exhibited. "I'm done with 'em. I've had my lesson. Hereafter an airplane or a gas balloon for me. I only did this to oblige the fair committee. I'll not do it again."

The man spoke in short, crisp sentences, as though he was in too much of a hurry to waste his words.

"Let it sink," he went on. "It's no good. Glad to see the last of it."

Almost as he spoke, with a final hiss and a cloud of steam that mingled with the black smoke, the remains of the big bag sunk beneath the surface of the lake.

"We must get you ashore at once and to a doctor," said Mr. Swift. "You must be badly burned."

"Not much. Only my hands, where some burning pieces of canvas fell on' em. If I had a little oil to put on I'd be all right."

"I can fix you up better than that," put in Tom. "I have some Vaseline."

"Good! Just the thing. Pass it over," and the man, though he spoke shortly, seemed grateful for the offer. "My name's Sharp," he went on, "John Sharp, of no place in particular, for I travel all over. I'm a professional balloonist. Ha! That's the stuff!"

This last was in reference to a bottle of Vaseline, which Tom produced. Mr. Sharp spread some over the backs of his hands and went on:

"That's better. Much obliged. I can't begin to thank you for what you did for me—saved my life. I thought it was all up with me—would have been but for you. Mustn't mind my manner—it's a way I have—have to talk quick when you're balloonin'—no time—but I'm grateful all the same. Who might you people be?"

Tom told him their names and Mr. Swift asked the aeronaut if he was sure he didn't need the services of a physician.

"No doctor for me," answered the balloonist. "I've been in lots of tight places, but this was the worst squeeze. If you'll put me ashore, I guess I can manage now."



"But you're all wet," objected Tom. "Where will you go? You need some other clothes," for the man wore a suit of tights and spangles.

"Oh, I'm used to this," went on the performer. "I frequently have to fall in the water. I always carry a little money with me so as to get back to the place where I started from. By the way, where am I?"

"Opposite Daleton," answered Tom. "Where did you go up from?"

"Pratonia. Big fair there. I was one of the features."

"Then you're about fifteen miles away," commented Mr. Swift. "You can hardly get back before night. Must you go there?"

"Left my clothes there. Also a valuable gas balloon. No more hot-air ones for me. Guess I'd better go back," and the aeronaut continued to speak in his quick, jerky sentences.

"We'd be very glad to have you come with us, Mr. Sharp," went on the inventor. "We are not far from Shopton, and if you would like to remain over night I'm sure we would make you comfortable. You can proceed to Pratonia in the morning."

"Thanks. Might not be a bad idea," said Mr. Sharp. "I'm obliged to you. I've got to go there to collect my money, though I suppose they won't give it all to me."

"Why not?" demanded Ned.

"Didn't drop from my parachute. Couldn't. Fire was one reason—couldn't reach the parachute, and if I could have, guess it wouldn't have been safe. Parachute probably was burned too. But I'm done with hot-air balloons though I guess I said that before."

The boys were much interested in the somewhat odd performer, and, on his part, he seemed to take quite a notion to Tom, who told him of several things that he had invented. "Well," remarked Mr. Swift after a while, during which the boat had been moving slowly down the lake, "if we are not to go ashore for a doctor for you, Mr. Sharp, suppose we put on more speed and get to my home? I'm anxious about a robbery that occurred there," and he related some facts in the case.

"Speed her up!" exclaimed Mr. Sharp. "Wish I could help you catch the scoundrels, but afraid I can't—hands too sore," and he looked at his burns. Then he told how he had made the ascension from the Pratonia fair grounds and how, when he was high in the air, he had discovered that the balloon was on fire. He described his sensations and told how he thought his time had surely come. Sparks from the hot air used to inflate it probably caused the blaze, he said.

"I've made a number of trips," he concluded, "hot air and gas bags, but this was the worst ever. It got on my

nerves for a few minutes," he added coolly.

