TENEMENT LIFE.

HARD TO KEEP BABIES ALIVE.

How the People Who Live in Them Stand the Heat.

"Oh! It's so hot; I guess I'm meltin' all away."

A little boy about seven years old sank down on the stone door-step as he spoke and rested his burning head on his dirty hands as his sharp elbows tried to steady themselves on his trembling knees. His dusty hair was damp with perspiration, and his hollow cheeks were streaked with dirt. Thin, bony hands were black with coal dust, and his bare feet showed that the boy had given up trying to carry him along. His toes spread like a fan on the stones of the sidewalk, as if gathering up all the coolness they could from their surface.

"Are you sick, little boy!" I asked. "What makes you sit in the broiling sun, and where is your hat?"

I took him by the hand; he rose and dragged his frail body a few steps further, then sank in a trembling heap at my feet.

"I can't do it, missus; my legs act queer like, and I feel as if I were a-meltin' into butter or somethin'."

No sooner had I lifted him in my arms and carried him back of a high stoop where he could rest in the shade than there were a million children about us.

"You run over there and tell that saloon-keeper to give you this handkerchief full of broken ice—take this money and hurry, and you must help me until we can get him somewhere. Who can get me some milk?"

"I know where!" "I can!" "I'll go fer you, missus," were the eager cries. Ten cents brought a cup of milk, which the boy gulped down so fast that he almost strangled. The ice was wrapped in the handkerchief and bound about his head, and with the corner of another handkerchief his face was wiped clean as the water trickled down from the melting ice on his forehead.

"What do you think's the matter uv me, missus," he finally asked, as he lay with his head resting on the tattered coat of Johnny the bootblack.

"What is it?" called a strong, raw-boned woman, as she elbowed her way through the crowd of children. "This is my house, and what are you crowded around here for?"

"Finnley is tooken sick, and de leddy guv him some milk," vouchsafed a wee tot, evidently the pride of some mother's heart, for his long curls had been freshly combed, and an attempt to wash his face was evident.

"Finnley, poor lad, what's happened you?" said the woman, kneeling and taking his hands tenderly in hers. I told you to come here for a bite when you got hungry, and I'll warrant you've had nothing to eat to-day. How is it, my boy?"

"Oh, Mrs. Bacon, I dreamed my mother came back and I had a lot to eat, and when I woke up I said, 'maybe she'll be home to-day.' So I jes' waited, thinkin' if she came I ought not to ask you for a bite so much. You've been mighty good to me, Mrs. Bacon, and"——

With a moan his head fell on one side, and the motherly Mrs. Bacon picked up the boy in her strong arms and carried him up the ricketty stairs to her own room. "I'll take care of him, lady," she called back as she saw me standing on the sidewalk below. "I've been working every day and have neglected to keep an eye on him." She disappeared and the children who had been so noisy a short time before wandered away silently, none seeming to feel like play just then.

"Who is Finnley?" I inquired of a girl who was carrying two small children, one under each arm.

"His mother lives on the top floor of the rear house. His father has been out of work for a long time. They used to live in the first floor of this house, close to Mrs. Bacon. Mrs. Bacon washes and hain't got no children; guess she'll keep Finnley now. Do you know where I can get any work? I have tried every place and no body wants me. I just have nothing to do, and so I carry the babies about all day. It is so hot in the rooms. We have two, and one has a window, but it doesn't seem to do much good. It is awful in Summer time. I wish Summer would never come."

She shifted the children and straightened her slender back to support the burden better.

"You talk well. Have you worked out?"

"Oh, yes'm, but now the lady is gone into the country and I have nothing to do. There are seven of us in family, and not one of us making a cent."

"What did you have for breakfast?"

"Only tea and bread and butter."

"She passed on down the street with the two bareheaded children clinging to her faded calico sleeves and their scrawny bare legs flopped like limp rags at her side.

"The tenement house districts; go see how the poor summer in them," was my order. Although the streets are regularly cleaned, since the poor, during the summer months, live principally out of doors, there is very little sign of the broom having been through after half an hour has gone by.

Children sit with bare legs on the dirty walks or roll in the gutters, play ball with the contents of the barrels and eat of the decayed fruit and stale bread they find in the restaurant refuse.

