

and while philanthropists go on donating millions in money for the conversion of the heathen, some importance is demanded for the question whether men like "Butch" Lyons have had a fair chance, and whether our civilization is all that it is represented to be.

### IS IT THE FRAM?

Some time ago a dispatch to the NEWS stated that a vessel had been seen in the month of July somewhere off the coast of Greenland, imbedded in ice, and that the supposition was that the vessel possibly was the Fram, Nansen's ship, which long ago was given up for lost.

Official investigations now tend to strengthen this supposition rather than otherwise. In a report to the government, Mr. J. Hansen, captain of the sealer *Magdalene*, it is stated that only Norwegian vessels this year were employed in the seal catching business in these regions, while formerly also English vessels were seen there. This year there were in all sixteen Norwegian vessels. All these left about the middle of July except two, one of which was too far from the coast to be seen by the *Equimaux*, and the other has returned home in safety.

That the vessel reported seen in the ice, consequently, was some ship not belonging to the whaling fleet is considered tolerably certain. The opinion that it may be Nansen's Fram is further supported by the fact that the unknown vessel is said to have its foremast broken, the rigging of the Fram being such as to give her this appearance when seen from a distance. As communication with these parts of the world is limited to a few months in the year, the probability is that full particulars cannot be obtained before next spring. Nansen was, however, well equipped for four years. Investigations concerning the reported ship are still going on.

### A SOUTH AFRICAN BUBBLE.

Notwithstanding all warnings from conservative sources, a sort of a craze for South African mining stocks has taken possession of London and is spreading to the European continent. It has now advanced so far that a crash is looked for, more disastrous in its consequences than any point in recent years.

A few figures will give an idea of the enormous extent of the transactions involved. Shares in South African mines to the value of \$2,000,000,000 have been distributed in England and on the continent. The whole output of gold for the year 1895 is estimated at \$45,000,000. When the cost of production is deducted, the net profit may amount to between twelve and fifteen million dollars. Probably four-fifths of this is absorbed by a few companies, that will realize dividends, leaving practically nothing to the remaining millions of investors.

One of the leading spirits in this gigantic financial scheme is Cecil Rhodes, who formerly acquired fame because he secured control of the large diamond mines of South Africa. He is also supposed to have been aiming at

the building up of an African republic with himself as president. Concerning the antecedents of this new Napoleon of finance, the following is published:

Rhodes is the younger son of an English Episcopal clergyman, whose greatest ambition twenty years ago was to enter the profession of his father. But health failed while he was at college, and he went to the Cape of Good Hope for a change of climate. Soon after his arrival the Kimberley diamond fever broke out and Rhodes was stricken with it. He, therefore, followed the rush to Kimberley, and began at once a career of the boldest kind of speculation. It resulted ultimately in his securing possession of all the mines in the district, which he consolidated under the name of the Consolidated De Beers. He then restricted the output by closing up some of the mines, and thus regulated the diamond market to suit his own purposes. Later on the discoveries of gold in the Transvaal opened a new field for his adventurous spirit, and he afterward extended his operations into Matabeleland, located and partially developed some properties, and then successfully promoted and listed a lot of South African mines in London, "turning," says a commentator, "millions of unearned pounds into the coffers of the combine," of which he was the chief.

His chief assistant is a man named Barney Barnato, who once earned a living as a contortionist but who now has the head of a London banking house and entrusted with the duty of promoting South African mining properties. From the fact that he has accumulated a fortune estimated at \$100,000,000, an idea may be formed of the success he has scored in his capacity of financeering the enterprise. It has come to this that as soon as Barnato associates his name with any company speculating in mining, there is the wildest scramble for stock.

Contortionists who have figured in the South African bubble, although not so conspicuously as Cecil Rhodes and Barney Barnato, says the *San Francisco Chronicle*, are Hamilton Smith, formerly engineer of the North Bloomfield hydraulic mine on Humboldt creek, a tributary of the South Yuba; Perkins, who was at the same time superintendent of the North Bloomfield; Tom Mein, formerly of Nevada City and subsequently of Alaska, and De Crano, remembered by every hydraulic miner as the inventor of the deflector of the monitor or hydraulic giant. He went to South Africa some years ago under Hamilton Smith, who, in turn, represented the interests of the Rothschilds in South African properties.

All of these are said to have made fortunes by their operations.

### CHINESE JUSTICE.

In a correspondence of recent date to the *Pall Mall Gazette*, detailed accounts are given of the methods by which persons in China, accused of participation in the recent massacres are made to "confess." When the court is ready, the writer says, the accused man is brought in, handcuffed. He is invariably filthy in appearance, and has the wild and ghastly look of a starved man, which he really is. The prisoner opens proceedings by swearing that he was nowhere near the

scene of the massacre, and then the torture begins. The man is first compelled to kneel with his bare knees upon a coil of chain. His head is dragged back and his pigtail is fastened in a rack high above his head. A pole is then thrust across his legs, and two soldiers stand on each end of it, crushing the wretch's knees into the coil of chain. The British consul could not stand this method of extracting testimony, and insisted that it be stopped. This was done, so far as the proceedings in the courtroom were concerned, but for an hour afterward the shrieks of the tormented prisoners could be heard coming from an adjacent room, where the torture was continued.

When the magistrates wanted to hear the confession of a tortured man the prisoner was brought back into the courtroom. If he held back his confession a threat to resume the torture was usually sufficient to cause him to tell all he knew. Besides the torture described, the prisoners were beaten with bamboo sticks until their yells were horrible to hear. One prisoner appeared in the courtroom unable to walk from a beating he had received, and another was unable to kneel because his knees had been broken by the chain links and his thighs had been lacerated by strokes of bamboo rods.

In the midst of such misery, cakes, fruits, tea and wines were served and partaken of by the native officers, who could not understand why the foreigners present pushed these delicacies aside, refusing to touch them.

It is well known that such jurisprudence is common in Mongolian courts of justice, and it is evident enough that it bars the accused wretches from proving their innocence. For if they are accused, they are doomed inasmuch as confession and death are about the only escape possible from worse than death.

In the present instance there is not the slightest guaranty that the tortured and condemned prisoners are the rickety. They may be persons guilty of no other crime than having incurred the displeasure of the mandarins, and being on that account considered proper substitutes for the real criminals. But it is high time the foreign representatives in China see to it that the justice they demand in the name of civilization is not thus flagrantly outraged.

### MEXICO'S GREAT ACHIEVEMENT.

The world has seen no greater sanitary project than that having for its object the drainage of the ancient American capital, the City of Mexico. It has excited the most intense interest among engineers everywhere; its history has hardly been more romantic than tragic; and its accomplishment removes a menace that has existed ever since the very beginning of the rare old city. For at least three centuries it has presented a problem which scientific skill has wished and aimed to solve. Its antiquity has in no way detracted from its interest and importance, nor have its claims to public attention been either diminished or postponed by reason of historic tragedies with which the city has been associated, or of national violence.