"I should think it would," agreed Tom as he speeded up the motor and sent the *Arrow* on her homeward way.

The boys and Mr. Swift were much interested in the experiences of the balloonist and asked him many questions, which he answered modestly. Several hours passed and late that afternoon the party approached Shopton.

"Here we are!" exclaimed Mr. Swift, relief in his tones. "Now to see of what I have been robbed and to get the police after the scoundrels!"

When the boat was nearing the dock Mr. Sharp, who had been silent for some time, suddenly turned to Tom and asked:

"Ever invent an airship?"

"No," replied the lad, somewhat surprised. "I never did."

"I have," went on the balloonist. "That is, I've invented part of it. I'm stuck over some details. Maybe you and I'll finish it some day. How about it?"

"Maybe," assented Tom, who was occupied just then in making a good landing. "I am interested in airships, but I never thought I could build one."

"Easiest thing in the world," went on Mr. Sharp, as if it

was an everyday matter. "You and I will get busy as soon as we clear up this robbery." He talked as though he had been a friend of the family for some time, for he had a genial, taking manner.

A little later Mr. Swift was excitedly questioning Garret Jackson concerning the robbery and making an examination of the electrical shop to discover what was missing.

"They've taken some parts of my gyroscope!" he exclaimed, "and some valuable tools and papers, as well as some unfinished work that will be difficult to replace."

"Much of a loss?" asked Mr. Sharp with a business-like air.

"Well, not so large as regards money," answered the inventor, "but they took things I can never replace, and I will miss them very much if I cannot get them back."

"Then we'll get them back!" snapped the balloonist, as if that was all there was to it.

The police were called up on the telephone and the facts given to them, as well as a description of the stolen things. They promised to do what they could, but, in the light of past experiences, Tom and his father did not think this would be much. There was little more that could be done that evening. Ned Newton went to his home, and, after Mr. Swift had insisted in calling in his physician to look

after Mr. Sharp's burns the balloonist was given a room next to Tom's. Then the Swift household settled down.

"Well," remarked Tom to his father, as he got ready for bed, "this sure has been an exciting day."

"And my loss is a serious one," added the inventor somewhat sadly.

"Don't worry, Dad," begged his son. "I'll do my best to recover those things for you."

Several days passed, but there was no clue regarding the thieves. That they were the same ones who had stolen the turbine model there was little doubt, but they seemed to have covered their tracks well. The police were at a loss, and, though Tom and Mr. Sharp cruised about the lake, they could get no trace of the men. The balloonist had sent to Pratonia for his clothing and other baggage and was now installed in the Swift home, where he was invited to stay a week or two.

One night when he was looking over some papers he had taken from his trunk the balloonist came over to where Tom was making a drawing of a new machine he was planning and said:

"Like to see my idea for an airship? Different from some. It's a dirigible balloon with an airplane front and rear to steer and balance it in big winds. It would be a winner, only for one thing. Maybe you can help me."

"Maybe I can," agreed Tom, who was at once interested.

"We ought to be able to do something. Look at our names—Swift and Sharp—quick and penetrating—a good firm to build airships," and he laughed genially. "Shall we do it?"

"I'm willing," agreed Tom, and the balloonist spread his plans out on the table, he and the young inventor soon being deep in a discussion of them.

# TOM SWIFT and His Motorboat

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## CHAPTER XXIV

### THE MYSTERY SOLVED

FOR THE NEXT two days, the young inventor and his new friend lived in an atmosphere of airships. They talked them from morning until night. Even Mr. Swift, much as he was dismayed over his loss, took part in some of the discussions.

The man, John Sharp, was eager to repay Tom for saving his life, so he lent a hand assisting the young inventor in making several refinements and enhancements to the *Arrow*.

Of the many ideas that had come to him, Tom wanted to incorporate at least three. The first involved the fuel system. He had removed the spark plugs the morning after the rescue and found that corrosion had begun claiming the metal surfaces.

