

The Daily Short Story

A MATRIMONIAL LOTTERY

In Which One Man Owned Most of the Tickets.

By Dwight Norwood.

There are in various countries curious customs with regard to matrimony. In Lapland the groom must chase his bride in a foot race. In Russia, which has a very large area, with many different peoples, one and all having their own peculiar methods, there are a number of varied customs. One of these is that a girl may go into the house of any man whom she wishes to marry and remain there until he marries her. If he refuses he is considered to have insulted her and her family, and they take revenge on him if they can.

Another Russian custom among a certain people is this: They have a lottery. A girl is put up as the prize. Sufficient tickets are sold to give her a dowry. The holder of the winning ticket is compelled to marry the prize he has drawn, but she may decline him. If she does they may divide between them the money paid for the tickets.

If a married man is the winner he may give the prize to any bachelor he may select.

In N., a village in the northern part of Russia near the Siberian border, there were four of these lotteries held each year, thus providing for four girls who may reach a marriageable age and had not the necessary dowry.

The simple people of this village buried in the heart of what might almost be called a wilderness, naturally resorted to simple amusements. They were an athletic people, especially adapted to the management of animals. One of the chief recreations of the people of N. was a sort of circus in which the young men performed in gymnastics and trained animals and feats of horsemanship were exhibited.

At one of these performances a slender young man named Ivan Ivanoff, with a figure fit for a statue, led the rest in riding. He would ride several bare-backed horses at the one time, stepping from one horse to another.

Among those who looked at the feats of this young man was Nina Dimitrieff, a girl barely sixteen years old. To her Ivan, standing erect with a foot on each of two horses, guiding them wherever he wished, was the

most beautiful sight she had ever beheld. When he had finished his performance and stood bowing before the plaudits of his audience Nina Dimitrieff took from her girdle a bunch of hardy flowers that grew wild in the woods of that region and threw them at his feet. He picked them up, meeting at the same time her admiring gaze.

In that glance which passed between these two simple creatures was an instantaneous flash of love. No courtship was needed. The mingling of two spirits was complete. Long associations might strengthen it, as constant use will develop a muscle, but it was from that moment a perfect love.

These two children—they were not much more than children—did not stop to follow out the consequences of this newborn passion, the nature of which in their innocence they did not understand. Among these people parents regulate marriages, and no marriage is permitted except where the bride has a dowry. Nina's parents could give her no dowry, and Ivan could not afford to marry her without one.

Not that they would, if left to themselves, consider this as a barrier. They would consider nothing but their love and mate like a pair of doves. It was the older heads of their parents, foreseeing the wretchedness of poverty for them and their children, that would keep them apart. It was some time before their attachment was discovered, but as soon as it was known to exist Nina was forbidden to have anything to do with her young lover.

For some time there were clandestine meetings, usual in such forbidden affairs. Then the two being caught together by Nina's father, he took measures to marry her off. One of the marriage lotteries was about to come off, and he arranged that his daughter should be offered as the prize.

It was a terrible blow to the lovers. A thousand chances were to be sold at 4 rubles a chance. If they were all disposed of the bride would have a dowry of 4,000 rubles or \$2,000 of our money, a very large sum in that region for a young couple with which to set up housekeeping. If the chances were not all sold the deficiency would be made up by the wealthier citizens of the village. In this case, where Nina was the prize offered, the chances would have doubtless all been sold had it not been that her love for Ivan was generally known. As it was, but

a quarter of the chances had been taken up. So great was the deficiency that it was doubted whether those who usually made up such sums would do so in this case.

