

HEROES OF THE ENGINE CAB

NO newspaper ever reported the deed of Dan Fairbairn, which made his name famous among the railroad men of the Canadian Pacific system and still keeps well kept the grave in which he lies in the little cemetery at Chapleau, Ontario. Like many another hero of the rail, Big Dan escaped all the perils of his calling only to die while comparatively young from the sickness following an ordinary cold. On the Chapleau division, which includes most of the stretch between Sudbury mines and Fort William on Lake Superior, there is perennial danger from forest fires. The track runs through an uncultivated country of thick bush, and nearly all the bridges are of wood, some of them long up-standing trestles spanning broad rivers or arms of lakes. Frequently in late spring and early summer the whole force of the bridge and building inspector is detailed for days at a time to do nothing but watch these structures while the fires are raging.

With the first of the warm weather in 1887 the fires on this section of the road became even more menacing than usual, and the evening when Fairbairn backed his engine to No. 1 (the transcontinental mail) at Cartier, a pall of smoke hid the sky. Fifty-four miles from Cartier is Biscotasing, and about a mile farther on is the long Bisco trestle. From the time of leaving the point at which engines had been changed, the fire conditions had been getting steadily worse, and the pillar of cloud on the track ahead of the engine blacker and denser. The muffled roar of the consuming flames could be heard occasionally, and from time to time the glare of the conflagration could be seen for a minute or two by the passengers. Evidently the train was approaching nearer to a danger zone instead of leaving the fires behind.

The express had cleared Biscotasing and was heading for Ramsay, when the fireman, Howard Gougeon, thought he discerned a flicker of flame apparently in the middle of the track about half a mile ahead.

"Great Scott, Dan! I believe the long trestle is on fire," he said.

Fairbairn scanned the track from his side of the cab, but could see nothing of the light. "Nonsense!" he replied. "Between the bridge carpenters and the section men, we should have heard of it long ago if that was so. That is the one point they'll both be watching just now."

At the same time he took in a notch and continued to keep a sharp lookout. They were within two train lengths of the trestle at the end of a long down grade, when Gougeon shouted once more.

"There it is! Look now!" he cried. No need to tell the engineer; he had seen, understood, and already made up his mind. He had only a second in which to act, and that small spurt of fire told him that he was within a few yards of a long wooden bridge that had burned long since and was now a smoldering ruin. To attempt to stop within the short distance was out of the question; it would only mean a heavy dead weight creeping on the charred woodwork and death for all.

There was just time to jump; but Dan was not considering that. Still the young fireman must have his chance; so the engineer threw a curt "Drop off!" to him over his shoulder. As he shouted the words, he yanked the throttle wide open and put on every limit of speed of which his engine was capable. With a roar and a rumble the train took the bridge. Instantly the rush of the wind created by its great speed acted as a gigantic fan on the smoldering wood; the flames leaped high and enveloped the whole train in a mantle of fire. Underneath, the rails sunk as in a quagmire; but with hair and eyebrows scorched and the big blond beard actually on fire, Fairbairn held tight to the wide open throttle, and after an eternity of a few seconds the train was on the other side. High above the whirl of the wheels on the ballasted roadbed sounded crash after crash. The long Biscotasing trestle had collapsed from end to end!

When the frightened passengers climbed out of cars, from which every vestige of paint had been licked, and stumbled over the ties to the river bank, they saw only a long black void. Not even a remnant of the superstructure remained to show that there had ever been a bridge at that point. For a minute they regarded the scene in awestricken silence, then with one accord they made for the engine. Clambering from the cab was a blond giant of six feet five inches, who wiped with a piece of oil soaked cotton waste a face blistered and seared by fire.

Dan summoned a very one-sided grin. "Pretty close," he said.

Close! Didn't they realize how close it had been? Could they not picture what might have been, had



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Drawings by Hibbard V. B. Kline

this man sought only his own safety or hesitated with his duty for one moment?

They lifted him, giant as he was, on their shoulders, and carried him to the dining car. One of their number was a doctor, who set about bandaging the face of the hero, much to Dan's disgust.

"That's all right," said the engineer; "but first let's find out whether they've sent a brakeman back. It's no use our escaping if the next fellow following is dumped into the drink."

Assured that the conductor had done his best by placing three red lanterns on the bank and leaving a trainman in charge, Dan became only more impatient of attention. "Get 'em all aboard, gentlemen," he said almost harshly. "If the

brakeman can't swim, it's up to us to hustle to Ramsay as quick as we know how and let the despatcher know what has happened. No time for tomfoolery just now, though I'm much obliged just the same."