Remembering what he had spied under the hood of Mr. Damon's automobile, Tom created a makeshift fuel float and separator from a small canning jar, tubing—which he soldered at various places—and a small rubber ball. Once closed up, fuel would be drawn into the top of the jar through a tube that extended nearly to the bottom. It would then be drawn off from another tube that extended only a quarter inch into the jar.

Tom told John that gasoline floats on water, so the intent was that both would separate inside of the jar where water-free fuel would rise and head on to the motor while the water would remain at the bottom. The ball would only float in the water, so if moisture filled most of the jar, the ball would rise and plug the exit point, cutting off any water from getting to the engine.

“Won't that cut off the engine?” John asked.

“Sure, but it would be just a second or so to open the jar, pour the water and gasoline into a larger jar, close it back up and be back on the way.”

His second enhancement had to do with the oiling mechanisms for for both the cylinders as well as the drive

shaft. “I need to have a better-refined oil to go into the cylinders. There are too many impurities and they burn off leaving carbon deposits that foul the spark plugs.”

John and Tom, along with Barton Swift's occasional assistance, devised a new filter mechanism to clean the oil. Tom took inspiration from his own bicycle and motorcycle tire pump and built a two-chamber device. Oil would be poured into the top chamber. A handle was attached to a piston that came down through the cap. Once screwed in place, anyone could use his body weight to pull down on the handle.

The resulting pressure forced the oil into and through a three-inch-thick filter made from old rags and fabric scraps.

As it passed through, practically all impurities were trapped in the fibers and only very clean oil passed down and into the collection chamber.

A test was made of this oil in his motorcycle. After a four-hour trip, Tom removed and checked his spark plug. As he hoped, there was absolutely no sign of carbon build-up.

The final task the two new friends accomplished was to build a set of lights, again using small canning jars to keep water from infiltrating the system, that were soon attached to the bow, stern and to both sides of the boat.

"Gosh, Tom. I'd guess that even in a dense fog and especially at night, no other boat could claim that they hadn't seen you!" John exclaimed.

Tom was very pleased. He had even decided to not tackle the drive shaft lubrication issue as he felt that a simple change to the new, filtered oil, would suffice to provide better movement of that steel shaft.

In the meanwhile efforts had not ceased to locate the robbers and recover the stolen goods, but so far without success.

One afternoon, about a week after the thrilling rescue, Tom said to the balloonist, "Would you like to come for a ride in the motorboat? We'll take a trip across and up the opposite shore."

"Good idea," commented Mr. Sharp. "Fine day for a sail. Come on. Blow the cobwebs from our brains. Maybe it will help us to solve the puzzle of the fire on my balloon."

Mr. Swift declined an invitation to accompany them. He said he would stay home and try to straighten out his affairs, which were somewhat muddled by the robbery.

Out over the blue waters of Lake Carlopa shot the *Arrow*. It was making only moderate speed—Tom was in no hurry—and he knew his engine would last years longer if not forced to sustain high revolutions too frequently. They glided along, crossed the lake and were proceeding

up the opposite shore.

As they turned away from a little bay and rounded a point of land, Mr. Sharp exclaimed, "Look out, Tom, there's rowboat just ahead!"

"Oh, I'll pass well to one side of that," answered the young inventor, looking at the craft. As he did so one of the boat's four occupants caught a glimpse of the *Arrow*. His head whipped around and he spoke to his companions. They all turned to stare at Tom. At first the lad could scarcely believe his eyes, but as he looked more intently he uttered a cry.

"There they are!"

"Who?" inquired Mr. Sharp.

"Those men—the thieves! We must catch them!"

Tom had spoken loudly, but even though the men in the rowboat heard what he said, they realized that they were about to be pursued. There was no mistaking Tom's attitude.

Two of the thieves were at the oars. They leaned into them and increased their speed. The boat swung about sharply and headed for the shore, which they seemed to just come from.

"No, you don't!" cried Tom. "I know your game! They want to get to the woods, John, where they'll have a better chance to escape! If this isn't great luck, coming upon

them this way!"

