

JOHN BAUMER WHO HAS LIVED AND WORKED FOR OMAHA

Son of a Soldier of Napoleon Finds in Ways of Peace that Which Occupies Him During a Long and Busy Life and is Now Honored in Retirement as One of Omaha's Successful Pioneer Citizens

SON of a soldier who marched for ten years under the conquering eagles of the grand army of the great Napoleon is John Baumer, pioneer of Omaha. His father lived a large part of his life in that period when Europe was in the throes of war, when the "little man of destiny" had come from his island birthplace, had fought his way to distinction and into the hearts of the French people, and had then led his magnificent army from victory to victory until the whole of Europe bowed before him and kings and princes were his servants. For twenty years Europe underwent the fierce baptism of blood, fire and carnage.

In 1805 Napoleon's eagles crossed the frontier into Germany. His grand army at that time numbered 200,000 men. It was made up of seven corps, each an independent army in itself in charge of its generals, marshals and chiefs. In addition to this there were 200,000 inferior troops. Napoleon immediately levied on the Germans for additional soldiers and among those who were drafted into the imperial legions was the father of John Baumer, then only a boy of 16. He served in the campaign into Spain. Later he took part in that most marvelous movement of civilized human beings the world has ever seen, the attempted conquest of Russia.

From his father's own lips John Baumer has heard the reminiscences of that campaign, when heaven itself seemed to arise against the "world's oppressor" and seek to bring him low, when a magnificent army of half a million men, with 100,000 wagons and 1,200 guns, with waving banners, gleaming eagles and gaily-playing bands, was transformed in a few short months into a miserable rabble of scarcely 50,000 men hundreds of miles from a friendly country, half mad with hunger, cold, disease and suffering, clad in tatters, in women's jackets, fragments of old carpets or filthy remains of old cloaks, pale and cadaverous, defenseless, weaponless, jostling one another like a herd of cattle, their heads hanging down and eyes on the ground.

"Napoleon," said Mr. Baumer's father, "was a man of many moods. He was cheerful sometimes, when he would walk or ride among us, and again he would fly into the most ungovernable rages. But through it all we loved him; yes, even we Germans who he had drafted into his legions would have laid down our lives in his defense. There was nothing in his personal appearance to make men love him or have awe of him. I have seen him among his marshals. Many of them were in the most glittering uniforms. The emperor wore his famous grey coat, a plain green uniform and a cocked hat. The ribbon of the Legion of Honor he seemed to try to hide under the lapel of his coat.

"We were happy as we marched toward the Russian frontier. We thought the same unquestioned submission awaited us there as on other fields through which we had come in the last seven years. We had a sort of belief in that of which the emperor was always talking, his 'lucky star.'

"The emperor rode in a carriage with the army. A lantern was fixed inside and through night marches he was constantly at work while the carriage moved on."

Recollections of Moscow

Mr. Baumer's father was one of the few who survived that awful winter. He marched with the grand army across the Niemen into Russia and advanced toward Moscow, taking part in the battles of Mohliet, Drissa, Polotsk, Smolensk and Borodino. He was one of those before whose eyes rose the glittering towers of the sacred city, Moscow, richest city in Russia. He walked along its echoing streets whence the inhabitants had fled; he stood on a distant hill and saw the flames eat up those magnificent palaces and those great treasures gathered through the centuries. Then he took part in that awful retreat.

"Winter descended upon us in all its horror," he has told his son. "The nights were sixteen hours long. Most of the soldiers were loaded with plunder taken from Moscow. But food soon began to give out. Then came actual starvation and following that the snow. I saw many reduced to a state of idiocy. Those who retained some semblance of sense kindled fires for the bivouacs; others seated themselves on the frozen bodies of their comrades and gazed blankly at the fire. They looked more like beasts than men, unwashed, unkempt, with faces shrunken by hunger, disfigured by disease, blackened by the camp fires. The emperor himself walked among the troops. Our path was strewn by the treasure taken in Moscow which we could no longer carry."

All this time the Cossacks had been harassing the miserable rabble of men, sweeping in upon them and capturing or killing whole companies. In one of the captured companies was the father of John Baumer. Thereafter he had at least the comfort of warmth and food and was later exchanged and returned to his native city. But his fighting days were not yet at an end. When the allies united to crush the great world conqueror whom they could not crush singly he again entered the army, this time under the Prussian flag. He fought in the battle of Waterloo against the general whose conquering legions he had followed, for seven years and he confessed afterward to a pang of regret when he saw the old guards hacked to pieces by overwhelming numbers.

