

**FINANCE COMPANIES—SO-CALLED.**—A class of institution has sprung up in recent years which conducts a kind of business that could be dispensed with to the great advantage of the community. The business is, lending money on most exorbitant rates of interest, secured by chattel mortgages on household goods, and other questionable forms of security. The borrowers are usually persons who know nothing of finance, all they do know is, that they are in urgent need of money, the pressure of which want blinds them to the enormous cost of the loan obtained from one of the new class of companies. A case known to us illustrates this. A young clerk having lost money at cards sought a loan of \$50. The loan was agreed to, the conditions being, that only \$40 cash be paid him though he signed a demand note for \$50. Interest and instalments were to be paid weekly, or, in default, his furniture was to be seized. These payments, if kept up, would have caused him to pay interest at 50 per cent. per annum on \$50 when he had only borrowed \$40, and the instalments amounted to \$55, over and above the interest! The agreement worked out the result that, the borrower was charged 100 per cent. on his loan. To call such transactions "business" is an abuse of language. They are a cruel form of fraud, against which the community ought to be protected by a legal enactment against extortionate rates of interest on loans.

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Mr. P. M. WICKHAM, who was many years the representative of the Alliance Insurance Company in this city, has been appointed chief agent of the Rochester-German Insurance Company, his territory including the Province of Quebec. Mr. Wickham is a well and favourably known underwriter. We wish him abundant success.

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**SUICIDE OF A YOUNG BANK OFFICER.**—Mr. Robert G. McCash, paying teller of the Bank of Commerce, Winnipeg, killed himself on 2nd inst., by a shot in the head. His accounts are reported to be in order and the cause for this terrible deed is a mystery. Hopes are expressed that the shot was accidental.

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**THE RUSSIAN SITUATION IMPROVING.**—If the reports from St. Petersburg are true a remarkable change for the better has occurred in the situation in Russia. It is stated, grimly, that the slaughter of revolutionists in Moscow has been on such a wholesale scale as to have cleared the city of this disturbing class. A very, indeed, the most effective way of putting an end to revolt is to destroy the revolt. That course was taken by Louis Napoleon, in December, 1852, when he made a revolution on his own account and caused himself to be proclaimed Emperor of the French. The objectors to this were killed off wholesale and artillery was placed along some of the streets of Paris, and point-

ed at commanding centres of traffic to overawe the citizens. It is a terrible crisis in a country when nothing short of wholesale massacres will secure the requisite conditions for considering and for carrying out the reforms needed in the interest of liberty and popular Government.

It is reported that the people are beginning to realize, that order must be established before the constitutional government promised by the Czar can be organized. A popular election cannot proceed until voters are able to cast their ballots outside the range of rifle bullets.

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**THE WAR ON PRINTING ESTABLISHMENTS.**—The Minister of the Interior, St. Petersburg, is stated to have closed 42 printing offices to prevent the publication of newspapers obnoxious to the ruling powers. We fear this Minister, to use a familiar phrase, "is up against" an insurmountable difficulty. He might as well try to keep back the tides as stop the Press from being the medium for expressing public sentiment. The thing has been often tried and those who sought to suppress newspapers, pamphlets, etc., found the task not only difficult, but very dangerous. Russia will never be in a healthy political condition until the Press is free.

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**THE NEW GOVERNMENT IN GREAT BRITAIN.**—The elections to be held shortly are giving rise to speculative forecasts as to what the result will be. There is by no means great confidence felt in the electorate giving Sir Campbell-Bannerman anything more than a bare and uncertain majority, even by the newspapers of his party. On the other hand there is a far from sanguine feeling shown on the other side.

The probabilities are that, if Mr. Balfour were more definite in his views, if he played loyally on the side of Mr. Chamberlain and his team, the combination would be too strong for the new Government. Free Trade, or, the policy of Free Imports, has seen its best days in England. The competition of foreign manufactures is conveying a lesson to many in the old country, which shakes their faith in Free Trade.

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**MONTREAL BOARD OF TRADE PRESIDENCY.**—Mr. F. H. Mathewson, manager of the Montreal branch of the Canadian Branch of Commerce, who now fills the office of 1st vice-president of the Board of Trade, was nominated by Sir George A. Drummond, president of the Bank of Montreal, for the position of president for the ensuing year. Mr. Mathewson during the past year acted as chairman of the Civic Insurance Committee, in connection with which he and his colleagues did excellent work. They went into the matter thoroughly, and presented a concise and valuable report. Mr. Mathewson was for many years a member of the Winnipeg Board of Trade,