Tom increased their speed and headed the *Arrow* for the rowboat. The men were pulling frantically, but they had no chance.

"Get between them and the shore!" cried John Sharp. "You can head them off." This was good advice and Tom followed it. The men, among whom the lad could At closer range, Tom recognized Happy Harry and Amberson Morse. Both of them stood up as though planning to jump overboard, but their companions yelled to them to stop.

"If I only had a gun now; not to shoot at them but to intimidate them," murmured the balloonist, "maybe they'd stop."

"Here's one," answered Tom, pointing to the seat locker where he kept the shotgun Mr. Duncan had given him. In a moment Mr. Sharp had it out.

"Surrender!" he cried, pointing the weapon at the men in the small boat.

Seeing their plight, Morse shouted, "Don't shoot! Don't fire on us!"

"We give up!" cried Happy Harry, and the two with the oars ceased rowing.

"Don't take any chances," urged John in a low voice. "Keep between them and the shore. I'll cover them."

Tom soon had the *Arrow* in position to cut off the retreat of the men. They could not land. And, to try to row across the lake meant speedy capture.

"What do you want of us?" growled Morse. "What right have you got to interfere with us in this fashion?"

"The best of right," answered Tom. "You'll find out when you're in jail."

"You can't arrest us," sneered Happy Harry. "You're not an officer and you haven't any warrant."

Tom hadn't thought of that, and his let it show on his face. Happy Harry was quick to see it.

"You'd better let us go," he threatened "We can have you arrested for bothering us. You haven't any right to stop us, Tom Swift."

"Maybe he hasn't, but I have!" exclaimed John Sharp suddenly.

"You! Who are you?" demanded Featherton, alias Simpson, the man who usually drove the automobile that carried the other men.

"Me? I'm a special deputy sheriff for Essex county," answered the balloonist simply. Keeping the gun pointed in their direction he stated, "Here's my badge," and, throwing back his coat, he displayed it. "You see I got the appointment in order to have some authority in the crowds that gather to watch me go up," he explained to

Tom, who plainly showed his astonishment. "I found it very useful to be able to threaten arrest rabble rousers and troublemakers. In this case I'll do more than threaten. You are my prisoners," he went on to the men in the boat, and he handled the shotgun as if he knew how to use it. "Toss your oars overboard and put your hands up where I can see them. I'll take you into custody on complaint of Mr. Swift for robbery. Now will you go quietly or are you going to make a fuss?" asked Mr. Sharp pointing the gun directly at Amberson Morse.

"Well, seeing as how you have the drop on us, I guess we'll have to do as you say," admitted Happy Harry, alias Harry Greene. "But you can't prove anything against us. We haven't any of Mr. Swift's property."

"Then how did you know we were talking about my father's property?" Morse and Featherton blanched. "You obviously know where it is," added Tom quickly.

Under the restraining influence of the gun, the men made no resistance. While Mr. Sharp covered them, Tom towed their boat toward shore. Then, while the young inventor held the gun, the balloonist/deputy tied the hands and feet of the thieves in a manner such that nobody could fully stand without pulling the man next to him over. He left them no possibility of escape.

"Now, I guess they'll stay quiet for a while," remarked Mr. Sharp as he surveyed the crestfallen criminals. "I'll

remain on guard here, Tom, while you go notify the nearest constable and we'll take them to jail. We bagged the whole lot as neatly as could be desired."

"No, you didn't get all of us!" exclaimed Happy Harry, and there was a savage anger in his tones.

"Keep quiet!" urged Morse.

"I'll not keep quiet! It's a shame that we have to the blame while that rotter, Todd Boreck, goes free. He ought to have been with us, and he would be, only he's trying to get away with that sparkler!"

"Shut up," urged Morse.

Tom was all attention. He had caught the word "sparkler," and recalled the occasion he had heard the men use it before. He felt that he was close to solving the mystery connected with his boat.

