

PLAYING WITH FIRE

BY RAYMOND W. PULLMAN
STORY OF CHISHOLM, THE MINNESOTA TOWN THAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN SAVED



RUINS OF CHISHOLM



THE FEW DWELLINGS SPARED WERE TURNED INTO STORES



VAULT OF FIRST NATIONAL BANK

The people in the section around Chisholm, Minn., say that it is the driest year that they have ever known. The woods and the brush growth on cut-over land are as dry as tinder and fires can be seen in as many as a half dozen places at one time, starting from what no one knows. The natives give various causes of how the flames start, the most popular of which are sparks from engines, hunters and campers, careless brush-burning by homesteaders and incendiaries. One man even advanced the theory of spontaneous combustion, and did not seem to like it when I told him that I

week. It was at five o'clock in the afternoon that the fire entered the city in the clutch of a gale from the northwest and laid the place in ruins in less time than it takes to tell it. Up to within a half hour before the flames caught the town the people were confident that there was no danger, and, with few exceptions, went about their business as usual.

When the fire came all were panic-stricken, and grabbing the few things nearest at hand, which in numerous cases were not articles of the greatest usefulness, fled the town, making for the iron mines near by. Had ordinary precautions been taken even as late as the forenoon of the fire, it is said that the place could have been saved. As it was, all that was spared by the flames were the two churches, the beautiful \$125,000 high school, the grammar school, and two blocks of dwellings on opposite sides of town, which were saved because of a peculiar shifting of the wind.

One of the fortunate things about the fire was that it struck Chisholm awake in the afternoon instead of at night after all were asleep. There was no loss of life as it was, but had the flames swept in in the dark the holocaust which would have resulted would have been most horrible, for



Ruins of Chisholm Hotel—Getting Lines for New Building.

thought this was hardly the case. In many sections up here the ground is of peat bog formation and a spark may burn for weeks after it finds a lodging before it is fanned into a flame.

It is hard and practically impossible to figure losses accurately at this time, and it will be weeks before even an approximate estimate that is final can be made. Cruisers will have to be sent over the burnt-over areas before close figures can be obtained and the timber owners say that it is absolutely useless to do anything in this line until a heavy rain comes and the end of the fires is assured.

Putting the losses low, to be on the safe side, they are commonly agreed to be \$5,000,000 to \$10,000,000. The majority of people say about \$5,000,000. This is considered a conservative estimate by those who have been over most of the ground. At five per cent. interest the amount of capital lost would yield \$250,000 a year. This is worth contrasting with what the state forestry board now has to spend for protection. It has an appropriation of \$11,500.

The burning of the prosperous little town of Chisholm on the Mesabi iron range is the item of loss which figures most prominently in conversations with all who have anything to say about the forest fire destruction to date. The people in this country are used to fires, and hardly feel at home unless there is the smell of smoke in the air. Until the flames menace a town or a very valuable stand of timber they are fairly indifferent to the danger.

A striking evidence of this over-confident feeling of safety was given on the day of the Chisholm fire, the losses in which are now conservatively estimated at \$1,250,000 to \$1,500,000, including real property, stocks of merchandise, and every other item of direct loss. The same fire that destroyed the town had been burning in the forests near by for more than a

there is no telling what part of the 5,000 people would have been cremated in their beds, so quick were the flames, or what would have happened to the fleeing, panic-stricken people and their children who might have been awake.

Many of the people of the city were hard hit by the fire financially and some lost practically all they had. The same dauntless spirit that impelled large cities like Baltimore and San Francisco to arise from the ruins of fire and rebuild is in the people of little Chisholm and already there are about 50 new stores and dwellings nearly completed. When I saw the people going about their work in such a cheerful go-ahead way, I was surprised, for one can hardly expect such quick action from a small town.

Thought Him a Mollycoddie. John D. Rockefeller rebuked a Cleveland reporter one day for swearing. "Don't swear," he said. "Say 'damn' or 'pahaw.' There is as much comfort in those mild words as in the reddest oaths.