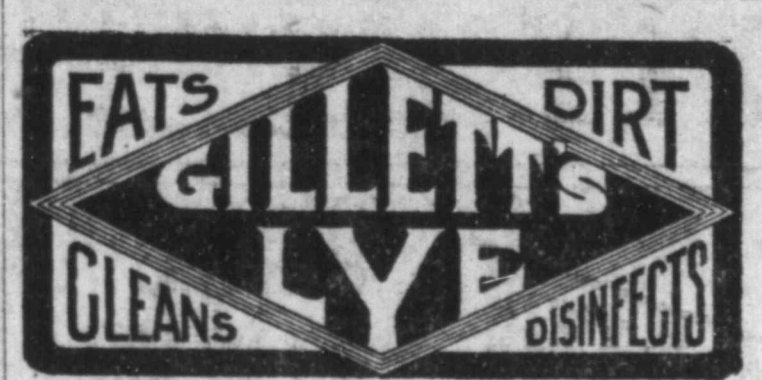
Almost directly north of N. is Kara, in Siberia, where political offenders are sent to work in the mines. N. is the nearest town of any importance on the western side of the border between Russia and Siberia. Not long before the drawing of the marriage lottery was to take place Ivan and Nina by a preconcerted arrangement, met in a wood to the northward of the village. The meeting was not to devise a plan, but to lament together over their approaching separation. They were in the heart of the forest under snow laden branches when, hearing a stirring in a thicket near by, they turned and saw a face that caused Nina to shriek. It was the face of a man, but so wild looking that for a moment they thought it some creature of the forest. Then a figure stepped forth, a man with unkempt hair and beard, ragged, shoeless, with cheeks shrunken and eyes glaring like those of a hunted beast.

"My children," he said, "can you not hide me? If they get me they will take me back to the mines."

Ivan had once before seen an escaped prisoner from Kara who had been pursued and arrested in N. and had never forgotten the despair on his face when, loaded with chains, he was taken away on his dismal march back to prison. Ivan knew well that this man was fugitive, and the hearts of the children went out to him. They asked him what they could do for him, and after consultation it was arranged that they should return to the town, and bring him food. This they did, and as soon as night came on they took him into the town, where Ivan hid him in his father's barn among the hay.

Early in the morning a number of officials entered the town looking for an escaped prisoner. But he whom they sought was safely hidden and ministered to by Ivan and Nina. After searching the village in vain the party left, and the fugitive, as well as his preservers, breathed more freely. Two or three days after the officials departed Ivan took clothes and shaving materials to the loft, and the fugitive relieved himself of his beard, cut his hair and put on a peasant's suit. Then he asked Ivan to bring him pen, ink, and paper, and he wrote a letter, which he addressed to some one in Moscow, and asked Ivan to put it in the post for him.

After this the fugitive occasionally left the barn and, growing more venturesome, at last took up his quarters



at an inn. He invented a story that he had a little money, with which he proposed to buy a few acres of ground and was looking about him for that purpose. This explanation of his presence in N. was weakened by his manner, which, since he was rid of his wild appearance, marked him for a gentleman. However, the people with whom he mingled were not very acute, and even had they known that he was an escaped political prisoner would have shielded him so far as was possible. After a while he began to receive mail which, of course, was addressed to him under an assumed name.

Meanwhile the lottery scheme by which Nina was to be disposed of dragged because so few tickets had been sold. But at last they were disposed of, and the drawing was announced to take place at once. Some curiosity was manifested to know who had taken them. But the managers of the affair would give them no information.

On the evening of the drawing Nina was present, as was customary for the bride, with a despairing look on her face that excited the commiseration of all. Ivan had saved enough money to pay for ten tickets. But what were ten chances in a thousand? The same as one in a hundred. He could not bring himself to attend the drawing he walked back and forth before the building in which it took place where the girl he loved was to be disposed of.

Presently he heard a commotion, which he believed followed the announcement of the name of the winner. A wild hope sprang up in his breast that one of his chances had won. He ran up into the hall and asked who had drawn the prize. He was told that the name was Nicholas Axelrod, but who Nicholas Axelrod was no one seemed to know. His heart fell. Wringing his hands, he was about to turn away when the manager of the lottery, standing on the platform where the drawing had taken place, advanced and read from a paper he held in his hands:

If I, Nicholas Axelrod, win the prize, being a married man, I give it to Ivan Ivanoff. Shouts arose and cries for Ivan were heard. A man caught him by the arm as he was leaving and, turning him around, led him up to the

platform where Nina sat, a smile of delight on her features. He kissed her and the shouting broke forth anew.

But who was Nicholas Axelrod? There were cries for him but he did not respond. Persons looked about them, expecting to see him arise and make his way to the platform to receive the ovation which it was evident was awaiting him. But he did not appear, nor was he ever seen again in N. The happy couple sought him, but did not find him. It was rumored that he was a member of a noble family; that he had been pardoned by the Czar; that he had returned to Siberia. None of these rumors was ever proved. Both Ivan and his wife believe today that he bought all the unsubscribed tickets in the lottery, thus having three out of four chances of winning, and that he had done this to repay them for succoring him.