From War to Peace

Enough of war and carnage, of pestilence and famine. The scene changes to one of peace and prosperity. It is twenty-five years later. The soldier who passed through so much danger and suffering following the standards of Napoleon was, in 1840, a wealthy builder in Munster, kingdom of Prussia. He had four medals received in recognition of conspicuous bravery in action. One of these was the highest order given by France, the Cross of Honor; another was the Iron Cross, given by Germany. Whenever a German or French soldier passed him the soldier had to salute the wearer of those medals.

But the old soldier advised his son, John, who was born June 21, 1840, to follow peaceable pursuits instead of war and adventure. Therefore, when he was a young man he became apprenticed to a watch and clock maker, whom he served four years, making "grandfather clocks" by the old hand method and learning to make such other crude and clumsy instruments as the business at that time included.

Here is observable that irony of destiny which knits the life of one man into the warp of war and carnage filled with startling events, with turmoil of men struggling and with the death agonies of peoples and nations; and the life of another into scenes of peace and prosperity, the quiet and good order of a jewelry store. Mr. Baumer has followed the peaceful tenor of his way in his profession of expert jeweler all his life. He left his native city in 1863, going to London. He worked in the metropolis three years. Then he determined to go to the United States.

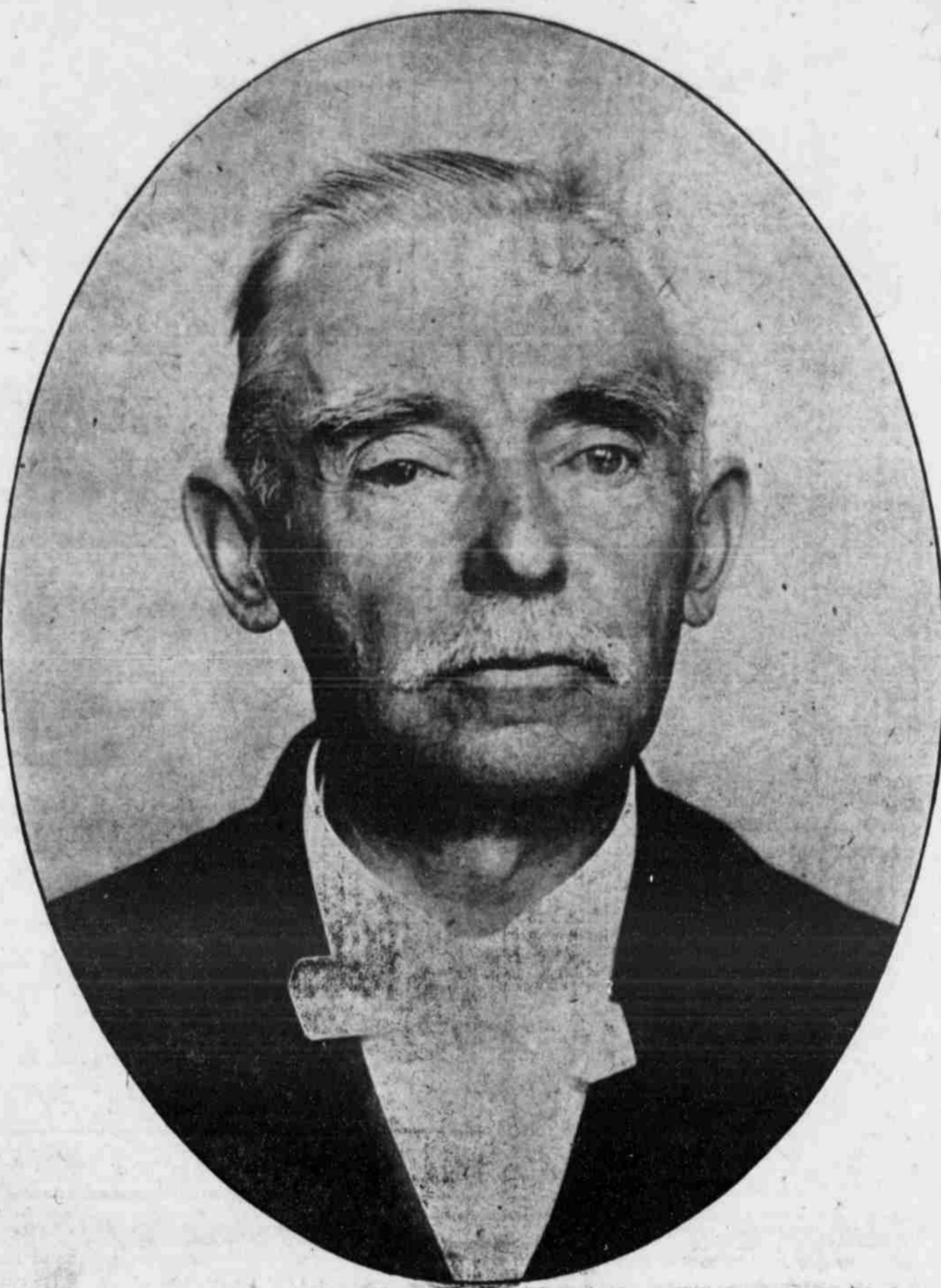
His brother, William, had preceded him several years and had sent back accounts of the beauty and promise of Nebraska. Accordingly Mr. Baumer embarked on the steamer "Manhattan" August 7, 1866. When in midocean the steamer broke its screw propeller and for days drifted helplessly. By means of sails port was finally reached. In New York Mr. Baumer entered the employ of the great firm of Wasser, Lisauer & Germ. After six months there he went to Philadelphia and worked for Clark & Biddle a few months.