He looked at the men. They were the same four who had been involved in the former theft—Appleson, Featherton, Morse and Greene. Were there actually five of them? He recalled the man who had been caught tampering with his boat—the man who had tried to bid on the *Arrow* at the auction. Where was he?

"Boreck didn't get what he was after," resumed Happy Harry, "and I'm going to spoil his game. Listen, kid," he went on to Tom, "check the front part of your boat—where the gasoline tank is."



Tom's heart was beating fast. At last, he would solve the puzzle. He opened the forward compartment. To his disappointment it seemed as usual. Morse and the others were making a vain effort to silence Happy Harry.

"I don't see anything here," said Tom.

"No, because it's hidden in one of those blocks of wood you use for a brace," continued the man. "Which one it is, Boreck didn't know, so he pulled out a few. Only he came up with nothing each time. You must have moved them from the way they were when *we* had the boat."

"I did," answered the young inventor, recollecting how he had taken out some of the braces and inserted new ones, then painted the interior of the compartment. "What is in the braces, anyhow? The diamond you all stole?"

All signs of bravado went out of the men's faces. They knew they had been outfoxed. "Yeah. The sparkler—the big diamond—in a hollow place in the wood, kid!" continued Happy Harry, blurting out the words. "I'm not going to let Todd Boreck get away with it while we head for jail."

"Take out all the braces that haven't been moved and have a look," suggested Mr. Sharp. Tom only had to remove two, those farthest back, for all the others had, at one time or another, been changed or taken away by the thief.

One of the blocks did not seem to have anything unusual about it, but the other one made Tom remember. It was the one that seemed to have had a hole bored in it and then plugged up again. His father noticed it on the occasion of overhauling the boat.

"It's in there," said the tramp as he saw the brace. "Boreck was after it several times, but he never pulled out the right one."

With his knife Tom dug out the putty that covered the round hole in the block. No sooner had he done so than a white object rolled into his hand. It was done up in tissue paper. As he removed the wrapper, there was a flash in the sunlight and a large, beautiful diamond was revealed.

The mystery had been solved.

## TOM SWIFT and His Motorcycle

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### CHAPTER XXV

#### WINNING A RACE

"WHERE DID this diamond come from?" demanded Mr. Sharp of the criminals.

"What's it worth for you to find out?" sneered Happy Harry.

"It will go much easier on you if you tell us now," Sharp told him.

"I don't care a hoot about it as long as that rat Boreck doesn't get it. He tried to do us out of our share."

"Well, I guess the police will make you tell," went on the

balloonist. "Go for the constable, Tom."

Leaving his friend to guard the ugly men, who for a time at least were beyond the possibility of doing harm, Tom hurried off through the woods to the nearest village. There he found an officer and the gang was soon lodged in jail.

The diamond was turned over to the authorities, who said they would soon locate the owner.

Tom asked whether he might talk to one of the prisoners, Happy Harry. The policeman was hesitant. "I'm not certain I can do that, Mr. Swift."

Tom told the man of the theft from his father's workshop. "I believe he might be in the mood to tell me what they took and where it is. Please let me. My father is in a most distressed state and I only wish to help him."

In the end, the officer relented and soon brought Happy Harry to stand in front of Tom in a side office. "I'll be just outside the door. Holler if you need me!"

Tom looked at the shackled man before him. "Hello, Mr. Greene," he said.

Giving the youth an embarrassed grin, he replied, "Hello back to you, Tom. As you folks say, long time no see."

"I have just three questions for you. First, whose side are you really on? I saved Mr. Duncan, or Mr. Munson,

after someone shot him. He want everyone to think it was his gun that went off accidentally, but his was a shotgun. The bullet came from a deer hunting rifle or something of that caliber. Well?"

Greene denied his involvement. "If he says that it was his gun, then it must have been. I suggest that you don't question that. Not right now. I have the feeling that Our Todd Boreck is to blame for that one. He has been seen carrying a carbine rifle from time to time."