"It seems so dreadful out here. I should not think you would allow your children to come out of the house," I remarked to an old woman crooned over a half sleeping babe that she held in her withered arms.

"It is better than the house. We cannot get out of the city even to get on the fresh air boats. My daughter washes, and it takes every day to carry us along. The children die if shut up in the house. You don't know how awful the rooms are. Some of us have but one window, and there is not a breath of air to be got. We stay in the streets until the policeman drives us in. Do you wonder at the men who sit all night in the park? It is much better than in their homes. My son has not been able to sleep home for a week, ever since the hot weather began. We women folks must stay there but it is killing us. One baby died last week, but this one I hope to save by staying out with it all day. I am the grandmother, and while the others are earning a few cents here and there, I am walking the streets trying to save my baby by doing the very thing you would think would surely kill yours—keeping it out in the sun all day."

The child looked bright and happy, but a babe a few doors below lay moaning in the arms of a woman whose scarred face showed trouble besides the great heat everybody else was suffering.

"Your baby is ill," I said, stopping and taking its bony fingers in mine.

"Of course it's ill; we are all ill. Jimmie is upstairs now dead. He sold paper till he dropped down one morning like a horse. I only hope he has gone where there is plenty to eat. Poor devil, he had nothing that I knew of for a week."

"But the baby, surely you feed it?"

"Tea; nothing but tea. We can't afford milk, and tea is all it gets."

"How do you happen to have tea?"

"The missionary brings it, and Molly begs bread from door to door."

She looked into the face of the child as it lay on her lap, and running her fingers softly around the eyes, as if measuring the dark circles that disfigured the face, suddenly lifted her black and blue visage to me and said with a kind of [illegible] sent the chills running all over me: "Say, miss, would it be very wicked if I wrapped it up in a pretty red shawl and dropped it in the river over there?"

Although my heart was in my mouth at the suggestion, as I followed the direction the finger pointed out, and saw the water beyond so cool and fresh, I could not but think and wonder, too, if it would be so very wrong.

I hurried over to the west side into the better districts, still all tenement houses. More of the people get to the Fresh-Air people and show the advantage, but the older girls, who have been thrown out of employment, are inclined to mope and pine while thinking about their bad luck. Groups of idlers seek the sidewalks about 4 o'clock. These grow larger as the sun goes down, and the conversation is generally on what they did or did not do during the day.

West 56th street is what they call the truck street. Stables for the carts and horses line both sides of the last block. Boys and girls, too, hang about, each trying to get work; the boys for themselves and the girls for a brother, who has been sick and is getting better, or a father who is too discouraged to ask for himself.

"I have not done a lick to-day, ma'am," spoke up a remarkably bright young man of about twenty. "I do trucking and carting, but to-day was a bad day. Don't you want to have some one carry your kodak? I would like nothing better."

A group of blacksmiths came out to talk of the hard times, and the women and girls who live in the shanties near drew close to hear what was said. Hostlers and drivers, truckmen and shop owners, who live in that vicinity, spoke freely, and declared the summer, in many respects, is harder for them to weather than the winter.

"Our babies drop off so terribly fast," said one old man, who was so fat it would not have been a wonder had he said he feared he was 'meltin' away." "Two of my children are gone—gone, never to come back again."

He wiped his face and hastened across the street, where he leaned up against a wagon for support.

Children swarmed in the wagons and carts like bees. They skipped under the horses' legs and flitted about, helping to burn the rubbish, shoe the horses, clear the shops and unhitch and hitch to the carts.

Down further, between 20th and 40th streets, are tenement houses that hold in each a small city. The older girls parade the walks with babies. Some have carriages and some only cheese-boxes on home-made wooden wheels, with a stick for a tongue and a soiled feather pillow for cushion. Little mothers are thick and little babies pop up like mushrooms all about you. Mothers come out about 6 o'clock and await the husbands who are to return with the expected supper.

"We don't ever have much ahead," said one. "We are much harder up than people give us credit for. The winter was hard, and now many think since Summer has come there is no danger of freezing to death, and we do not need so much help. Our family is in greater distress than it has ever been before. We managed to stand the cold by wrapping quilts about us and keeping the children in-doors. Now we can't get away from the sun, and the little ones are growing thinner and thinner until they droop and die."