Nicholas Axelrod's real name was Paul Gerowsky, a Pole, whose family related to the king of Poland, submitted only because they were obliged to submit to the partition of their country among the three powers—Austria, Germany and Russia. But the Gerowsky's did not give up hope that Poland would be redeemed and were ever watching for an opportunity to assert its reunion and independence. Some years before the marriage of Ivan and Nina, Paul Gerowsky became the leader of a plot with this end in view. It was discovered and he was sent to Siberia. His escape from there, his succor by the lovers, his purchase of the unsold tickets to the lottery, as has been stated, were all that was ever known of him by the people of N. Under his own name he spent the rest of his life as a citizen of the United States.

PREPARE FOR THE WORST.

Are you prepared for a fire? Most folk are not! One of my liberal policies will make the calamity easier to bear. It will cost you nothing to ask for a low rate and very little to be perfectly secure with Percie Johnson's insurance agency.

COAL FOR THE POOR

The "Can't Lose" will bring a load of coal from Sydney for disposal at St. John's in about 10 days. Orders now booked. Price \$6.50 delivered. Orders should be left at the office of the Trading Co. The quantity is limited and this chance may not offer again before Christmas.—jyl,tf

ADVERTISE IN THE MAIL AND ADVOCATE

Commercial Catechism

What is the price of Flour now? Ans. \$5.80. good.
Is Sugar likely to be dearer? Yes.
Under Confederation, will our fishermen get a bounty on fish? Yes.

What do you think of the Muscle as an article of food? Excellent. Only recently a famous professor of one of the American Universities, who had been experimenting with the Muscle for six years, handed down his report, which says that it is just as good as the Oyster. He goes on to say that in view of the high cost of living it would be a grand thing if the nation would realize the value of this excellent shell fish, as ten persons could be fed for 25c. He further states that the opinion widely held in the United States as to Muscles containing a poisonous part is erroneous, simply a superstition introduced by the Indians in early days.

Is there more business done by mail in Newfoundland today than there was twenty years ago?

Yes! twenty times as much.
Name a house that makes a specialty of selling by mail? Well, there are several mail order houses in St. John's, but one house that figures largely in this line is J.M. Devine, The Right House.

Does he send the goods without the money? Well, the system, if we are correctly informed is cash in advance or cash with order, and money refunded if goods are not satisfactory.

But will he really refund the money if the goods are sent back to him for any reason? Oh, yes, you get a money back guarantee with the goods if you are not satisfied.

What is his correct address?

J.M. DEVINE, The Right House

167 Water Street, St. John's.

You had better write him for all information.
Does he give credit? Oh, certainly, to well-rated people.

2 H. P. Engines.

We have received a shipment of 2 h.p. Gasoline Engines, suitable for Dorries. F.P.U. members requiring such engines should order at once as number is limited.

Union Trading Company, Ltd.