On the Way to Omaha

Having acquired a good command of the language, he started then for the promised land of Nebraska. Going to Cincinnati by rail, he took a boat there for St. Louis, came to St. Joseph by rail and thence to Omaha by boat.

"Omaha had only about 8,000 inhabitants when I arrived," he says. "I think the thing I noticed chiefly the first day was the mud, which was very deep and very sticky. The wagons sank in to the hubs of the wheels."

He began hunting for a location at once. But every business location was taken and it was nearly two months before he found a vacant building at 235 Farnam street. This was on the south side



JOHN BAUMER.

of the street, between Tenth and Eleventh streets. Some idea of rents may be obtained from the fact that for this building, with a front of twenty-two feet and depth of fifty feet, he paid \$1,000 a year.

There he hung out his sign and with a very modest stock began business. The trade grew. His location was convenient to the river and in the fall the miners began coming down from the upper river with their sacks of gold dust and yellow nuggets. John Baumer's place was the great purchasing station for this golden treasure. It was worth about \$18 an ounce.

He became a member of the Volunteer fire department in 1869, being secretary of his company, No. 1. He took an active part in fighting the fires of the early days.

"We built a house at Twentieth and Izard," he says. "Whenever there was a fire all the volunteers and as many others as would do so ran to the house and pulled the engine to the scene of the fire. There was no city water system then, but we had cisterns under the street at various points in the town. These were kept full of water and were our source of supply.

"The St. James hotel was one of the hottest fires we ever had to deal with. It was a three-story frame building standing right across from my jewelry store. The flames were so hot that they blistered the paint off the buildings across the street. In the Grand Central hotel fire we lost four men, who were killed by the collapsing of the building when they were within.

"Sometimes we got into laughable positions on account of our

small equipment and the fact that we could not be as well drilled as a paid fire company that devotes all its time to fighting fires. I remember once when we were making a run we got stuck with the little fire engine in the mud. We tugged in vain at the long rope by which we drew it. We could see the smoke from the fire getting thicker and thicker. People came running and calling on us to hurry, but they didn't want to get out in the mud and help us get the engine started again. And the more we pulled the more the engine seemed to stick. Everybody was shouting at once and all was confusion. Then a man came along driving a team of mules. Two or three of us made a rush for him and in a minute we had his mules unhitched and fastened to the engine. They pulled it loose and away we went amid the cheers of the people."

"Honest John at Work"

The little jewelry business on lower Farnam street grew. In 1869 it was moved to the corner of Eleventh and Farnam streets; later to Thirteenth and Farnam streets, and then to 1314 Farnam street. It was located at the latter place for eighteen years. The stock increased from \$2,000 to \$50,000 and the employes from none to ten.

During these years the German boy had gained a reputation for honesty and uprightness and when he went into politics his friends immediately dubbed him "Honest John." He ran for city treasurer in 1874, but in the subsequent contest with Ed Johnson he was counted out. He was elected to the state legislature in 1875. He was county clerk in 1881. In 1883 he took a leading part in reorganizing the Douglas County Agricultural society and was secretary of the organization for the next ten years, during the most flowery season of the society's existence, when as much as \$7,000 a year was spent on the races alone.