The young girl stopped talking and burst into tears. "I had work until last month, and now I have nothing to do but walk the streets. I shall steal anything I can get my hands on that will help the children."

"But you will be locked up if you do wrong."

"Maybe," replied the girl sullenly. "I run a risk, but I will take my chances. I can't see the children get whiter and whiter and stand by and not give them something. No, I shall steal everything I can; I am going to commence to-morrow if the boys come home without work to-night."

"What do you do all day?" I asked several people as they walked aimlessly along the walk or pushed ill-naturedly everyone who happened to come in contact with them.

"I wash," said one, "when I can get it to do." "I sew for the shop girls who live in the next block." "I don't do anything but mind the children," said another whose face was ashen white, and her eyes went far back into her head. Her hair was uncombed, and the child in her arms cried loudly.

"What is the matter with it?"

"I don't know. It was born so. The landlord wants his rent, and we want something to eat. I can't do anything on account of the baby."

"I am blind," said an old man, who came along, feeling with his cane, every now and then yelling out two or three lines of a song for the benefit of the poverty-stricken mass about him.

"Why do you sing here? Surely you don't get much money in this part?"

"Yes, I do, ma'am. The childers are free with their pennies, and sometimes I get three cents, and once I got five."

A colored girl held tight to her bosom a tiny colored baby.

"Is it sick?" I asked. "Oh, no, ma'am. It stays out all day with me. Mamma stays home and works, and I keeps the baby out all day, and don't go in except to eat. It is well, but we have to keep out of the house as much as possible."

I went inside and walked through to some of the rear houses.

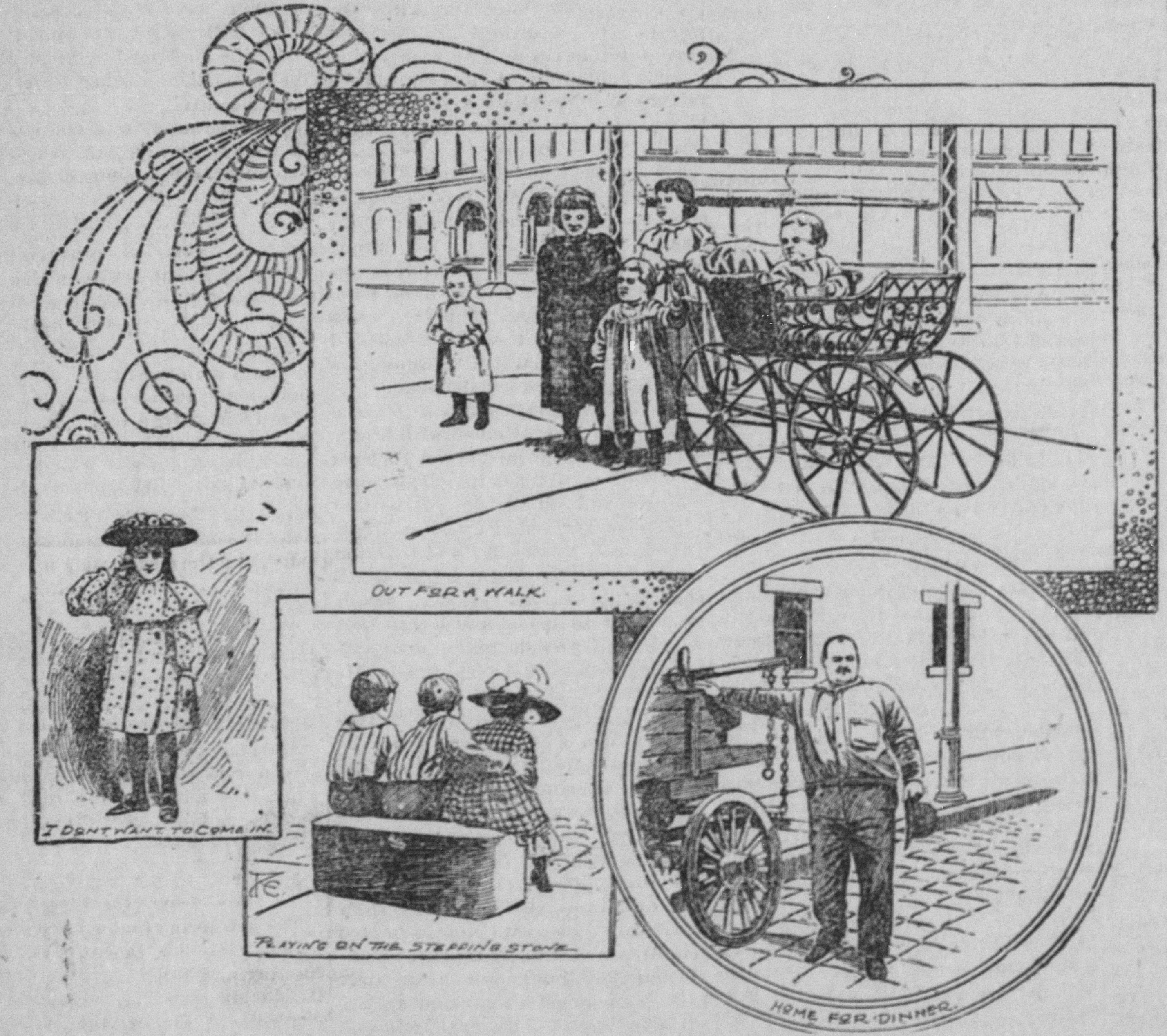
"How are you spending your Summer?" was the question I put to all who allowed me to visit them.