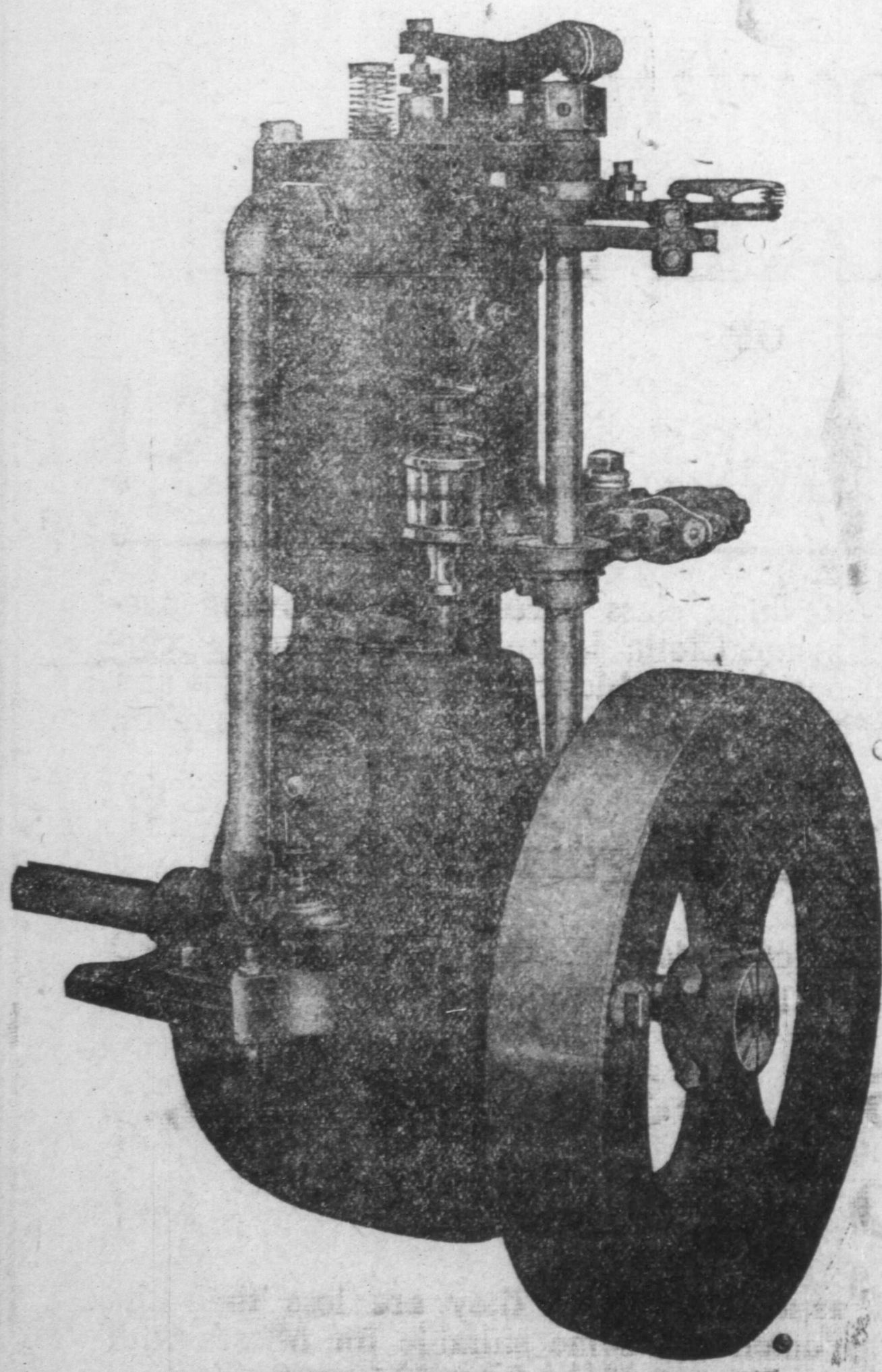
READ THIS! To The Fishermen:

"THE COAKER" Kerosene Motor Engine Is The Favorite!

A Motor Engine made for The Union Trading Co.

by one of the Largest Motor Engine Manufacturers

in America is now available to the Fishermen.



