

The Gun Club



The American members of the Gun Club worked hard to build a huge cannon.

- Preview:**
1. Read the name of the story.
 2. Look at the picture.
 3. Read the sentence under the picture.
 4. Read the first paragraph of the story.
 5. Then answer the following question.

You learned from your preview that the Civil War was fought between

- a. the North and the South.
- b. the East and the West.
- c. the South and the West.
- d. the East and the North.

Turn to the Comprehension Check on page 10 for the right answer.

Now read the story.

Read to find out about Impey Barbicane's plan.

The Gun Club

A long time ago there was a war between the North and the South. This period of time was called the Civil War. People left their work and homes. They wanted to be soldiers and captains. A lot of money was spent on war supplies. During the Civil War an important club was formed.

The newspapers ran many stories about the thrilling new guns and cannons being made. Sometimes one American has an idea. He looks for other Americans who share his idea. Three people may share an idea. So they choose a president. Then two vice presidents. Soon their club is started. This is how it happened in Baltimore. A man invented a new cannon. Then he joined with a man who molded it. Next, they joined with another man who fired it. A month after it was formed, the Gun Club had a total of 30,575 members in different places.

There was one rule of the Club. The men joining must have invented a cannon or some other kind of gun. The American members made a huge cannon. This cannon shot farther than any cannon had before. With each of its shots, soldiers fell. This cannon was the idea of J.T. Maston. He was the secretary of the Gun Club. His idea was a huge success.

The Gun Club was made up of very nice men. Some of these Gun Club members were officers. Many came back from the war without arms or legs. Then, one day, the shooting slowed down. The war was coming to an end. Then it stopped. Members of the gun Club became very bored. The rooms of their club became empty. Sounds of snoring came from dark corners.

"It's disappointing!" Tom Hunter said one evening. "There's nothing to do! What a weary life!"

"You're right!" spoke Colonel Bloomsberry.

"And no war in sight!" said J.T.

Maston. He scratched his head with the hook at the end of his arm. "And only this morning I made a set of plans that will change how wars work!"

"How interesting!" said Tom Hunter. "Maybe we could build weapons for the wars taking place in Europe."

"No," said Maston, "That wouldn't work. It seems that Americans don't want to take action! For example, didn't America once belong to England?"

"Yes," answered Tom.

"Then why shouldn't it be England's turn to belong to America?" said Maston.

The club members argued for a long time. It seemed that the Club might break up.

But the very next day, each member of the club received the following message:

Baltimore, October

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The president of the Gun Club has the honor of telling his friends that during the meeting on October 5, he will make an announcement that they will be very interested in. He insists they all be at the meeting.

Impey Barbicane
President

October 5 came. All the members crowded into a hall. It was a big meeting. Models of cannons, rifles and other war weapons filled the hall. A huge iron desk was at the far end of the room. Behind it sat the president of the Club, Impey Barbicane. The club members knew he would not have insisted they be there unless it was very important.

Impey Barbicane was a quiet, cold, serious man. A true Yankee. He had made a fortune in the lumber business. He stood out from the other men. Barbicane was one of the lucky men who still had all his arms and legs.

The clock struck 8. Everyone was

quiet.

"My friends, we have been at peace for too long a period! We must take action! Any war that would bring back the use of weapons would be welcome!" spoke Barbicane.

The members yelled in support.

Barbicane continued. "But for now, war is not possible. We must accept this and find another way to use our energy. For a long time I have been thinking of a plan. This plan will make a great noise in the world."

"A great noise?" the Colonel asked with excitement.

"You have all seen the moon, haven't you?" Barbicane asked. "Well, I will lead you weary men on an adventure. An adventure to the moon! We know a great deal about it. But so far, no one has been able to succeed in communicating with it. People from ages ago have told of seeing people on the moon. In 1835, one scientist, looking at the moon through a telescope, told of seeing caves with hippopotamuses living in them!"

The crowd cheered! Each member of the Club was excited by Barbicane's words.

"Silence!" they shouted from all over the hall.

The voices died down. Barbicane spoke again, this time in a deeper voice. "You all know how firearms have improved these last few years. With this in mind, I started to wonder if it would be possible to build a huge cannon. A cannon large enough to shoot something to the moon."

"Oh!" the crowd gasped.

"I have looked at it carefully," Barbicane said. "And I think we can succeed! And so my good friends, let's do it!"

The Gun Club

Preview Answer:

a. the North and the South.

COMPREHENSION CHECK

Choose the best answer.

1. The Gun Club was formed in the city of
 - a. Biltmore.
 - b. Baltimore.
 - c. Bridgewater.
 - d. Brighton.
2. After one month, the Gun Club had
 - a. 3,000 members.
 - b. more than 30,000 members.
 - c. more than 70,000 members.
 - d. more than one million members.
3. To become a member of the Club, a person must have invented some kind of
 - a. animal trap.
 - b. special knife.
 - c. hammer or spoon.
 - d. cannon or gun.
4. J.T. Maston, the secretary of the Gun Club, had an idea to build
 - a. a huge cannon.
 - b. a quiet cannon.
 - c. a safe cannon.
 - d. a famous cannon.
5. When the war ended, the members of the Gun Club became
 - a. sick.
 - b. amused.
 - c. bored.
 - d. happy.
6. The members of the Gun Club seemed to like the idea of war because
 - a. they all loved the fighting.
 - b. it kept them away from home.
 - c. it gave them all something to talk about.
 - d. it gave them a reason to continue making weapons.
7. Just as the Club seemed as if it would break up,
 - a. Impey Barbicane came up with a new idea to keep the members busy.
 - b. Impey Barbicane became sick.
 - c. Impey Barbicane left for England.
 - d. Impey Barbicane made a great noise in the world.
8. Impey Barbicane was
 - a. the Club's president.
 - b. the Club's vice president.
 - c. the Club's secretary.
 - d. the Club's enemy.
9. Another name for this story could be
 - a. "Sharing Ideas."
 - b. "Life During the Civil War."
 - c. "Mr. Barbicane Calls a Meeting."
 - d. "Adventure to the Moon!"
10. This story is mainly about
 - a. men who build cannons.
 - b. a club that was formed during the time of the Civil War.
 - c. a man who made a fortune in the lumber business.
 - d. why the members of the Gun Club became bored.

Check your answers with the key on page 67.