AA Milne | Winnie the Pooh Author's 'lost' poem

“POEM”

You have head of the wonderful Tanks,

There are legends about them in plenty:

They will flatten a wood

If the cover's too good,

Or recline on Hill 60 until it's Hill 20.

There's a story that one for a wager -

A matter of twenty-five francs -

Flew off on its own,

And just pushed down Cologne,

A proceeding which rather annoyed the Town Major.

Oh, they're devils when once they get going,

They are up to the oddest of pranks;

There's a patter - Mark III -

Which can swim in the sea,

And submerge until only its periscope's showing.

Oh they're wonderful, wonderful things are the Tanks!

You have heard of them?

THANKS!

You have read of the actual Tanks.

"At dawn we attacked on the So-and-So line,

Observation was good and the weather was fine.

On the right of the sector the Umptieth Blanks

Secured their objectives - assisted by Tanks"

With the co-operation of Tanks.

And perhaps you have pictured a Tank,

As it poised and pitches

Itself at the ditches,

And noses its way up the bank.

You can hear its machinery clank,

And its guns rat-tat-tat,

As it opens on Fritz,

And he runs like a rat;

But there's no use in that.

He's cornered "tat-tat" -

And shot as he sits...

So, perhaps you have pictured the Tanks,

The latest invention, the Tanks,

Is there wire in the way?

Then send for the Tanks!

Are machine-guns at play?

Then forward the Tanks!

The Tanks that go anywhere - Forward the Tanks!

The grim mechanical Tanks.

And you're proud as you read of the wonderful Tanks.

You are proud of them?

THANKS!

But they're not quite mechanical Tanks;

There are men at the wheel and the gun.

And the grim reputation of Tanks,

And the wonderful things that they've done,

And the battles they've won,

Are the work of the MEN in the Tanks.

And it isn't all fun

For the men who sit tight in the Tanks.

No, it isn't all fun in the Tanks:

You may read with a cheer

How they crashed down the wire,

But perhaps you don't hear

That a couple caught fire -

Well, it's one of the risks of the Tanks.

For the humans who sit in the Tanks:

The brain and the soul of the Tanks,

The Tanks that go anywhere. Anywhere, true,

If the men in the Tanks will go anywhere too -

As they do.

So remember, whenever you talk of the Tanks,

The newest invention, the wonderful Tanks -

The older invention - the men in the ranks;

The wonderful men of all ranks.

For they're just the same men, only more so, in Tanks.

You'll remember them?

THANKS!