

CHAPTER I -Tom Swift and His Electric Locomotive

In "A Tempting Offer," the opening chapter of "Tom Swift and His Electric Locomotive," Tom Swift and his father, Mr. Barton Swift, discuss the potential of a high-speed electric locomotive with Mr. Richard Bartholomew, a visitor from the West representing the Hendrickton and Pas Alos Railroad Company. Faced with intense competition and a need for innovation to sustain its financial viability, Bartholomew presents the Swifts with a challenge to develop an electric locomotive capable of unprecedented speed and power. He highlights the indispensability of such a development for overcoming the rugged Pas Alos Range and outperforming the rival Hendrickton & Western railroad, backed by Montagne Lewis, whom Bartholomew sees as a formidable and vengeful adversary.

Bartholomew's proposition involves a significant element of secrecy and urgency, reflecting his fears of industrial espionage by Lewis's operatives. He offers the Swifts \$25,000 for their experimentation toward creating an advanced electric locomotive, with a promise of a \$100,000 bonus plus orders for all units they can produce within two years if they succeed. This financial arrangement underscores the high stakes and the transformative potential of their proposed work in the railroad industry.

Tom, intrigued by the challenge and the opportunity to engage in a "battle" of wits and innovation, is eager to proceed. Despite the risks and the pressure, the Swifts agree to undertake the project, with plans to finalize a contract with Bartholomew. As the chapter concludes, the Swifts are aware of the need for discretion due to the sensitivity of the project, hinting at the adversities and intrigue they may face in their pursuit of revolutionary technological advancements in rail transportation.