Among other causes celebres he was concerned in the case of In re John Anderson. Among Mr. Hagarty's contemporaries were W. H. Blake, W. B. Richards, J. C. P. Esten, Adam Wilson, P. M. S. Vankoughnet, J. W. Gwynne, J. C. Morrison, and Lewis Wallbridge, all of whom were subsequently elevated to the Bench.

Shortly after commencing practice on his own account Mr. Hagarty formed a partnership with the late Hon. John Crawford, afterwards the Lieutenant-Governor of Ontario, and the firm of Crawford & Hagarty speedily established a large and lucrative business. The firm subsequently became Crawford, Hagarty & Ardagh, by the addition of Mr. W. D. Ardagh, who at the time of his death was County Judge at Winnipeg. At the Bar Mr. Hagarty acquired a high reputation as an acute and learned lawyer with great powers of persuasion before a jury. In 1850 he was created a Queen's Counsel, and in 1855 received the honorary degree of D.C.L. from Trinity College, Toronto.

Mr. Hagarty was appointed to a puisne judgeship in the Common Pleas on February 3rd, 1856. Sir W. H. Draper was created Chief Justice of that Court, the late Sir W. B. Richards being its other member. In that position Mr. Hagarty continued until 1863 when he was transferred to the Queen's Bench. In 1868 he went back to the Pleas as its Chief, and ten years later he went back to the Queen's Bench as Chief Justice. There he remained until 1884 when he succeeded the late John Godfrey Spragge as the Chief Justice of the Province and President of the Court of Appeal. This exalted position he held until 5th April, 1897, with entire satisfaction to his colleagues, the profession and the public, thus completing a judicial career of rather more than forty-one years.

After his retirement from the Bench a large and highly representative meeting of the Bench and Bar of the Province was held at Osgoode Hall, in June, 1897, at which an address expressive of the admiration and respect of all the members of the profession was presented to the late Chief Justice. (See 33 C.L.J., 476.) On the 28th September following Her Majesty was pleased to confer on him the dignity of a knight of the United Kingdom.

To say that he was a man of polished and ready wit does not express the brilliancy of many of the bon mots and clean cut but withal good natured sallies with which he often relieved the dull monotony of a prosy argument. With an even temper and genial