

There are other much more discreditable methods whereby this business acumen shows itself in the form of collusion; but the line of conduct and motive already indicated is surely sufficient evidence of the inherent possibilities of the unloading system. The party allowed to unload occasionally goes in again on the new and sound estate formed by a guaranteed composition, and thus still greater business acumen is developed.

That Mercantile Agencies are and have been, both consciously and unconsciously to themselves, utilized successfully to the process of unloading is past a doubt. Business acumen suggests at once a possibility of their usefulness. Would that their "usefulness were gone"!

It seems weak to be wise after the fact, but events have convinced us that to lack of honour and good faith between merchant and merchant, merchant and trader, and man and man, Mercantile Agencies must attribute their existence and their success among us. With the return of these qualities they must disappear.

In view of the woeful effect of dishonour in trade, foolish attempts to shirk the consequences of our own reckless trading on others less able to bear it, as seen in disasters to the whole trading community, as well as to financial circles, following inevitably as effect from cause, who should dare to maintain that character, ability, honour and integrity are qualities which have no monetary value? True, at first it is "the simple who pass on and are punished"; yet their loss is not a gain to any. For the trouble is that they *do* pass on and take their punishment in some other land; and it is *not* good for a country when the simple man who delights in honest labour, and holds all men true to the same creed and practice till he has proved them otherwise, finds no response to his trustful honesty, and in all the wide waste of the flood of falsity which overspreads the land fails to discover *another green thing* to rest upon.

It has not got quite so bad as that yet in Canada, but there are yet undiscovered possibilities in our business acumen which cause trembling in

"One who has Suffered."

"NO KINGS, NO PRIESTS, NO NOTHING."

Social reforms are admitted by most persons to be necessary, from time to time; and the main question with social reformers is, where they ought to stop. Some think it only necessary to keep up the fabric of society, as you do the fabric of a building, by necessary repairs—which repairs perhaps include concessions to the new requirements of the times, in the form of alterations. There they stop short. Others think that reforms should go a great deal farther, and not only include repairs and alterations, but an absolute change in the very constitution of things. These it has been customary to call radical views; but time, which changes everything, has given a new meaning even to the word "radical." It was adopted in the time of the English Reform Bill, about 1830, as most expressive of the extreme political views of that period. The people who called themselves Radicals did so because they believed that they were going to the root of things—as its meaning implies—and instead of patching and tinkering up the old Constitution, meant to uproot old abuses, to go beneath the surface of society and down to first principles, and so start fair on a new course untrammelled by the past and uninfluenced by those considerations which deterred the Whigs—who also wanted reform—from striking for them in anything like a bold, determined, or thorough fashion. But the Radicalism of fifty years ago was a very mild sort of thing, terrible as it looked to those who regarded it as a lever for uprooting the very foundations of society. Much that it aimed at has been accepted even by the Conservatives themselves, who have, indeed, gone in some directions farther than the original Radicals ever dreamed of.

Meanwhile, principles have come into play which Radicalism would have shuddered at. People used to joke about levelling-down till there was nothing more to level; about sharing property, so that all might be equal; and then, when individual genius and industry upset that equality—sharing again. It was held to be quite a fancy Democrat who was in favour of "no kings, no property—no nothing." And here we find ourselves, as the result of the world's progress, actually face to face with the "no nothing" creed as an actual, tangible, and moving principle in the world around us. The principle takes different names; but there it is, a reality, doing its work, exercising its influences, bringing about a new social condition of things, and filling the rulers of the world, and the holders of property under those rulers, with consternation, not to say absolute horror.

The "no nothing" principle has many degrees of intensity, takes many shapes, and has many names. Happily, our Canadian soil does not seem favourable for its growth. It exists in several stages of development amongst our neighbours in the United States, and traces of it are to be found in all European countries, but in some it is much more formidable than in others. In its mildest form it means little more than a conviction that society must be reorganized, that the old types are worn out or unfitted for use in this enlightened age, and that consequently there must be new ones. A good many

