

# FAGAN, SAGE OF THE SIGNAL TOWER

### Hard-Headed Scotchman Who Became Famous in the Railroad World.

## AUTHORITY ON ACCIDENTS

Many Years of Keen Observation Gave Him Practical Knowledge on Subject and Then He Wrote Books About It.

By OSBORN MARSHALL.

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It was a warm evening in June; still there was a breeze blowing in the signal tower at the railroad station at West Cambridge, Mass., and Fagan, the lean-faced, eagle-eyed signalman stationed there, was about the only man in West Cambridge who wasn't kicking about the heat. Maybe this was because Fagan was so thin he didn't mind a high temperature or perhaps it was because he was so interested in his little \$2.50-a-day job that he didn't have time to think of his own comfort.

As Fagan looked up the rails his trained eye caught sight of the eastbound freight train running toward the signal tower. At the same time Fagan was aware that from the opposite direction there was coming an express passenger train. The freight train was running along at 30 miles an hour and the passenger train was coming at full speed. Both trains were on time and both had a clear right of way. Still Fagan kept his keen eyes open. Then half a mile west of the tower Fagan spied another eastbound freight train running parallel with the first freight, and Fagan's pulse beat faster as he noticed that this train was enveloped in a mist of smoke.

"Hot box," thought Fagan, his eyes intent on the train. "Wonder if the crew knows?"

There was no longer need of asking this question, for as Fagan watched he could see that a brakeman was on top of the car watching the trouble. The brakeman knew and the conductor knew, and of course the engineer knew.

But why didn't the engineer stop? Why didn't he throw on the throttle that would bring his train to a standstill? Fagan was an experienced signalman and knew the answer to the question. The freight train was nearing its terminal. On the parallel eastbound track was the other freight train and, with the love for a race that is deep rooted in every man of his trade, that locomotive engineer was intent on "jumping" the other freight train.

### Horror Narrowly Averted.

It was a terrific risk to run with a hot box, but apparently all hands were eager to take the risk, eager to run the frightful race against appalling odds for the sake of the sport that was in it, so the engineer had thrown his engine wide open, held his breath and let her go.

Fagan also held his breath and his usually steady gray eyes were fired with rage, for from his tower he could see the westbound train bearing steadily down upon the eastbound freight trains, and he knew that the passenger train was crowded with men and women and children who weren't so eager to run a race with a hot box as that crew of the freight train was. Fagan saw it all, but his hands were tied. There was nothing under heaven for him to do but wait. In a few seconds he would know the outcome.

As he watched eagerly, angrily even, he could see the chips flying from the ties, showing that the melted journal of the hot axle box had snapped in two. Fagan shuddered as he knew that it was only a question of seconds before the burning freight car would be derailed and the smash would come. Still the passenger train was bearing toward the racing freight trains.

Then came the smashup. There was a terrific crash, followed by a blinding smoke, and both eastbound and westbound tracks were blocked with twisted rails, broken ties and derailed cars. Fagan clenched his hands and looked through the smoke.

"Thank God!" he murmured. The passenger train crowded with passenger coaches and sleepers was just its own length from the gruesome wreck. It had covered the distance and passed the freight trains before the general smashup came, only through a miracle of narrow escape.

This time the passenger train did escape, but in other cases—cases which Fagan had watched from his tower—the passenger train hadn't escaped and men and women and children had been sacrificed. Some of the railroad men considered such accidents simply inevitable. Others admitted that they were due to stupidity, others to negligence, others to the imperfection of rails, locomotives and car structure. These were the highly paid railroad men who were supposed to know all about such things.

### Fagan Knew the Cause.

But Fagan, who drew his two dollars and a half a day and who watched the trains from his watch tower and studied the human nature of railroad engineers and conductors—Fagan knew that these accidents were avoidable, that they were due to lack of

discipline of the railroad employees, a lack of co-operation between the men who worked with their hands and the men who didn't. So Fagan went on studying in his little tower and he determined at least, to the solution of the problem of railroad accidents.

