PROPHESIES BIGGER "TANKS"

Novelist Who Foretold the Caterpillar Forts Believes More Terrible Land Battleships Are Sure to Come

By H. G. Wells,

Author of "Mr. Brillop Sees It Through."

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The young of even the most horrible beasts have something poignant and engaging about them, and as I suppose it is in the way of things that the land kraken, which opens a new and more dreadful and destructive phase in the human folly of warfare, should appear first as if it were a joke. Never has any such thing so completely masked its wickedness under an appearance of genial silliness. The "tank" is a creature to which one naturally flings a pet name; the five or six I was shown, waddling, rooting, and climbing over obstacles round a large field near Woking, were as amusing, as disarming, as a litter of lively young pigs.

The War Office, after a period of reluctance, has suddenly permitted a lavish publication of photographs and descriptions of these things, so that their general appearance is now familiar to everyone.

They are like large slugs, with an underslung a little like the flattened rockers of a rocking horse, slugs between twenty and forty feet long. They are like flared-end slugs, slugs of spirit, which raise an inquiring nose, like the snout of a dogfish, into the air. They crawl upon their bellies in a way that would be straining belly, it overhangs more and more, and at last topples forward; it aways upon the heap and then goes plunging downward, sticking out the sickly counterpart of its wheelless tail.

If it comes to a house or a tree of a wall or such like obstruction it rams against it to bring all its might to bear upon it; it weighs some tons and then climbs over the debris. I saw it, and incredulous atelier of experience watch it, at the same time, cross trenches and wallow amusingly through medly exaggerations of shell holes. To me it was a sight.

Again the "tank" is like the slug. The slug as every biological student knows, is exceedingly complicated inside. The "tank" is as crowded with internal parts as a battleship. It is filled with engines, guns and ammunition, and, in the boot, men.

"You will smash your hat," said Colonel Stern. "Not keep it on, or else you will smash your head."

Only Mr. G. H. W. Nevinson could do justice to the interior of a "tank." You see a hard gripping something; you see the eyes and forehad of an engineer's face; you perceive that an overall bluntness beyond the engine is the jack of another man.

"Don't hold that," says one row. "It is too hot. Hold on to that." The engine roars, so loudly that I doubt whether we could hear guns without; the floor begins to slope and slumps until one seems to be at forty-five degrees of sheerabouts; then the whole concern swings up and away and shuts the other way.

You have crossed a hulk. You heel sideways. Through the door which has been left open you see the little group of engineers, staff officers and naval men collosing and falling away behind you. You straighten up and go on bill! You hail and begin to rotate. Through the open door the green field with its red walls, rows of workhorses and files of chimneys in the background, becomes a steady processional movement. The group of engineers and officers and naval men appears at the other side of the door; and, further off, "Then comes a spurt down hill."

You descend and stretch your legs. About the field other "tanks" are doing...