Mr. Baumer has always been devoted to singing and has been a member of the choir in St. Mary Magdalene Catholic church for many years. He was also one of the leading spirits in the Omaha Maennerchor and has taken part in a number of German concerts. He is a member of the Plattdeutscher Verein and the Catholic Mutual Benefit association.

In 1869 Mr. Baumer married Miss Josephine Granacher. Her parents were pioneers of Omaha, her father having conducted the Valley house in the very early days. Mr. and Mrs. Baumer began housekeeping at once in the same house in which they now live at 811 North Nineteenth street. They had eight children, five of whom are living. They are as follows: Wilhelmina, now Sister Consuelo of the Loretto order stationed in Santa Fe, N. M.; Sophie, bookkeeper at the Omaha Commercial club; Bertha, assistant in the public library; Mary, a trained nurse, and William, chief clerk at the Union Pacific shops. Mr. and Mrs. Baumer celebrated their silver wedding anniversary in 1894.

Military Glory Remains

Mr. Baumer's brother, William, who died in 1869, exercised some of the qualities which he might have inherited from his soldier father and was one of the distinguished soldiers of the civil war. He enlisted at Omaha in the First Nebraska regiment and was made captain of Company B. He went through the war, taking part in twenty-six battles. The citizens of Cape Girardeau presented him with a sword in recognition of his services in defending the city against Price and Marmaduke. This sword, together with the four medals won by his father, are now in the possession of Barnhart Baumer of Chicago. Before the close of the war William Baumer had been made a major, a colonel and a general by brevet. It was he who, when called for a speech at a banquet given after the war in the Herndon house, pronounced that sententious sentence regarding the campaign of the First Nebraska. "When we fought mit Siegel," said Colonel Baumer, "dot was noddings, but when we fought mit Koeneckens, dot was somedings."

Mr. Baumer has been a member of the Catholic church all his life. He still sings in the choir of St. Mary Magdalene's church and still takes a deep interest in musical concerts. He is also a devoted player of games of skill. He was one of the most expert players of chess in the city and instructed the present champion, Julius Meyer, in the game.

Mr. Baumer has been a strict follower of the tenets of prohibition all his life. During the campaign in which James E. Boyd was elected governor of Nebraska he was vice president of the Personal Rights league. He is a man of decided domestic tastes and takes the greatest pride and delight in his home and family.

His brother, Theodore, was a prominent physician in Omaha. He died in October, 1876. Herman Baumer, now living in Benson, is also his brother.

Some of the intricate Puzzles of Modern Airbrakes

Engineers Do Not Always Know How to Use the Automatic for Controlling Trains Under Emergency Conditions

SO IMPORTANT are the airbrakes on railroad trains nowadays that a fireman seeking promotion is examined more rigidly in regard to his knowledge of the apparatus governing them than as to his understanding of the operation of a locomotive," said the road foreman of engines on one of the big railroads running into this city.

"Moreover, the examination on the 'air' is harder to pass than on the engine itself for the ordinary fireman. It is absolutely necessary that each new engineer shall know all about the working of airbrakes and their effect upon short and long trains under all sorts of conditions, and until he gains this knowledge there is no chance of his getting an engine.

"The introduction of the emergency brake is largely responsible for this state of affairs, for this invention, useful as it is, is productive of great mischief.

"In the early days of the airbrake when the 'straight air' system was used the whole apparatus consisted of a main reservoir on the engine, with a single connection with all the brake cylinders back through the train. When the engineer wanted to apply the brakes he turned the handle of a three-way cock in the cab, which allowed the air pressure from the engine reservoir to rush back through the train, and the air filled one brake cylinder after another, forcing the brake shoes against the wheels. This old system had many weak points. One of these was that in a long train the air pressure in the reservoir was not great enough to fill the cylinders throughout the train with enough pressure, and the result was a slow acting brake of low pressure.

Coming of Automatic Brake

"But the most vital defect was that if a train was running down hill, say, and a hose connection broke on any part of the train the engineer was helpless, and nothing would save a bad wreck except the best of luck or the prompt application of the hand brakes.

"Then automatic brakes were introduced, which did away with both of these failings. In

this system an air tank or reservoir is placed on each car alongside of each brake cylinder. This tank is filled with an air pressure from the engine and is controlled by a triple valve attached to the brake cylinder. This valve has three functions—it releases the air from the auxiliary reservoir on each car to the brake cylinder when applying the brakes, then allows the air to escape when the brake is to be released, and also opens a hole through which the air pressure from the engine can once more charge the auxiliary reservoir.

