

THE GIANT GUN

"I'm ready," said John, who had steeled every nerve, "and I'll do my best."

He felt the rush of air as the *Arrow* increased her speed, and shot downward in a slanting curve, and he heard also a shout from below, as the sinister shadow of the aeroplane showed black between the gunners and the sky.

He leaned over and watched. He saw hundreds of eyes turned upward, and he heard the crackle of many rifles, as they sent their bullets toward the *Arrow*. Some whistled near, but the darting target, high in air, was hard to hit and none touched it.

John paid no heed to the bullets, but watched the huge cannon with its monstrous mouth upturned at a sharp angle to the sky. When he thought they were directly over it he hurled two of the bombs at the caisson, but they missed. They struck among the men, and several were killed, but the gun and its equipment remained unharmed.

"Never mind," said Lannes, knowing that John felt chagrin. "You came pretty close for a first trial. Now, ready, I'm going to swoop back again."

The second attempt was not quite as good as the first, and a bullet tipped John's ear, drawing blood. Off in the east the black specks were growing larger, and they knew but little time was left to them now. The German aeroplanes were coming.

The third swoop and with an eye and hand in perfect accord John threw once and then twice. A terrific roar came from below. The giant cannon had been blown from its concrete bed and lay a vast mass