

A Farce in Finance.

The idea of a "popular loan" for the city of Montreal can only be considered one of the whims and follies of some feverish brain, and the result is calculated to make the metropolis a cause for merriment among those entrusted with the financial affairs of the smallest hamlet in the Dominion. The childish supposition that every prudent possessor of fifty dollars would be impelled by patriotic feeling to compete with his neighbour for the chance of becoming the owner of a civic bond bearing interest at the rate of 3 1/2 per cent. per annum, has been so completely swept away by the ridiculous response of the public, that every sensible citizen will devoutly wish there may be no repetition of such a farce in civic financing.

The Great Ferry.

The announcement that the "Oceanic," the most wonderful passenger steamship now afloat, will cross the Atlantic Ocean with the regularity of a ferry-boat in which persons or things are carried across a river, will stimulate ocean travel in no small measure. Without any direct challenge to Neptune, owners of the "White Star" liner quietly announce their belief that they have conquered the boisterous ocean, and are able to promise that passengers will be landed at Liverpool or New York with unflinching regularity at fixed times. Such is the advertised aim and purpose of the great Atlantic ferry-boat, and, if the "Oceanic" can make her voyages in fair and foul weather with the regularity of a railway train, even her great hull will hardly hold the passengers and freight that will always await her. But the very boldness of the scheme indicates that the speed of the "Oceanic" is to be maintained at all hazards, and even through dense fog the great mass will hold its direct and certain course. The programme of this ocean ferry is an admirable one. But some timid souls will possibly regret that the splendid audacity of genius has induced the owners of the "Oceanic" to throw the caution of the steamship companies of the past overboard, and that never again will the passenger be told that his ship leaves port "wind and weather permitting." This is truly the age of progress.

A Black Cloud.

Now that all eyes are turned toward South Africa, several students of possibilities perceive a black cloud upon the horizon in the shape of the colored population of that country, and the question of what the Zulus and Matabeles may do in the event of war is being much discussed by those who know the country and are familiar with its history. The blacks are said to hate the Boers and fear the British, and it is thought that the outcome of the first few engagements between the soldiers of the Queen and President Kruger's burghers will determine to which side the support of the blacks will be given. An approximate estimate shows the respective population to be:—

In Cape Colony, 376,812 white and 1,148,266 colored; in Natal, 44,415 white and 450,288 colored; in Rhodesia, 13,000 white and 500,000 colored; in Bechuanaland, 5,254 white and 7,471 colored; in Basutoland, 578 white and 218,326 colored; in the Transvaal, 300,000 white and 649,560 colored, and in the Orange State, 77,716 white and 120,787 colored. Thus there are nearly four times as many blacks as whites in that part of South Africa to which the attention of the civilized world is now directed.

The Zulus and Matabeles are renowned for their bravery and discipline, and the Dutch Republic would probably have been wiped out by a swarm of blacks twenty years ago but for the success of the British in their campaign against the Zulus. The black nations are now reported to be quitting work and endeavoring to obtain arms, and it is more than likely that the outbreak of war between the British and the Boers will be the signal for an uprising of their common enemy. Altogether the white residents of the Transvaal are in an unenviable position.

An Amateur Salvage Corps.

The confusion and havoc frequently occasioned at fires by the fearful and wonderful work of those who voluntarily assist to remove property menaced by the flames has seldom been more amusingly depicted than in the following description by the Sydney "Bulletin" of occurrences at Kalgoorlie and Rockhampton, Australia. We are told that the former town has "some kind of a fire brigade—mostly crippled for want of water—but no salvage corps." Everybody takes a hand at the salvage business when a big fire happens, and the work of the amateur salvage corps is thus described: "It begins in a wild state of excitement, and grows wilder and madder as it goes on, till it bursts open every house and shop in the street where the fire is located, and in the next three streets as well, and throws the stock and the cash and the proprietor's baby 40 feet in the air, and lets them come down whack, and then treads them in the mud, and leaves them there while it rushes off and benevolently wrecks some more premises—all with the view to saving the goods from destruction. At the last big fire in Kalgoorlie the amateur salvage corps worked nobly without hope of reward and broke nearly everything within a quarter mile of the conflagration. But it is much the same everywhere. Rockhampton, Queensland, used to be given over to these unobtrusive benefactors, but one night a judicious jeweler with a gun so damped their ardor that the amateur salvagers pretty well dropped the business. The usual fire was on, and the well-meaning crowd had cleaned out the adjacent grocery, which was in practically no danger; and some of them had saved the kippered herrings by carrying them home, and the rest had saved the eggs by heaving them into the road under the boots of the multitude. Then they rushed to rescue the jewelry shop next door by hurling the gold watches and