How It Operates

"Now with this system, when the engineer wants to put down the brakes, instead of turning on the air as a matter of fact he draws it off. The pressure in the reservoir of each car being, say, seventy pounds on one side of the sliding valve and an equal pressure being on the engine side, the valve remains stationary, but when the engineer allows a certain amount of the air to escape, this action, weakening the pressure on the engine side, causes the greater pressure in each car tank to force out each sliding valve, which as it moves exposes an entrance to each brake cylinder, and simultaneously the air rushes into each brake cylinder and causes the application of all the brakes. This device has done away with all danger of a train running away, for the moment a hose breaks the pressure on the engine side escapes and thus causes all the brakes to go down automatically.

"This brake has worked successfully in almost every respect and the engineers have mastered its workings without much trouble. Then came the emergency brake, which supplied the former remaining defect by producing an instantaneous and tremendous check. But with the emergency brake has come a lot of complicated apparatus that has to be thoroughly understood, theoretically and practically, by the engineers.

"To put on the emergency brake the engineer throws over his air lever as far as it will go with one quick movement. This lets out every bit of pressure in the train line that is holding each valve in the car reservoirs. Finding no resistance the air from the car reservoir drives out the slid-

ing valve as far as it will go, the great pressure forcing it further than when an ordinary service application is made, and this discloses at once not only the whole of the entrance port to the brake cylinder but also another opening leading to the pressure from the engine. At the bottom of the second opening is what is known as the emergency valve, which, borne back by the pressure, allows added power to enter the brake cylinders from the train line in conjunction with the other pressure from the car reservoirs and produces a most powerful brake.

"Sometimes the emergency device gets beyond control and causes a lot of trouble. If the sliding valve on a certain car of a train becomes clogged with dirt it won't respond to the engineer's reduction of, say, five pounds pressure, and maybe even a ten pound reduction won't have any effect upon it. As a result the brakes on all the rest of the cars are partly down and not on that particular car. Then when the engineer makes still another reduction the high pressure from this tank forces the valve suddenly back with a jam, causing the brakes to go to emergency not only on that car, but on every car of the train, with the result that a train will come to an abrupt standstill maybe a couple of hundred feet from a station.

Effects of the Emergency

"That kind of a brake we call a 'kicker,' and there are times when the engineer of a passenger train has this thing happen to him a half dozen times during a single run. An emergency applied while a train is moving at fifty or sixty miles an hour has no bad effect, owing to the great momentum, but let the train be running at ten or twelve miles an hour and there will be a shaking up that will break everything in the dining cars and make everybody aboard uncomfortable.

"One odd thing about the application of an airbrake is that if an engineer of a freight train has slowed down his train to six or eight miles an hour on account of a signal against him, and that signal then clears, instead of pulling out his throttle and trying to regain his headway the wisest thing for him to do is to bring his train to a

standstill and then start afresh. The chances are very much in favor of the train being broken in two if the engineer under these circumstances tries to start up from slow speed. The brakes, on account of the length of the train, being released slowly on the rear cars, if the engineer puts on power once more the heavy engine with a jerk takes up all the slack in the cars from which the brakes have been released and soon finds itself in a tug of war with the hind cars, on which the brakes are still down. There was a case the other day where a heavy engine under these conditions actually pulled an empty flat car into two parts.

Control of Freight Trains

"In applying the air on a long freight train the greatest care must be taken, for if the brakes on the forward cars go down too quickly they will come to a sudden stop, all the rest of the cars take up the slack with a rush and, coming against the solid resistance in front, are very apt to buckle a car off the track, and maybe in the way of another train.

"This is one of the accidents that the passenger engineer knows is likely to happen, and he always keeps a most careful lookout on a freight train he happens to be passing.

"It is just as easy for the conductor to put down the brakes as the engineer, and he can either bring a train to a gradual stop or, by throwing back the lever all the way, cause an emergency application. The conductors on some of the roads, who are a little nervous, have been known to make use of this opportunity in more ways than one. One engineer complains that he can never make up time when he has a certain conductor behind him. The latter is a scary sort of a fellow, and when the train gets late the engineer turns loose his engine and tries to make up some of the time, sending the train along faster than the conductor cares to travel. The latter then goes to the emergency lever and makes a service application of the brakes by causing a small reduction of the air in the train line. Of course the train is held down to a certain speed, no matter how wide-open the engineer pulls his throttle."