Tom's second question regarded his father's missing models and equipment.

Harry was able to give Tom a general location but nothing specific. "Another case where Todd Boreck has the precise information you seek."

"Alright then. Question three. Why steal Dad's stuff?"

"A good question, and the first one I am able to fully answer. It was a ruse to throw off the police. We thought that you would go to them immediately. Even after the first time we showed up back on your property. But, you didn't. You just went off on some sort of jaunt."

Tom smiled now realizing that his plan for his father's rest and relaxation had both hindered the actions of Harry and the gang as well as having added to the very nervousness he had been seeking to alleviate.

"Is it that easy?"

“Yes, it is. You see, this gang of scoundrels I have insinuated myself among are simply crooks for hire. We took your father’s patent model in return for payment from some lawyers. We stole the diamond and other jewels while we are ‘in between’ other jobs.”

Before returning to his cell and resuming his double identity, Harry told Tom several facts for him to pass along to the police to aid in their investigation.

Tom did and the policeman contacted all of the local constabularies and put them into action. He promised Tom quick action.

They were not long in doing it. It appeared the gem was part of a large jewel robbery that had taken place some time before in a distant city. The Happy Harry gang, as the men came to be called, were implicated in it, though they got away with only a small share of the plunder.

A search was made for Todd Boreck and he was captured about a week after his companions as he attempted to board a train in Mansford.

Seeing that his game was up, the man made a partial confession telling where Mr. Swift’s articles were hidden. That same day the inventor’s valuable tools, papers and machinery were recovered, with no damage having been done to them.

It developed that after the diamond theft, and when the

gang had come into possession of Mr. Hastings’ boat, Boreck had, unknown to his cronies, secreted the jewel in one of the braces under the gasoline tank. He expected to get it out secretly, but the capture of the gang and the sale of the boat prevented this.

When he tried to buy the craft to take out the diamond, Tom overbid him. It was Boreck who found Andy’s ring of keys and was using one to open the compartment lock when Tom surprised him. The man had managed to remove some of the blocks, thinking he had the one with the diamond in it. But the fact of Tom changing them around and painting the compartment deceived him.

The gang hoped to get some valuables from Mr. Swift’s shops and, as Harry told Tom, wished to throw a twist into the mix and to so occupy the small police forces of the area. It had only succeeded after hanging around for several tries. Even stealing the *Arrow*, which was taken to aid the gang in robbing Mr. Swift, did not succeed, and Boreck’s plan then to get possession of the diamond fell through.

It was thought that the gang would get long terms in prison, but a day later as they were being loaded into a train for transport to Albany and the state prison, a violent storm blew up and a nearby lightning strike took attention from their captors. They escaped.

A few days after this, Tom was in the boathouse making

some minor repairs to the motor he heard a voice calling, "Mistah Swift, is yo' about?"

"Hello, Rad, is that you?" he inquired, standing and recognizing the voice of the owner of the mule Boomerang.

"Yais, dat's me. I got a lettah fo' yo'. I were passin' de post office an' de clerk asted me to bring it to yo' b'case as how it's marked 'hurry,' an' he said he hadn't seen yo' today."

"That's right. I've been so busy I haven't had time to go for the mail," and Tom took the letter, giving Eradicate ten cents for his trouble.

"Ha, this is good!" exclaimed Tom as he read it.

"Hab someone done gone an' left yo' a fortune, young Mistah Swift?" asked the man.

"No, but it's almost as good. It's an invitation to take part in the motorboat races next week. I'd forgotten all about them. I must get ready."

"Goodness! Dat's all de risin' generation t'inks about now," observed Eradicate, "racin' an' goin' fast. Mah ole mule Boomerang is good enough fo' me," and shaking his head in a woeful manner, Eradicate went on his way.

