

SINCE shortly following Jack Orr's appointment to Midway Junction Alex had been "agitating", as he called it, for his friend's transfer to the telegraph force at the division terminal. At length, early in the fall, Alex's efforts bore fruit, and Jack was offered, and accepted, the "night trick" at one of the big yard towers at Exeter.

Of course the two chums were now always together. And the day of the big flood that October was no exception to the rule. All afternoon the two boys had wandered up and down the swollen river, watching the brown whirling waters, almost bank high, and the trees, fences, even occasional farm buildings, which swept by from above. When six o'clock came they reluctantly left it for supper, and the night's duties.

"Well, what do you think of the river, Ward?" inquired the chief night despatcher as Alex entered the despatching room.

"It looks rather bad, sir, doesn't it. Do you think the bridge is quite safe?"

"Quite. It has been through several worse floods than this. It's as strong as the hills," the despatcher affirmed.

Despite the chief's confidence, however, when about 5 o'clock in the morning there came reports of a second cloud-burst up the river, he requested Alex to

# A Dramatic Flagging

The Young Telegraphers Series

By LOVELL COOMBS

Illustration by F. B. Master

call up Jack, at the yard tower which overlooked the bridge, and ask him to keep them posted.

"Tell him the crest of this new flood will likely reach us in half an hour," he added; "and that by that time, as it is turning colder, there'll probably be a heavy fog on the river."

Twenty-five minutes later Jack suddenly called, and announced, "The new flood's coming! There is a heavy mist, and I can't see, but I can hear it. Can you see it from up there?"

Alex and the chief despatcher moved to one of the western windows, raised it, and in the first gray light of dawn gazed out across the valley below. Instead of the dark waters of the river, and the yel-

low embankment of the railroad following it, winding away north was a broad blanket of fog, stretching from shore to shore. But distinctly to their ears came a rumble as of thunder.

"It must be a veritable Niagara," remarked the chief with some uneasiness. "I never heard a bore come down like that before."

"Here she comes," clicked Jack from the tower. They stepped back to his instruments.

"Say!—"

There was a pause, while the chief and Alex exchanged glances of apprehension, then came quickly, "Something has struck one of the western spans of the bridge and carried it clean away—"

"No—No, it's there yet! But it's all smashed to pieces! Only the upper structure seems to be holding!"

Sharply the despatcher turned to an operator at one of the other wires. "McLaren, Forty-six hasn't passed Norfolk?"

"Yes, sir. Five minutes ago."

A cry broke from the chief, and he ran back to the window. Alex followed, and found him as pale as death.

"What's the matter, Mr. Allen?" he exclaimed.

"Matter! Why, Norfolk is the last stop between that train and the bridge! She'll be down here in twenty minutes! And even if we can get someone across the bridge immediately, how can they flag her in that wall of mist?" Hopelessly he pointed where on the farther shore the tracks were completely hidden in the blanket of white vapor. "And there's no time to send down torpedoes."

At the thought of the train rushing upon the broken span, and plunging from sight in the whirling flood below, Alex felt the blood draw back from his own face.

"But we will try something! We must try something!" he cried.

At that moment the office door opened and Division Superintendent Cameron appeared. "Good morning, boys," he said genially. "I'm quite an early bird this morning, eh? Came down to meet the wife and children. They're getting in from vacation by Forty-Six."

"Why, Allen, what is the matter?"



Worked his way forward from tie to tie.