One day a conductor of a freight train sauntered into the signal tower and in an offhand way asked Fagan for a train order. While Fagan worked the telegraph keys with his bony, weatherbeaten hands and waited for the return clicks that would be an order from the train dispatcher, the conductor signed the blank.

Fagan picked up the blank and looked at it.

"Where is your engineman's signature?" he asked, handing back the slip. "You know there is a rule that these orders must be signed by the conductor and the engineman of the train."

The conductor explained that the ruling that called for the two signatures was a dead letter.

"Dead letter or not," said Fagan, nerved by the knowledge that he was doing his little share in preventing useless accidents, "I will not give the order till I have your engineman's signature. Not so long ago that trick killed three trainmen, wrecked two engines and cost the company something like fifty thousand dollars." He recalled the particular accident to which he alluded. "You must go back for your engineman's signature."

"You mean to say that I will have to walk half a mile and lose half an hour in order to get that signature?" snapped the conductor. "You are the first signalman who ever picked me up in this way."

"But I do demand it," said Fagan firmly, "and I'll fight to get it." In

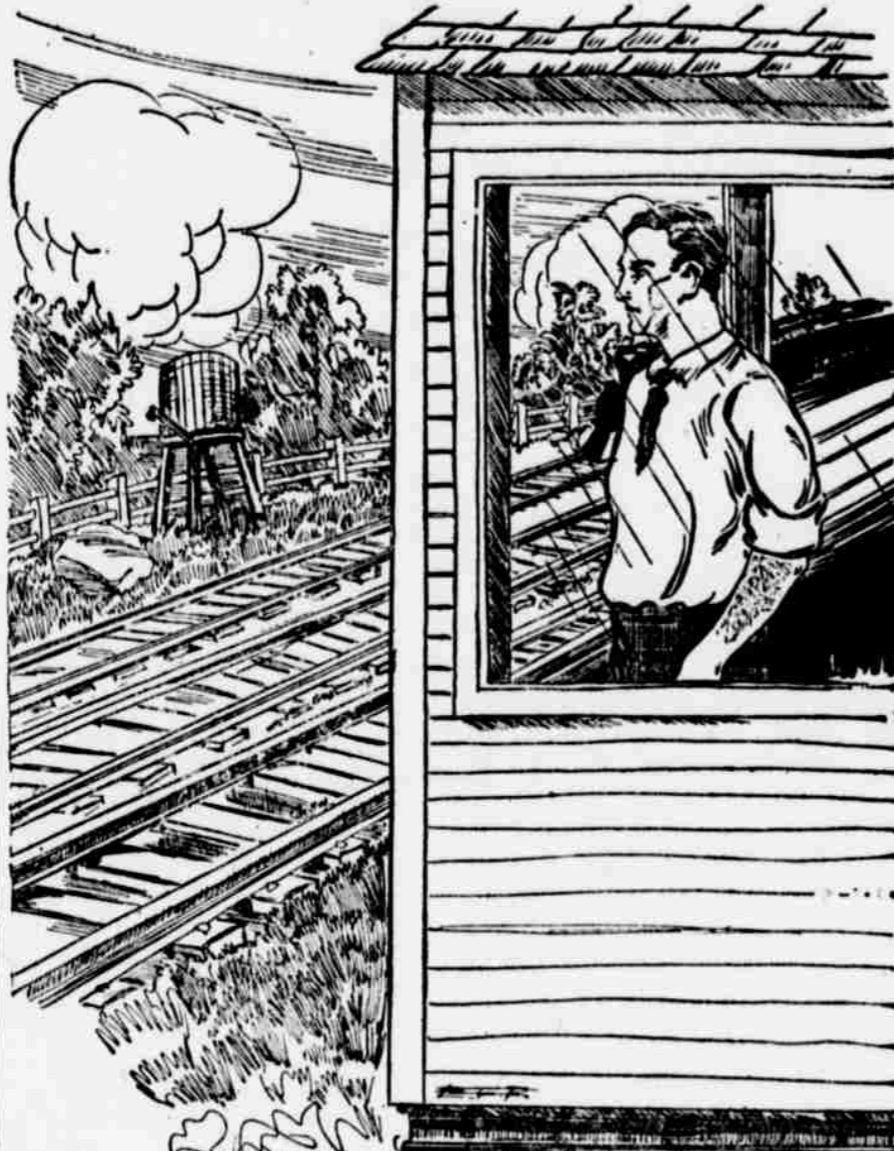
wrote his article. It was better than the magazine had expected, and another followed and finally Fagan wrote a book on the railroad situation.