advanced Germans mean little more than this, and some of the more startling political creeds of America hardly go beyond it. The French Communist has a bad name, and, as we know, can go to extremes on occasion. In England a "red" tinge shows itself here and there, but not to any such extent that it is likely to—socially speaking—"be universal sea incarnadine." For the thorough, pronounced, and really dangerous extreme of "no nothing"-ism, we must at this moment look to Russia. There the thing is expressed in the term Nihilist—one who aims deliberately at securing—nothing! "Pull down, burn, kill, destroy, make away with everything that exists, and then it will be time enough to consider what shall be built up and respected as worthy of endurance and respect." That, so far as it can be gathered, is in a nut-shell the present phase of the Nihilist creed. One of their apostles is represented as stating that the Nihilists are "drunk with the love of destruction." But it is not a senseless or aimless intoxication. There is method in their madness. They would destroy all governments and all modern civilization, so that they might start fair on the ruins.

Not a pleasant creed this for society at large—certainly not for the Rulers of it, as they have found to their cost. Enthusiasts professing a Gospel of Destruction are pretty sure to aim high. If it were only to make their own power felt and to inspire the world with a sense of awe and respect, they would begin by bringing down the noblest quarry and by condemning to the flames property of such magnitude that the fiery glow of its destruction would redden the heavens of the world. No wonder, then, that the name of Nihilist has struck terror to the hearts of kings and made the owners of wealth everywhere shudder with apprehension and the sense of insecurity. These men who would destroy all do not spare themselves. Singled out to point the revolver or use the assassin's knife, they go straight to what they hold to be their duty, prepared to perish with the wreck of the perishing world. It is not only that they are bound by oaths; they are the fanatics of the faith in support of which these oaths are administered. They stand in the position which the Thug holds to the vulgar assassin. They have embraced a social faith with all the fervour of religion, and are prepared to fall martyrs to it, convinced that their blood is the seed from which will spring that vague intangible good which is to be the heritage of the future. It sounds strangely, this faith of theirs, this belief in the necessity to annihilate in order that out of blank nothingness, out of barren waste, there may spring the material salvation for which the nations hunger. It is an old promise that in due course the wilderness shall blossom like the rose; but it seems a wild conceit that the desert must be created as a prelude to such blossoming. Ages of misery, of struggles, of the "hope deferred which maketh the heart sick," have preceded the birth of this strange fanaticism. It is none the less real, as the terror of Emperors who have been made targets of, and the blazing of cities, have too surely testified. Sober-minded folk regard it as a mania. The religious world sees in it the direct influence of the devil. Political economists, with their theories of production and capital, and their faith in wealth, stand aghast at the utter subversion of all the fundamental laws of society. To these and to all others the answer of the Nihilist is, "You kings, priests, statesmen and theorists have had your reign and tried your nostrums, sovereign, religious and political, and to what effect? You have left the world but a little better than you found it; you have taken care of yourselves and enriched your little coteries with the land and the produce of the land, and the outcome of the industries of the toiling millions. But what of these millions? What is their condition now, and what are the prospects before them for all time to come? Let the social wheel revolve as it has revolved from immemorial days, and the world will never be bettered. The social problem will always be solved in the interests of the few, never in the interests of the many. It is time, then, that the many should undertake the task that will never be performed for them; and as a first step it is desirable to make a clean sweep of all that at present exists. Let us break up the framework of society, knock its Rulers on the head, destroy property, reduce everything to one great, dead, barren level, and upon that, as upon one vast plateau, reconstruct society and civilization."

This is an outline, and perhaps imperfectly sketched, the creed of those insurrectionary spirits who are everywhere at work under different names and with various shades of opinion, but whose advanced guard assume the name of Nihilists. What their number may be it is impossible to estimate—whether they are so few that it will be possible for the despotic Powers to stamp them out, or so numerous that the persecution of individuals must be as ineffectual as Mrs. Partington's attempt to resist the Atlantic with her broom, time will show. In the very nature of things, somewhat of mystery must attend the birth and growth of such a movement. Looking to its monstrous character, the first conclusion would be that it must be confined to a few,—that it has been exaggerated by fear, and possibly gained a factitious importance through persecution. On the other hand, there is a widespread spirit of unrest and discontent among the nations. It is impossible to say to what lengths it may have gone, and how generally there may prevail in the hearts of the peoples of Europe that desperate feeling which takes the form of chronic antagonism to existing institutions, and of a resolve to have in the future no authority, no religion, no property—in a word, No NOTHING.

Quevedo Redivivus.