"I know," said Mr. Rockefeller, "that such is not the prevalent opinion. The prevalent opinion—but it is a wrong one—was expressed the other morning by my caddy." He had just been around with a minister. After I drove off I said to him:

"What kind of a player is the minister, Joseph?"

"Joseph snorted.

"Him?" he sneered. "He'll never make a golfer. Do you know what he says when he misses the ball?"

"No. What does he say?" I asked.

"He says, 'Tut, tut,'" Joseph sneered.

A New York man, who has just returned from his first visit to the middle west, says: "I have always known that this was a great city and now I know what supports it in its greatness."

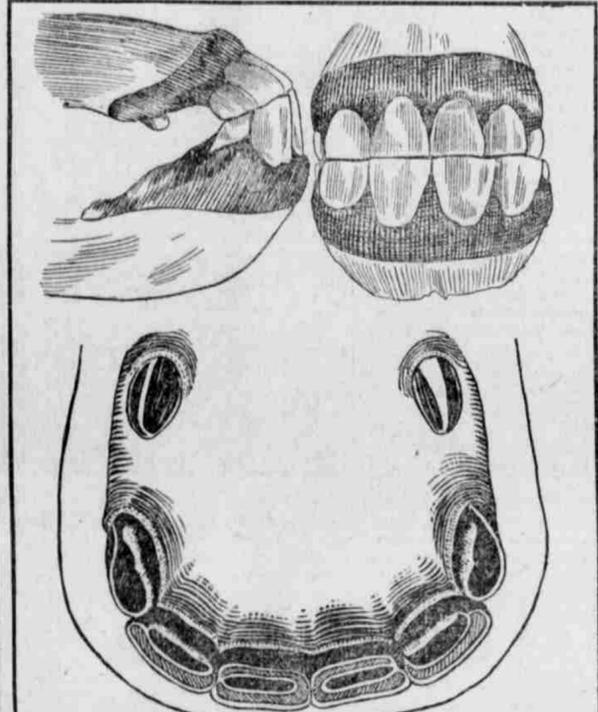
PROLIFIC ENGLISH SOW; OFFSPRING 135 IN 4 YEARS

Is There Any Sow in America That Can Beat That Record?



Our illustration shows an English sow with a wonderful history as a producer of bacon. She was born—so her owner informs me—about March, 1904, and since then her records read as follows: March, 1905, litter of 13; September, 1905, 17; February, 1906, 16; August, 1906, 17; February, 1907, 20; August, 1907, 15; February, 1908, 22; August, 1908, 15; total in four years, 135.

Teeth of Horse at Four Years

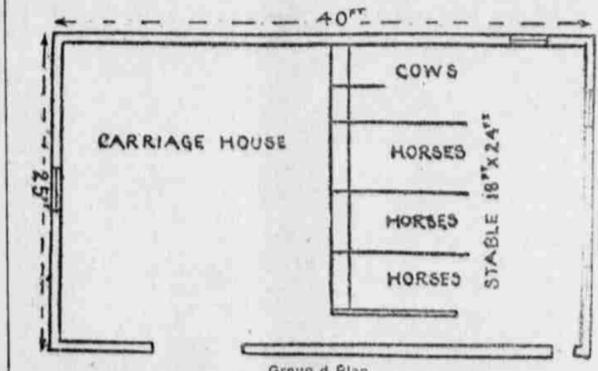


At four years old each jaw shows four permanent teeth, whose tables are worn to the same level. The dividers are worn upon both of their borders. Looked at from the side, the corner teeth are quite small. At four and a half years the nippers show wear on both edges. The corner teeth and the hook or canine teeth are in evidence.

STABLE AND CARRIAGE HOUSE

Will Provide Room for Two Cows and Three Horses.

The accompanying diagram shows ground plan for stable and carriage house 40x25 feet. The cows' stall for two is six feet wide and the horse stalls are each five feet wide, which is the proper width. This will give you a carriage house 20x24 feet, and feed the stock from the front. A passage leads from the stable to carriage



house, so a horse may be harnessed and hitched up and left inside till ready to go.