"We stay right here and try to keep the little ones alive," was the general answer. On an average the faces of the children were haggard and sallow; the old women were shriveled and dark, the middle-aged women unhappy and disconsolate

Thousands of mothers and children are taking advantage of the fresh-air excursions, and there is no doubt that many lives are saved by the chance they get for a bath—a luxury which would be of greater service to many than money.

As the sun went down the spirits of the poor people seemed to rise. Fathers appeared with small bundles hugged closely under their arms. Mothers smiled and the faces lost the hard, woe-begone look; babies stopped their whining and moaning, and now and then a soft coo! goo! goo! brought a bright look into the face of everybody who heard it. Boys played marbles and girls jackstones. Little tots from 2 to 4 played ring-around-a-rosy and screamed with delight as they broke circle and tumbled in a heap into the gutter. A policeman, with his bright buttons gleaming, walked through the first street I visited and began to tell of Finnley, the newsboy, who had just died of sunstroke. Immediately every little face grew solemn, jackstones were dropped, marbles forgotten, the supper delayed, and every ear was attentive and every heart beating with the sympathy that only the poor feel for each other.

The Little Mothers pressed the baby sisters closer, the boys linked arms, and a big boy sought the fat hand of his smaller brother and clasped it affectionately in his dirty fingers. Fathers grew thoughtful, and there was the unspoken thought in every face. "Who will go next, I wonder?" as they listened sorrowfully to the sad story of Finnley.—[Pocahontas, in N. Y. Recorder.



Renewal of Masonry.

A difficult operation was successfully accomplished recently in the renewal of the masonry front of a house on West Fifty-ninth street, New York, without disturbing the interior in any way, says the Philadelphia Record. The building was a four-story residence with stone-trimmed front, having a front of 33 feet wide and 80 feet high, with an entrance porch and a four story bay window. At the beginning of the work all windows and doors and the sidewalk were covered by 2-inch plank, and a very stiff scaffold was built along the full width and height of the front. This scaffold was eleven stories high and made with five groups of posts connected by diagonal braces. The posts were made of two pieces of 3x8 inch timbers, breaking joints and firmly bolted together, while the horizontal working platforms were provided with guards on both sides. Hanging platforms were also swung along the side of the building. The weight of the iron roof, chimneys, cornices and connected parts was removed from the front wall and shores were set up to carry the wall above the second story sills. These shores were numbered, wedged and constantly watched. The old masonry was then taken out and new brick and stone built in. Then the shores were carried one story higher and the operation was repeated while the carvers and stone cutters were at work below. This was continued for forty-six days, when the new front was entirely in place, the work having been done without entering the house, except at one side of the fourth story, where one old window was replaced by two new ones. The cost was about $42,000 and the work was done in such great haste that there was no time for the preparation of preliminary plans or estimates.

A QUEER FUEL.

PEAT IS BURNED ALL OVER EUROPE.