### Became Suddenly Famous.

Then when the book came out and everyone who knew anything about railroading had read it, the railroad authorities under whom Fagan had toiled for twenty-odd years suddenly discovered him. The president of his own railroad concern sent for him. Then another railroad president looked him up and received Fagan as an authority and an adviser. Fagan had suddenly become the most famous signalman in America, and Theodore Roosevelt, then president of the United States, sent for him to confer with him also, and listened to him as eagerly as had the railroad presidents as he told, simply and picturesquely, his ideas for improved railroad operation.

Other men had studied the same problems before, but they had been financiers or college professors who contemplated railroad economies from a quiet study. Or at best they had been practical railroad men who had had but a short apprenticeship on the rails. But Fagan—Fagan the eagle-eyed and the gaunt-faced—had spent 22 years in his watch tower and had watched the tracks and switches for almost a generation. He knew the language of the telegraph keys and the spirit of the rails and the hearts of the locomotive engineers, and he was able to speak with authority.

But what then? Of course Mr. Fagan was at once promoted? He must have been traffic manager, general manager, superintendent or an officer of the company, with a salary ten or a hundred times what he was earning before. But that is the romantic



Fagan Saw It All But His Hands Were Tied.

this way and others Fagan established his reputation as an unusual sort of signalman and with the railroad employees he gained little popularity by his new reputation. Soon they began to ask about him. "Who is this man Fagan?" they would say. And before long they learned a few facts of his hardworking life.

### Fagan's Varied Career.

Fagan—James O. Fagan—was born and humbly bred in Scotland, where he went to school, and, through a natural craving, studied all he could learn about electricity. His first job was as an apprentice on board a cable-laying hulk that sailed first to Portugal and then to the Canary Islands and South America. Then he turned up in South Africa, where he did some fighting, and in 1881 he drifted to New England, where he got a job as a telegrapher for the Boston & Lowell railroad. Five years later he became signalman at the station at West Cambridge, and there he had been ever since, earning two dollars and a half a day, in return for which he managed the switches, took and received telegraphic orders and communications and watched the rails.

About six years ago, several years after he had made up his mind to study the question of preventable accidents and after he had done a great deal of thinking, he climbed down from his tower for a day off. He went to Boston and made straight tracks for the editorial office of one of the biggest, most conservative of monthly magazines.

Fagan hadn't dressed up for the occasion, and he looked gaunt and a trifle unkempt when he asked to see the editor. But he managed to get an interview. A half hour later he left the office of the magazine with the order for an article dealing with the problem of accidents on the railroads of America and suggestions for their prevention.

Fagan went back to his tower and continued to watch trains and operate telegraph keys and throw the switches as conscientiously as ever, but at night when his duties were over he

thing about the story of this man's life. Fagan is still the signalman, and he still spends his days in the watch tower at West Cambridge, and he still earns, aside from what he gets from his books and articles, at most \$2.50 a day.

## AMOUNTED TO SAME THING

Reading This Anecdote, One Feels That Mr. Choate Could on Occasions Be Mildly Sarcastic.

You know how, sometimes, a word, a very common word, and one that you have used innumerable times in one way or another, will, of a sudden, entirely escape your mind. Thus it was with Mr. Choate on one occasion during his ambassadorship to the Court of St. James'. He told about it at a dinner he attended in London.

He said that he went into a book shop in the Strand a few days before to purchase a copy of Dante's "Inferno." It was his intention to present the book to a young friend who particularly wanted to read it. Much to Mr. Choate's chagrin, the instant he stepped in the store the word "Inferno" entirely escaped his mind.