The following is a bill of material: Four side sills 8x8—21 feet spliced; 4 cross sills, 8x8—25 feet; 35 floor joists, 2x10—14 feet; 21 ceiling joists, 1x8—25 feet; 2,000 feet plank, (inch measure) for floor; 1,000 feet (inch measure) for loft; 66 studs, 2x6—13 feet; 6 plates, 2x6—14 feet; 12 scantlings, 2x4—12 feet, for gable studs; 1,900 feet rough siding; 42 rafters, 2x6—16 feet; 1,350 feet roof sheeting; 25 M.

quire a wall of 3 feet at least. To build such a wall of concrete would require 9 1/2 barrels cement, 3 yards stone fillers, and 11 yards gravel. It is admitted that dipping posts in hot coal tar will add to their durability.

Money Well Spent.—A few extra dollars for a good pure-bred ram is money well spent. No flockmaster who takes pride in his flock and values its improvement can afford to save money by the purchase of a cheap-grade ram.

The Passing of Brickville

By Joseph N. Quail

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The destiny of Brickville was decided when Pikey McGinn's chimney caught fire, and in that flame the Brickvillian hope of a metropolis in the heart of the Bad Lands went up in smoke.

Brickville didn't realize it at the moment, because, paradoxical as it may seem, the little blaze which destroyed the town was easily got under control. The place hadn't progressed as far as a fire department, and it would not have helped matters if it had. A tipsy cowboy who had been sampling Pikey's hardware vaulted to the back of a wolfish-looking cayuse, yelled a few times in hearty Montana fashion, and then swung his riata at the chimney. As the noose fell fair about the stack of bricks he dug spurs into the sides of his mount and made a run upon the rope.

The chimney came down with a crash; the fire was out; the fate of Brickville was written.

That is why the town does not appear upon any map. But if ever you have ridden over the Northern Pacific you can probably recall a long and narrow valley to the north as you passed out of the Bad Lands of Dakota into the Bad Lands of Montana. That is where Brickville stood. The soil all about is hard and dry and red, and there is no verdure. Not anywhere in sight is there a tree. The side hills are seamed with black strata, and the rains have carried stains from these and streaked the valley with them on both sides of the muddy little stream which winds away to the south.

The black strata are seams of bituminous coal, and it was in mining this coal that the Brickvillians made their living. There is still pay in these streaks, but the people who worked them have drifted away, and on the site of the town prairie dogs and coyotes and rattlesnakes hold annual conventions which never adjourn.

If any place ever fully justified its name, that place was Brickville. At the height of its prosperity it had, exclusive of sheds and stables, 87 one-story buildings, including the railroad station, the saloon and the tonsorial parlor, and every one of them was of brick—even the sheds. There were optimists who looked forward to a brick court-house and a brick jail, and but for the fire in Pikey McGinn's chimney these aspirations might have been realized.

Pierre Succotash played perhaps the most prominent part in Brickville's destruction. Pierre was a French-Canadian, whose rear name had come in collision with Brickville's sense of propriety, and some of its letters were dislocated by the shock. He had been gold mining in British Columbia, and no one had inquired very closely into the reason of his coming from a gold to a coal camp; it would have established an uncomfortable precedent. But he went nosing about the wreck of that chimney, as he went nosing into everything that happened in town; and Fred Ritchie, who conducted "the tonsorial parlor," which was across the street from McGinn's, saw him suddenly dart in and pick up a broken brick.

Now Fred and Succotash had said some unpleasant things to each other once upon a time, and Fred, believing that Pierre was courting trouble, promptly ran in for his gun; but when he came out Succotash was nowhere to be seen.

Next morning Pikey found that some one had carried off nearly half of his chimney bricks, and he promptly declared it to be the work of Slant-eye McCafferty, his hated rival in the hardware business. Mac denied this in vigorous language, and a gunplay was imminent when the whiskey agent happened along and announced a reduction in rates by the barrel; and then they had a drink, and ordered half a barrel each, and the hatchet was buried.