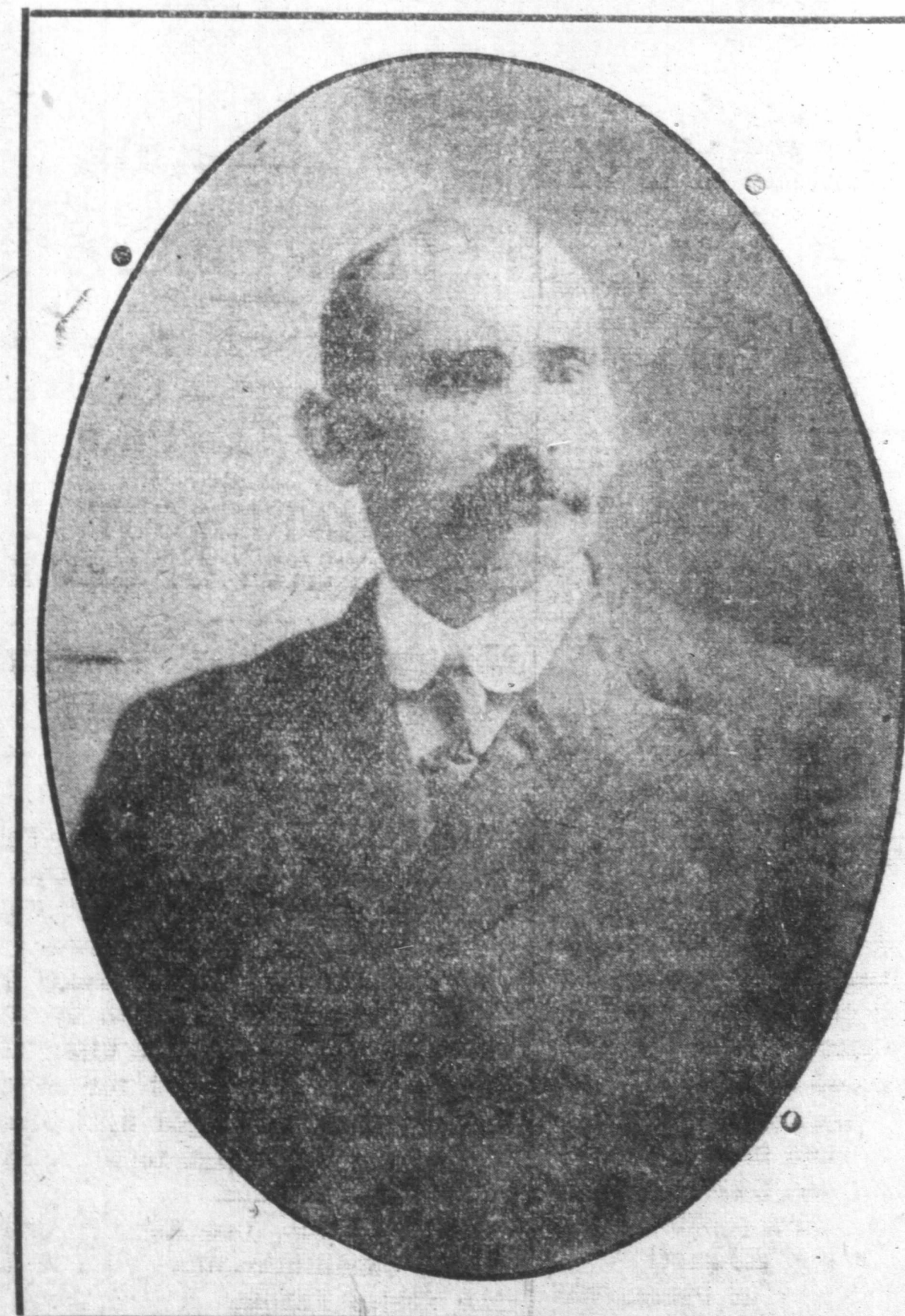
"THE COAKER ENGINE."

"THE COAKER" is a 6 H.P., 4 Cycle Engine, and can be operated on half the oil consumed by a 6 H.P., 2 Cycle Engine. This Engine's power is equal to the power of some 9 H.P., 2 Cycle Engines. It is made for Fishermen's use and expressly for Trap Skiffs and the large size fishing bullies. It is sold to Union Members at wholesale prices, all commission and middlemen's profits being cut out. We have contracted for the manufacture of 1000 of these engines. These engines are the favorites carried in stock by us. We have a large stock on hand now at our wharf premises. We carry parts and fittings in stock. We will arrange reasonable terms of payment to meet the requirements of men unable to purchase for cash. **WE GUARANTEE THE ENGINE.** An expert has been engaged to attend to the installation of our engines. Write for particulars and terms, applying to Chairmen of F.P.U. Councils concerning this Engine. We confidently recommend the Engine as being of the very best make and material, of being exactly what is needed for the Fishermen's use and **GUARANTEE TO GIVE SATISFACTION.** It is above all durable, simple and capable of doing heavy work; it is not a toy engine. The spark plug is attached to the side and not the top. The Engine starts on gasoline, and when started operates on kerosene oil.

We have sold 200 of these engines the past spring and all are giving splendid satisfaction. Our cash price is \$200.00 No other firm can sell you a similar engine. We possess the sole rights to sell this engine. The man who buys a Coaker Engine from us saves \$50. We can ship this engine one hour after the order is received.

No agents will be employed to sell these engines. We will do our work through the Councils of the F.P.U.

We are now booking orders for a 4 H.P., 4 Cycle Coaker Engine. This 4 h.p. Engine is suitable for small trap skiffs and large size fishing punts, and will fill a long felt want.



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