He told the salesman that he would be back in a minute, and he walked away down to Whitehall trying to think of the last half of the book he wanted. Of course it was Dante's "something," but Dante's "what?"—that was the question.

Finally he gave up trying to recall the full title and went back to the shop. The clerk asked him what he sought. He made a bold stab. "I want a copy of Dante's 'Hell,'" he replied.

The clerk darted back to the rear of the store. By and by he returned with empty hands. "I am very sorry," he said, "but we haven't got 'Hell' by Mr. Dante, but we've got 'Twenty Years in South Africa,' by Cecil Rhodes, if that would do."

"And feeling," concludes Mr. Choate, "that that was practically the same thing, I took the book."

## YOUR APPETITE

Your digestion, your general health will all be greatly benefited by the timely use of Hostetter's Stomach Bitters. It is compounded from absolutely pure ingredients and those best known as real aids to the Stomach, Liver and Bowels. It exerts a general tonic effect and helps Nature promote health and strength in the entire digestive system. Try a bottle today but be sure you get

## HOSTETTER'S Stomach Bitters

### TAKE COMFORT IN TOBACCO

Soldiers at the Front Find Solace in Their Supply of the "Soothing Weed."

Good stories about smoking and smokers continue to fill the space in the British papers not occupied by news of "major" engagements.

The following tribute has been paid to Gen. Sir Philip Chetwode by Sergt. A. Bowler of the Fifth Signal corps, R. E., who is at the front: "I have watched him calmly smoking a cigarette when shells have been dropping all over the place. I think that if all the German army were firing at him he would carry on as usual, smoking his cigarette and giving his orders as if he were at his club ordering a drink."

In mid-February German soldiers on the western frontier received daily two cigars and two cigarettes, or an equal amount of chewing tobacco, snuff or pipe tobacco.

### Couldn't See Any Face.

An old friend, whose name I won't mention, told me this one: "I was born and brought up on a farm, and I had the habit of going around with my mouth wide open, especially if there was anything unusual going on. One day an uncle whom I had not seen for years paid us a visit.

"Hullo, uncle!" said I, looking up at him with my mouth opened like a barn door.

"He looked at me for a moment without answering, and then said:

"Close your mouth, sonny, so I can see who you are."

### A Roland for an Oliver.

Manager—I say, can we get anything like a real doctor in this jay town to attend a sick actor? Village Inhabitant—Sure. Just go to that corner grocery. You'll find a man there who's all right at curing 'ams.

What a picnic the insurance company must have had collecting the premiums from the late Mr. Methuselah!

## JOKE WAS ON INVESTIGATOR

He Had An Idea It Was on Restaurant Proprietor, but It Turned Out Otherwise.

The late Norman B. Ream, the organizer of the steel trust and many other important corporations, once said to a New York reporter about a trust investigation: "Maybe these investigations will have the same luck as the game warden."

"A game warden heard that a restaurant was serving a game out of season. He disguised himself with a false beard, visited the place and ordered a pheasant.

"The pheasant, delicately high like Roquefort cheese, as well as all good pheasant should be, was served to the game warden, and he devoured it to the last morsel, at the same time inflicting severe punishment on a bottle of rare old Burgundy—for the state, of course, paid for all.

"At the end of his repast the game warden summoned the proprietor and said:

"I arrest you, sir, in the name of the law!"

"The proprietor's mouth opened in astonishment. He swallowed two or three times, then he gasped:

"Wh—what for?"

"For serving me a pheasant out of season," said the game warden.

"A look of relief appeared on the proprietor's face.

"Oh," he said, "that wasn't pheasant. It was crow."

### Taking Precautions.

"Mr. Mulligan," said Dennis, "you must have been afflicted by the death of your mother-in-law, for whom you had small affection while she lived."

"I did."

"What did she leave you?"

"She left me alone—isn't that enough?"

"But I understand you've been spending a hundred dollars, if you've spent a cent to get her out of purgatory."