What a Peat Bog is and How it is Worked-Big Peat Bogs in This Country.

Peculiar interest attaches just now to facts newly gathered by the Department of State on the subject of peat. The utilization of that natural product in this country would save a great deal of money for poor people who have to pay for coal whatever the Trust may ask.

Peat is used nearly everywhere throughout Europe, wherever it can be obtained without expense for transportation. In large and small cities, as well as in rural districts, it is utilized for fuel; in fact, in many localities it is the only substance employed for heating purposes. It is used also in factories, but its employment for driving locomotives has been abandoned, for fear of fires in forest and field.

A peat bed is simply an accumulation of the remains of plants that grew and decayed on the spot where they are now found. When the green and growing upper layer of this material is removed, one finds peat with 52 to 66 per cent. of carbon, and the deeper one goes the better in quality it gets. It may be cut out in blocks and they may be stacked up, covered, and dried and used for fuel.

There is a kind of moss called "sphagnum," which in large part makes up the peat-producing vegetation. Its roots die annually, but from the living top new roots are sent out each year. The workmen who dig peat understand that if this surface is destroyed the growth of the bed must stop; so, commonly, they remove the sod carefully, replacing it after they have taken out a stratum of peat. If these peat beds could lie undisturbed and covered over through many ages they would be transformed eventually into mineral coal.

The upper layer of peat, consisting chiefly of the moss described, is, when broken into fragments, a loose and fibrous material—a mixture of root fibres, leaves, stems, &c. The intermediate stratum, wherein the composition has reached an advanced stage, constitutes the main mass of the peat, often containing trunks and roots of trees. It is called "peat fibre." The bottom layer, known as "pitch turf," consists of a black, compact, pitchy stuff, which shrinks rapidly on being separated into small pieces. It has, when cut evenly, a smooth, wax-like surface. Containing the greatest amount of nitrogen, it is most valuable for heating.

When a peat bog is to be worked, the first thing necessary is to drain the land. After the latter has obtained the requisite degree of dryness the peat is dug. It still retains 70 or 80 per cent. of water, which is almost entirely removed from it by artificial processes of drying. In the digging of peat machinery has taken the place of manual labor within the last few years. Various machines are employed to cut out the peat in cubes or bricks, which are afterward dried. Other mechanical contrivances press the peat in molds, turning it out in balls or other shapes.

About five per cent. of the entire area of Germany is covered by peat bogs. One method adopted for working them is to cut away the vegetation from the surface to begin with. The bed is then ploughed and harrowed, the loosened peat being broken up so as to expose it to the action of the air. It is then gathered by a contrivance resembling a snow plough, after which it is put into a drying oven and thence conveyed to a press, whence it issues in the form of smooth, shiny, dark-brown bricks. One machine of six-horse power can produce from 60,000 to 100,000 bricks a day. Artificial drying is the most costly item in the expense account for the peat production.

Peat contains from 40 to 60 per cent. of carbon, 4 to 6 per cent of hydrogen, 25 to 35 per cent. of nitrogen, and 1 to six per cent. of oxygen. In respect to heating power, 100 pounds of it are equal to from 50 to 60 pounds of hard coal. In Europe peat is also turned to account as a fertilizer and as a building material, being employed as a filler for vacant spaces, separating layers for water-works, ice houses, &c. By means of a process recently patented, it has been made to do service in tanneries. The waste particles of peat, known as "peat dust," have been utilized extensively of late as a material for fitting up odorless vaults.

In the United States peat bogs of enormous extent are found. Experts are of the opinion that the article could be profitably produced in this country, especially in localities where distance from the coal mines makes coal excessively dear. Nevertheless, attempts already made in this direction have not met with success. In New England efforts have been made to dry and press peat for market, but it could not be turned out in this form for less than $5 a ton. At anything like equal prices, it cannot compete with coal, possessing less heating power, being very ashy, and having a peculiar odor. Fire made from it is not lasting. Peat is dug for burning to a considerable extent on the Island of Nantucket. Farmers in the United States use it to some extent as a fertilizer.

