

# 'MILLIONS IN IT,' SAYS FEDELER

## Ex-Cabin Boy, with a Good Job in the Public Library, Has Invented an Air Purger.

### HE'S A JACK OF ALL TRADES

#### Deserted His Ship, Tended Bar, En- tered the Navy, and Took Up Prizefighting on the Side.

When John H. Fedeler, then a cabin bay and dishwasher, deserted a Swedish merchantman moored at the foot of East Twenty-third Street, twenty-nine years ago, and ran all the way to Broadway, to escape the eye of the ship's cook, he began an adventurous career which culminated three years ago when he became Superintendent and consulting engineer of the New York Public Library, at Fifth Avenue and Forty-second Street. He started without a cent, but with a lot of grit, and with two ready fists with which to defend himself. Yesterday Mr. Fedeler announced that he had invented a device by which he not only hoped to reap millions but which, he said, would reduce the mortality in great industries the world over.

The device which Mr. Fedeler has invented is an air purger, a machine which, the inventor says, will remove all dust particles from the air. It will transform the interior of a dusty flour mill into a speckless loft. All the dust in cement, graphite, and grinding mills, in glass works and furniture factories will be eliminated. Workmen will no longer be compelled to inhale the dangerous fumes from arsenic roasting furnaces, of blast furnaces, and iron foundries, and of ore mixing and paint mixing establishments. In a word, all the dust and dirt in the air, no matter where it floats as a menace to health, will find its way into the drum-shaped receptacles which Mr. Fedeler plans to manufacture. And horses won't slip, nor automobiles skid on the streets in normal weather, after the invention is perfected, for the device, it is said, will put springing carts out of business.

Centrifugal force is the principle behind the new invention. A large fan-shaped device revolved at high speed in a drum. The drum can be put in a window or in any part of a room. When the machine is in motion, the air around it is drawn into the drum. The revolving fan throws all particles heavier than air to one side, leaving the air free from dust particles. The inventor exhibited a small model of the instrument in his office yesterday. He threw talcum powder into the air, set the machine in motion, and later took the talcum powder out of the machine.

Many men who have followed the inventor through his varied career have dropped in to congratulate Mr. Fedeler on his success in the last few days. He had not seen some of them since he tended bar in the Bowery in Anton Meyer's old place.

"I want to tell you that the poor inventor nowadays runs an awful race for his money," Mr. Fedeler said. "The big fellows have the bulge on him. They can get to the Patent Office when the little fellow hasn't a chance. I can prove that I submitted the first draft for the vertical turbine engine. The man I submitted my draft to made millions and I never got a cent. It was my idea, but he coined the money. Now I've got the real thing and I have it patented and the best patent lawyers in the business will see that I get my rights."

Mr. Fedeler did not have to be urged to tell of his Bowery days. He is proud of them and still clings to a bit of Bowery dialect which he acquired. He found his old scrapbook yesterday and referred to it many times to illustrate the story which he told.

One one of the pages of the scrapbook appeared a free meal ticket from the Bowery Young Men's Christian Association. It had many punches in it, showing that the inventor was very fond of bean soup. On the same page with the meal ticket was a registration slip from Harvard University, showing that Fedeler had registered at Harvard in the Fall of 1893.

"How did I get to Harvard?" the inventor said. "Well, that's some story. You know I was a bad boy for many years. I was born in this country somewhere. My father served through the civil war. Then he took mother and me back to Germany. When the Franco-Prussian War broke out he left for Sweden to escape more service. It was from Sweden at the age of 15 that I made my getaway. I shipped for New York on a merchantman and worked as a ship's boy. We landed at East Twenty-third Street and you ought to have seen me run when I got off that ship!

"I didn't have a cent. A restaurant man somewhere on the west side gave me a lift. I washed dishes for him and he presented me with a pair of shoe brushes. I remember very well the first time I yelled 'shine.' Some big bootblack who said he owned that corner knocked me down. I cried and told the restaurant man. He told me to yell 'shine' all I wanted to and to knock down any one who disputed my rights. That's what I did. The first fellow who tried to run me off the block, I hit over the head with my shoe box. That was somewhere down in Front Street, I believe. A policeman came along and arrested me. While he was leading me in front of Anton Meyer's saloon at 392 Bowery—that was the old number—old Anton spied me. He knew the policeman and told him to let me go. The policeman did so and old Anton took me in and I set up piffs in his bowling alley. I shined shoes on the side and also tended bar.

"I got to be quite a fighter. Steve Brodie and Jack Dempsey both took a crack at me and, believe me, they trimmed me right. On the Bowery I met a lot of sailors and they induced me to join the Navy. I enlisted on the old Minnesota. In the Navy, I picked up something about electricity. I worked in the gunnery department. The Navy offers a splendid chance for poor boys to learn a trade.

"One of my ship mates was Edwin Burke, later police Captain and a great friend of Col. Roosevelt. Burke and I were star scrappers. Once, when we landed at Washington, we took a chance on a fight in a dime museum. One hundred dollars was offered to the man who would stand four minutes against some prize fighter. I tried him and was knocked out. Burke held out. I believe they paid him \$50. I was honorably discharged from the Navy in 1890 but went back for the Spanish-American War. I shipped on the Hist and Capt. Burke was on the same boat. And, by the way, I got to be a sea diver. We sank a boat off the Cuban coast and I went down and picked up a lot of junk, medals, rifles, and the like. I sold the whole outfit later for \$1,500 cash to Gould Frockaw.

"In 1893 I went to the World's Fair in Chicago. I bluffed my way into the Chief Engineer's office and told him I was an expert in electricity. They had a lot of trouble with their wires and I straightened them out. I made as high as \$72 a day. There I had a chance to save money and I piled it up in a hurry. In the Fall of 1903 I went to Harvard to study engineering, using the money I had saved in Chicago. It was pretty tough to get rid of all my Bowery ways in a short while and I guess I didn't succeed. I stayed in Harvard two and a half years. I quit because I would have failed in some studies anyhow. I had to give boxing instructions on the side to make a living. I let a lot of rich young fellows knock me down for \$5 a lesson. It cheered them up, and I was just faking to get their money. I never got my degree from Harvard.

"I worked as designer for Thomas Edison, and then as a draughtsman. It was as a draughtsman that I figured out the vertical turbine. Through the aid of Douglas Robinson I finally became Superintendent of the New York Produce Exchange building. Mr. Robinson also befriended me in making me one of the consulting engineers for the receivers of the Metropolitan Railways Company. I tell you jobs like that pay fine money. Later I became agent for the Argentine Republic in the purchase of gunboats. When the new library was finished I came here as Superintendent and consulting engineer."