"Whisht now, and isn't it worth it to get her out before I get in?"—Exchange.

### How "Sam" Registered.

Not far from Lexington lives a young farmer, "Sam" Woolridge, who found occasion to stop at the Phoenix, in Lexington. Just before Mr. Woolridge registered, James B. Haggin of New York, owner of the beautiful Elmendorf stock farm, walked to the desk and wrote, "James B. Hagin and Valet, New York."

Mr. Woolridge was the next to register, and this is what he wrote: "Sam Woolridge and Valise, Versailles."

### Initial Cost.

Patience—What was the initial cost of your hat, dear? Patrice—A. V.

There's no one to be pitied more than the man who has loved and lost—unless it is the man who has loved and won.

A young man may be slow before marriage, but in tying the knot he is made fast.

It takes an unusually polite salesman to overcharge a woman for anything and get away with it.

## Torturing Twinges

Much so-called rheumatism is caused by weakened kidneys. When the kidneys fail to clear the blood of uric acid, the acid forms into crystals, like bits of broken glass in the muscles, joints and on the nerve casings. Doan's Kidney Pills have eased thousands of rheumatic cases, lumbago, sciatica, gravel, neuralgia and urinary disorders.

### A Nebraska Case

J. U. Metcalf, 815 Pacific St., Omaha, Neb., says: "My kidneys were in bad shape and the secretions were retarded and painful in passage. I was laid up six months, under the doctor's care and my health was a wreck. The rheumatic pains in my back were awful. Doan's Kidney Pills made my kidneys normal, cleared my system of the uric acid and gave me a permanent cure."



Get Doan's at Any Store, 50c a Box. DOAN'S KIDNEY PILLS. FOSTER-MILBURN CO., BUFFALO, N. Y.

### Then Was the Time.

Dr. Winton Ingram, the bishop of London, is possessed of a somewhat cynical wit. He was once engaged in conversation with a very bumptious man, who was boring him terribly.

"What a fine life a bishop's must be!" exclaimed the bore, enthusiastically. "I would give anything to change places with your lordship for just one hour to experience what it must be like."

"Ah," replied Doctor Ingram, fervently, "I wish you could this very moment."

### Knew Where He Was Headed.

The story is told of a very crusty, gouty old gentleman who lost his patience with his doctor, because he did not make enough fuss over the pain he suffered.

"Doctor," he cried out, twisting and turning because of the agony, "you don't understand! You don't seem to grasp the case! You talk as though there were nothing the matter with me, whereas, I assure you, I am enduring the torments of the lost!"

### The Beady Vine.

Singing was just over in the kindergarten, and immediately a small hand flew up.

"What is it, Alice?" asked the teacher.

"I want to know what is a beady vine," asked the little girl timidly. "I always wonder what kind of a vine it is when we sing that song, 'Little lives may beady vine' (be divine)."

### The Cause.

"She dropped him instantly." "Oh, I see, and that broke their engagement."

The human alarm clock always makes the racket at the wrong moment.

A lot of sympathy is wasted on under dogs and henpecked husbands.

A fatal flirtation is one that ends at the marriage altar.

# "Buy the Goods— Not the Package"

Advises Hon. Geo. W. Perkins, Chairman of New York's Food Committee.

And it's good advice! Select the food that contains the greatest nutrition for the least money, whether in ornately colored package or in a plain carton.

The Grape-Nuts package isn't pretty—no money is wasted upon ornament—but it's air-tight and germ-proof, to protect the food and keep it in perfect condition.

# Grape-Nuts

FOOD

made of selected wheat and malted barley, is delicious, concentrated, easily digested, and contains, pound for pound, more nutrition than beef—and costs less.

Grape-Nuts food has a delicious, nut-like flavour that is relished by old and young. It contains no sugar added, but its delicate sweetness is due to natural conversion of the starch of the grain into grape sugar by long, skilful baking.

It comes all ready to eat with cream or good milk and it's mighty good!

## "There's a Reason" for Grape-Nuts

—sold by Grocers everywhere.