Tom told Mr. Sharp and his father of the proposed races at the Lanton Motorboat Club. As it was required that two persons be in a craft the size of the *Arrow*, the young

inventor arranged for the balloonist to accompany him. Ned, Tom's first choice, would be unable to get away from work in time to participate. Our hero spent the next few days in tuning up his motor and getting the *Arrow* ready for the contest.

The races took place on the side of Lake Carlopa near where Mr. Hastings lived, and he was one of the officials of the club. There were several classes, graded according to the horsepower of the motors and hull type, and Tom found himself in the same class with Andy Foger.

"Here's where I beat you," boasted the red-haired youth exultantly, though his manner toward Tom was more temperate than usual. Andy had learned a lesson.

"Well, if you can beat me I'll give you credit for it," answered Tom. Inwardly, he was sure that the boy had still not mastered the operation of his motor.

The first race was for high-powered craft, and in this Mr. Hastings' new *Carlopa* won, driven by two local men. Then came the trial of the small boats, and Tom was pleased to note that Mary Nestor was on hand in the tiny *Dot*.

"Good luck!" he called to her as he was adjusting his timer, for his turn would come soon. "Remember what I told you about the spark," for he had given her a few lessons.

"If I win it will be due to you," she called brightly.

She did win, coming in several yards ahead of three confident lads who had better boats. But Miss Nestor handled the *Dot* to perfection and crossed the line a boat's length ahead of her nearest competitor.

"Beautiful!" cried Tom, and then heard the warning gun that told him to get ready for his trial.

This was a five-mile race and had several entrants. The race was handicapped on several categories. Tom had no reason to complain of the rating allowed him.

"Crack!" went the starting pistol and away went Tom and one or two others who had the same time allowance as did he. A little later many others started followed closely by the last class, including Andy Foger.

The *Red Streak* shot ahead and was soon heading toward the lead, for Andy and Sam had learned better how to handle their craft. Tom and Mr. Sharp were worried, but they stuck grimly to the race. When the turning point was reached, Tom's motor had so warmed up and was running so well that he crept up on Andy. Each time John lubricated the drive shaft the boat seemed to surge ahead. The cylinder oil was working wonders.

A mile from the final mark, Andy and Tom were on even terms, and though the red-haired lad tried to shake off his rival he could not. Andy's ignition system stuttered

him several times and he switched from batteries to magneto and back again in the hope of getting a little more speed out of the motor.

But it was not to be. A half-mile away from the finish Tom, who had fallen behind a little, crept up on even terms. Then he slowly forged ahead. By five hundred yards from the finish, the young inventor knew that the race was his. He clinched it a minute later, crossing the line amid a burst of cheers. The *Arrow* had beaten several boats out of her own class and Tom was very proud and happy.

"My, but we certainly did scoot along!" cried Mr. Sharp. "But that's nothing to how we'll go when we build our airship, eh, Tom?" and he looked at the flushed face of the lad.

"No, indeed," agreed the young inventor. "But I don't know that we'll take part in any races in it. We'll build it as soon as we can."

This race ended the contests of the motorboats and the little fleet crowded up to the floats and docks, where the prizes were to be awarded. Tom received a handsome silver cup and Mary Nestor a gold bracelet.

"Now I want all the contestants, winners and losers, to come up to my house and have lunch," invited Mr. Hastings.

As Tom and the balloonist strolled up the walk to the handsome house, Andy Foger passed them.

"You wouldn't have beaten me if I hadn't got water in my fuel system," he said, somewhat sneeringly.

"Maybe," admitted Tom, and just then he caught sight of Mary Nestor. "May I take you in to lunch?" he asked.

"Yes," she said, "because you helped me to win," and she blushed prettily. When they all sat down to the tables set out on the lawn, Tom looked so often at Mary that John Sharp said afterward it was a wonder he found time to eat.

But Tom didn't care.

He was very happy.

## **THE END**

Tom Swift will next be seen in his forthcoming story

**TOM SWIFT and HIS AIRSHIP**

A new adventure for today's science minded boys.

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