The seventeen miles to Ramsay were made in eighteen minutes, and the warning message telling that the Bisco bridge had gone was sent in. At Chapleau they wondered what had happened, since such a message came from the conductor and engineer of No. 1 at the station next beyond this very bridge.

In due course the conductor and engineer made reports. Dan's (which has been read by the writer of these lines, who knew him well) was a dry, terse statement of facts. That of the conductor had more of imagination and color. Both were forwarded to the head office in Montreal, and a little later Daniel Fairbairn was ordered to report at the office of the general manager. There he was presented with one of the best gold watches money could buy, which bore inside the case a suitable inscription testifying to the gratitude of the company for his heroic action. On his return to Chapleau another surprise awaited him. The division superintendent had received by express from Vancouver an embossed address suitably framed, from the passengers who had reached the end of their journey, with a request that it be presented to Fairbairn, together with the purse of gold that accompanied it.

A Strange Act of Providence

HOW remarkable are some of the experiences of those who drive locomotives for any length of time may be gathered from a story of early days in the West told by an engineer not long ago in the official organ of the Order of Railway Conductors.

About twenty-five years ago, while working on what was known as the P., M. & O. railway, which ran through the eastern part of Missouri, he left Tacoma about ten o'clock one morning with a train of twelve heavily loaded passenger cars containing the members of a Sunday school bound for a picnic at a place known as Picnic Grove, about fifty miles distant. It was insufferably hot, and before the train had made more than half the distance clouds began to gather, and soon the sky became black as ink. Evidently an exceedingly heavy thunder storm might be expected at any time.

At last it came, a regular cloudburst. The children in the train thought only of a spoiled outing; but the man in the cab was seriously considering the possibility of a wash-out and spread rails.

As they swung round a curve and bore down on a small station at a speed of about thirty-five miles an hour, the engineer,

keenly on the lookout despite the falling sheets of rain, was horrified to discover that the switch for the siding was set foul. Probably a freight train had used it and the brakeman had forgotten to set it properly after backing out his train.

To run over it meant a terrible disaster, and even the fireman, feeling sure that his own death was near, could only whisper hoarsely, "Oh, the kids, the poor kids!"

The engineer reversed and did all in his power to bring the train to a stop; but he knew he could not hope to bring up in time; the speed was too great and the switch too near.

"Better stick to it!" he shouted to his fireman. "I mean to," was the answer. "God help us!"

Scarcely had the words left his mouth when a bolt of lightning more blinding than any before flashed directly in front of the engine, followed by the terrific and peculiar crack of thunder which indicated that the bolt had struck something. Engineer and fireman were half dazed, and by the time they had fully recovered their senses were astounded to discover that they had passed the switch and were still riding safely on the main line.

As soon as possible the train was brought to a stop, and both hurried back to discover what had happened.

The fireman took off his cap. "If that isn't what they speak of as the act of God, I don't know what it is!" he said.

The lightning had struck squarely between the switch and the rail, forcing over the track, and so allowing them to pass in safety. While the conductor hurried back to the station to make a report and call for section men to make permanent repairs to the switch, the pastor in charge of the excursionists was listening to the story of the engineer. At the end he gazed at him curiously for a moment, then said quietly:

"Yes, I think we should all give thanks to our heavenly Father. By the way, your hair was black when you combed it this morning, was it not?"

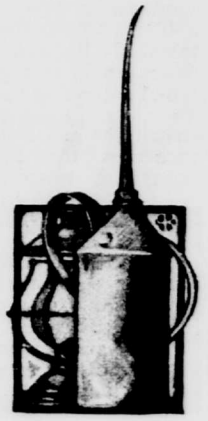
"Certainly," answered the driver.

"I'm afraid you won't find much black left there now," said the clergyman. "It has become almost entirely white."

Kindness of a Cyclone

ON another occasion, "L. E. G.—Old Sailor of the Rails," as he signs himself, was running through Western Kansas during a season when constant high winds and cyclones brought danger with every trip. He was pulling an important fruit train of twenty cars with order to land the consignment at the point of delivery on schedule time.

As they pulled out of the terminal there was every evidence of bad weather, and the fireman stopped shoveling coal long enough to remark that he guessed they were in for another batch of trouble before they reached the end of the division. By the time they had got fairly into the flat country there was no mistaking the signs of a storm of more than usual severity. Not only did it begin to get dark, but the clouds



Suddenly Morgan's Raiders Opened Fire.