But war was on hotter than ever next day, for the remainder of Pikey's loose bricks had disappeared in the night. Pikey swore that Slanteye was planning a cheap extension to his gin mill, and Mac retorted that he would be a fool indeed to go around picking up hoodoos that had fallen from his rival's leaky roof.

Then each got a shotgun and stood out in front of his saloon waiting for the other to come along. And the result of this was that trade fell off in both places, for Brickvillians knew that shotguns scattered their charges and they refused to slake their thirst when there was a chance that a stray buckshot might next moment spring them aleak. So it was that business interests induced the rivals for a second time to declare a truce, and then the town breathed easier and drank oftener.

A week later Succotash was a passenger on a west-bound express with a ticket to Glendive in his hat band. And the next east-bound freight brought in a very scarce article—some lumber—and a heavy iron roller marked with his name. On his return he installed the roller in the brick shack where he slept and put a big padlock on the door. What he did in that place was the town mystery. But he was flush of money, and one day he caused a sensation. He became

the owner of a saloon, having bought out Pikey McGinn—taking bar, stock, goodwill and building.

Then, to the greater surprise of Brickville, he promptly sold to Pikey's hated rival everything but the building. Pikey swore it was all a put-up job, and left town in disgust. Succotash said it was because he intended to tear down the old house and put up a better one. And tear down the old place he did, and he carted the bricks away to his mystery shed—to store them there until he was ready to build, he said.

But the only thing that Pierre built at that time was a wooden water trough, leading from his well to the brick shed. Most of the day and all of the night he locked himself in that shed with his secret. Those who passed in the rear of the place declared that they could hear him grinding something, and because of a pool of red water which had accumulated near the shed they thought it must be the bricks.

Now, Fred Ritchie was one of those who regarded Pierre's conduct as most suspicious. He gave a good deal of thought to the mystery of the shed and the tearing down of McGinn's saloon, and finally he recalled having seen Succotash grab that piece of brick and make off with it. Then it occurred to him also that it was Pierre who had caused all the trouble between Pikey and Slanteye by stealing the chimney. And one day when Succotash was down in town buying provisions Fred sneaked out the back way of his shop with a bit and stock and bored a hole in the mortar between the bricks of Pierre's shed to discover what his secret might be. As Pierre worked that night Fred had his eye glued to this hole and noted what he was doing.

Next morning his neighbors were surprised at finding that Ritchie's chimney had fallen during the night, and they were astonished to see Fred carrying the bricks into his barber shop and piling them up with great care. He wasn't going to have them stolen, as Pikey's were, he told them. And as they passed by the shop later in the day and looked in they saw him pounding away at the bricks, breaking them into bits and scanning each piece carefully.

One of his customers was let into the secret, and another chimney fell. The secret was a secret no longer. Succotash had found gold in the piece of brick that Ritchie had seen him dart forward to pick up, and he had found more in the bricks he had stolen from Pikey. With the proceeds he had set up an arastra in the shed,



McGinn Saw Him Pick Up a Broken Brick.

and in this he was grinding gold out of the bricks of Pikey's dismantled saloon.

Ritchie and the others found scales and grains and specks of gold. When the chimney bricks had been ground up the wall bricks followed, and in a short space of time Brickville was a town of tents again.

Then it was announced suddenly that Succotash and Ritchie had patched up their trouble and that Pierre had sold his arastra to Fred. This was followed by Pierre's departure from town. "He has made his pile," the Brickvillians said to one another.

The coal pits had been abandoned for this new method of gold mining, and there wasn't a whole brick building in the place when a freight brakeman one day brought a startling piece of news into the town.

Succotash had bought a claybank in Basin, and a brickyard as well; and he had astonished the good people of that nook in the mountains by converting this claybank into a gold mine and this brickyard into a mill in which to treat his rich clay, for the gold could not be freed by ordinary process of placer washing.

Then Brickville collectively kicked itself for not having thought to trace out this brickyard before the man from Canada; and the Brickvillians folded their tents and went scurrying away to the mountains to search there for other claybanks that were studded with nuggets of gold.