A peat bog represents the earliest stage of coal formation on a small scale. The material of the coal that is used by man to-day was chiefly contributed by mosses. But these mosses were of gigantic size. Though resembling in kind the low "club" mosses of the present, they were forest trees. Their fossil trunks have been found measuring from 100 to 130 feet in length and from 6 to 10 feet in diameter. Other plants that grew in profusion in those days were tree ferns, 20 to 30 feet high, and reed-like "horse tails," which grew to a height of 20 feet or more, with a diameter of 10 or 12 inches. These last stood close together in the muddy ground, forming an almost impenetrable thicket; probably they made up a large percentage of the vegetation that was transformed into coal.—[Washington Star.

THE LOST MINE.

A Bonanza Gold Story from the Wilds of Alaska.

In the spring of 1876 two miners left Sitka on a prospecting expedition, taking a course to the southeast, with the intention of exploring the islands along their route, but more especially to reach the mainland and make extensive search for placer diggings. Finding the islands barren of good results, they crossed Chatham Straits to the mainland, and pitched camp at the mouth of a large creek. To their experienced eyes the creek bed gave evidence of what they were in search of. It was strewn with quartz, and on "panning" the gravel "color" was found. They ascended the stream, and after two days' travelling over boulders and winding through underbrush they reached the head waters of the creek on the divide. Beyond and below a short distance in the basin lay a beautiful little lake, with a small stream emptying into it from the west and another flowing out to the north. They descended and encamped on the margin of the lake. In the little stream putting into the lake they again found gold. After prospecting and panning the gravel, joy filled their hearts, for they had found a bonanza! The gravel yielded coarse gold the size of beans and a dollar or more to the pan. The lucky gold hunters lost no time in setting to work. One returned to the beach after the cached supplies, while the other partner set to work building a rocker. For a matter of two weeks they washed the golden sands and made occasional trips to their cache on the beach, with no thought whatever of approaching danger, and no intimation of the horrible tragedy that was about to occur.

On the eventful day, at about noon, as they were leaving work to prepare dinner, ambushed savages, who had tracked the two lone miners from the beach into the mountains to murder and to plunder, poured their fire from behind trees upon them. One was killed outright, bnt miraculously the other was untouched. Seeing his companion fall, and taking in the situation at a glance, he bounded into the timber. Fear lent wings to the pursued, and he soon out-distanced his pursuers, who were unable to get in an effective shot while both were dodging through the timber and underbrush. The pursued made direct for the cache and boat on the beach, and hastily loading up with the remainder of the provisions and effects he pulled out into the channel. He saw the Indians no more, and shaped his course, as he supposed, for Sitka, but not being acquainted with the channels their intricate windings and ever-changing courses led him astray. He was picked up by a gunboat on her way to the sound and landed at Port Townsend. In a belt which he wore around his waist he had about $1,500 in coarse gold, his share of the work by the lake.

The miner returned to Sitka, and told the tale of his murdered partner and the finding of the bonanza, and induced a party to go with him in search of it again. The party, several in number, set forth in a small schooner, with the miner for their guide. But through the many changes made in the course in tacking against head winds, and the winding course that necessarily had to be taken with a schooner, the guide, as before, became lost. The crew began to doubt his story, and giving up all hope of finding the mouth of the creek that lead to the goal, insisted upon a return. The guide persisted that he would surely find the place and insisted also that the search be continued, when the party became angry and threatened to hang him to the mast. The search was then abandoned.

A short time after their return to Sitka the miner, or hero of the "lost rocker," as it was now termed, was taken sick and died, but to his attendant during his illness, Mike Powers, one of the pioneers of this camp, he confided the secret of how to find the rocker by the lake. The rich find in Silver Bow basin back of Juneau occurred soon after his death, and Powers was one who joined in the stampede. Being a good prospector, and lucky, he secured valuable claims which demanded his attention, and delayed his search in the direction of the "lost rocker," and after a time he was about to undertake the trip when he was killed by a land slide in the basin; and thus died the only living white person who, unless by accident, could find the lost lake, the rocker, and the bleached bones of the unfortunate miner who fell beside it.

To this day prospecting parties every spring go in search of it. Big rewards have been offered to Indians to reveal the locality, but, through fear of being implicated in the murder or otherwise, they remain silent.—[Juneau (Alaska) Mining Record.

A light suspension bridge was built at Niagara Falls in 1848, and removed in 1854.

A rich Laplander sometimes keeps as many as 5,000 reindeer in his service.