

The chief swayed back against the window-ledge. "One of the bridge spans—has just gone," he responded thickly, "and Forty-Six—passed Norfolk!"

The superintendent stared blankly a moment, started forward, then staggered back into a chair. But in another instant he was on his feet, pallid, but cool. "Well, what are you doing to stop her?" he demanded sharply.

The chief pulled himself together. "It only happened this moment, sir. The man at the yard tower just reported. One of the western spans was struck by something. Only the upper structure is hanging," he says.

"Can't you send someone over on foot, with a flag, or torpedoes?"

"There no torpedoes at the bridge house, and there's not time to send them down. As to flagging—look at the mist over the whole valley bottom," said the despatcher pointing. "Except directly opposite, where the wind between the hills breaks it up at times, the engineer couldn't see three feet ahead of him."

The superintendent gripped his hands convulsively. Suddenly he turned to Alex. "Ward, can't you suggest something?" he appealed. "You have always shown resource in emergencies."

"I have been trying to think of something, sir. But, as the chief says, even if we could get a man across the bridge, what could he do? I was down by the river yesterday morning, and the haze was like a blind wall."

"Couldn't a fire be built on the tracks?"

"Not quickly enough, sir. Everything is soaking wet."

The superintendent strode up and down helplessly. "And of course it had to

happen after the Riverside Park station had closed for the season," he said bitterly. "If he had had an operator there we—"

The interruption was a cry from Alex. "I've something! Oil!"

He dashed for the tower wire.

"What? What's that?" cried the superintendent running after.

"Oil on a pile of ties, or anything, sir—providing Orr can get over the bridge," Alex explained hurriedly as he whirled off the letters of Jack's call. The official dropped into the chair beside him.

"I, I, TR," answered Jack.

"OR, have you any oil in the tower?" shot Alex.

"No, but there's some in the lamp-shed just below."

"Look here, could you possibly get across the bridge?"

"I might manage it. There is a rail bicycle in the lamp-house. If the rails are hanging together perhaps I could shoot over with that. Why?"

"Forty-Six is due in twenty minutes, and apparently we have no way of stopping her except through you."

"Why, certainly, I'll risk it," buzzed the sounder. "I suppose the oil is to make a quick blaze, to flag her?" Jack added, catching Alex's idea.

"That's it. Make it just this side of the Riverside Park station."

"OK! Here goes!"

"Good luck," sent Alex, with a sudden catch in his throat, as he realized the danger his chum was so cheerfully running. "God help him!" added the superintendent fervently.

Jack, in the distant tower, took little time to think of the danger himself. Catching up a lantern and lighting it, he

was quickly out and down the tower steps, and running for the nearby shed. Fortunately it was unlocked. Darting in, he found a large can of oil. Carrying it out to the main-line track, he returned, and hurriedly dragged forth the yard lamp-man's rail bicycle—a three-wheeled affair, with the seat and gear of an ordinary bicycle.

Swinging the little car on to the rails, he placed the oil can on the platform between the arms, swung the lantern over the handle-bars, mounted, and was off pedalling with all his might.

As he speedily neared the down-grade of the bridge approach, and the roar of the flood met him in full force, Jack for the first time began to realize the danger of his mission. But with grimly set lips, he refused to think of it, and pedalled ahead determinedly.

He topped the grade, and below him was a solid roof of mist, only the bridge towers showing.

Apprehensively, but without hesitation, he sped downward. The first dampness of the vapor struck him. The next moment he was lost in a blinding wall of white. He could not see the rails.

On he pedalled with bowed head. Suddenly came a roar beneath him. He was over the water.

Jack's occasional views from the tower had shown him where the bridge was shattered; and for some distance he continued ahead at a good speed. Then judging he was nearing the wrecked portion, he slowed down and went on very slowly, peering before him with straining eyes, and listening sharply for a note in the tumult of water below which might tell of the broken timbers and twisted iron.

It came a roar of swirling, choking and



With the sharp words he again grasped the key.