THE OMAHA DAILY BEE: SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 27, 1887.--SIXTEEN PAGES.

RUSSIAN LIBERALS. THE

Their Last Appenl-The Justice of Their Protest. THE INTRODUCTION OF NIHILISM.

How the Liberals Were Hindered in

Their Attempt to Put a Stop to Violence and Bloodshed -The "Terrorists."

In the November Century there appears an article cutitled "The Last Apneal of the Russian Liberals." by George Kennan, who is without doubt one of the most thoroughly posted men in America on Russian affairs. Mr. Kennan, who was originally a telegraph operntor, has visited Russia several times and has spent several years in that country. The last time he went to Russia he had an interview with Count Tolstoi, and he also Interviewed over five hundred persons who had been exiled to Siberia. Mr. Kennan is one of the very few Americans who have mastered the Russian hanguage. His article in the Century is as follows.

Among the first questions which arise in the mind of any dispassionate student of contemporary Russian history when he reviews the events of the last twenty years are the following: "What is the real nature and significance of the protest against authority which has re cently taken so extreme and violent form in Russia; what are its original enuses and what are the opinions, hopes and aims of the party or class which manifests such an unconquerable spirit of rebellion and which acts with such ficree and destructive energy? Is the protecting party or class a homogene-ous body, all of whose memberss are inspired by the same ideas, or is there a difference of opinion among its constituent units as to principle and methods of action? Is what the world calls nihilism a mere philosophy of negation and destruction, which does not look beyond the overthrow of existing institutions, or has it in view some ideal of social order which it hopes ultimately to realize? If the Nihilists are social reformers sincerely desirous of improving the

CONDITION OF THE PROPLE by changing the social and political order of things in the direction of greater free-dom, how did it happen that they began their protest at the very time when such changes were being made with great radidity, and why did they fiercely and vindictively pursue and finally murder Alexander II., the man who was granting, as fast as it seemed prudent or practicable to grant, the very reforms which they themselves demanded? In short, what do the phenomena of con-temporary Russian history mean?"

These questions must be answered before any intelligent idea can formed of the existing situation in Russia, and before any prediction can be made as to the probable outcome of the

struggle which is there going on. It has been my fortune, in the course of the last two years, to make the intimate acquaintance of more than five hundred members of this. Russian protesting party, including not less than three hundred so-called "nihilists" living in exile at the convict mines and in the penal settlements of Siberia, I can perhaps throw some light, therefore, upon the problems presented by recent Russian history, and answer some of the questions which necessarily suggest themselves to the attentive student of Russian affairs. The sub-ject, however, is one of great extent and complexity, and it is not

renef, who used it in his novel 'Fathers and Children' to decribe a certain type of character which had then recently made its appearance in the ranks of the rising generation and which he contrasted sharply and effectively with the prevailing type in the generation which was passing from the stage. As applied to Bazaroff, the skeptical, materialistic, iconoclastic surgeon's son in Turgenel's novel, the word "Nihilist" had a natural appro-printeness which the Russian public at once recognized. There were differopinion as to the question enters whether any such class as that repre-Bazaroff really by Bazaroff really ex-but there was no difsented. isted. ference of opinion with regard to the appropriateness of the term as ap-plied to that particular character. It was accurately descriptive of the type. The word "Nihilist," however, was oon caught up by the conservatives and by the government, and was applied indiscriminately by them as an oppro-brious and discrediting nickname to all persons who were not satisfied with the Russian life under the novel conditions xisting order of things and who sought by any active method whatever, to bring about changes in Russian social and political organization. To many of the reformers, leonoclusts, and extreme the orists of that time the term "Nihilist" was perhaps fairly applicable-as it certainly was, for example, to Bakunin and his followers-and by some of them t was even accented in a spirit of pride and defiance as on appellation which although a nickname, expressed con cisely their opposition to all forms of authority based on force. To the great mass of the Russian malcontents, however, it had then, and has now, no appropriate reference whatever. It would be quite as fair and quite as reasonable to say that the people in the United States who were once called "know-nothings" were persons who really did not know anything as to say that the people in Russia who are now called "nihilists" are persons who really do not believe in anything, nor respect anything, nor do anything ex cept destroy. By persistent iteration and reiteration, however, the Russian government and the Russian conserva tive class have succeeded in making the world accept this opprobrious nickname as really descriptive of the charac-ter and opinions of all their opponents, from the "terrorist"

who throws an explosive bomb unde the carriage of the ezar, down to the peaceful and law-abing member of a provincial assembly who respectfully isks leave to petition the crown for the redress of grievances. It would be hard to find another instance in history where an incongruous and inappropri ate appellation has thus been fastened upon a hetrogeneous mass of people to whose beliefs and actions it has no sort of applicability, or a case in which an opprobrious nickname has had so coufusing and so misleading an influence upon public opinion throughout the where the peasants toiled and suffered. world. The people most misrepresented and wronged by this nickname are unques-tionably the Russian liberals-the members of the protesting party who seek to obtain reforms by peaceable and le-gal methods. From the point of view of the government there might perhaps be some propriety in the application of the term "nihilist" to a conspirator like Nechaief or to a regicide like Ryssakoff; but there can be no possible reason or excuse for calling by that name a pro-fessor who opposes the inquisitorial provisions of the new university laws, an editor who disputes the right of the government to banish a man to Siberia without a trial, or a momber of a pro-vincial assembly who persuades his fel-low-delegates to join in a petition to hauged at St. Petersburg in 1881, began her career with this sort of missionary work; Vera Phillipoya, who planned the the crown asking for a constitution. These people are not "inihilists," they assassination of General Strelnikof and are not even revolutionists; they are peaceable, law-abiding citizens, who are striving by reasonable methods to who died of prison consumption in the fortress of Schlusselburg last year, was another of the heroic young women who ceure a better form of government; and yet these men are removed from their official places, silenced by ministerial prohibition, arrested without adequate nuse, exiled without a judicial hearing, and finally misropresented to the world as "nibilists" and enemies of all SOCIAL ORDER.* I do not mean to say that the government formally and officially brands this class of its opponents with this nickname, or seriously regards it as properly applicable to them. I mean only that the Russian conservative party and the government press have used the word "nihilist" so persistently and so indiscriminately to characterize all sorts of malcontents, that the world has come to regard it as more or less descriptive of the whole protesting class, and has lost sight of the radical differences between the various groups of which that class is made up. It is my purpose in the present paper to briefly describe the attitude taken toward the government by this peaceable; law-abiding branch of the Russian protesting party, and then to allow the liberal members of that party to express in their own words the opinions which they hold with regard to the existing state of affairs in Russia, and the means which, in their judgment, should be adopted to stop oppression ca one side and violent and unnatural forms of protest on the other. Before precéeding, however, to an examination of the opinions and actions of the Russian liberals, it is necessary to sketch hastily the conditions under which the protesting class came into existence, and the nature of the wrongs and evils against which the protest was made. The sketch must necesserily be a brief and inadequate one, and the reader will, I trust, understand that it does not pretend to cover fully the ground, or even to outline the history of Russia during the period. It is in-tended merely to suggest the facts which are indispensable to a clear comprehension of the liberal position. Between the years 1861 and 1866 the Russian government, doubtless ani-mated by a sincere desire to promote the welfare of the people, undertook a series of sweeping and far-reaching re-forms, which included the emancipation of the serfs, the grant of comparative freedom to the press, the reorgani-zation of the courts, and the establishment of a system of local self-government, by means of elective assemblies, or zemstvos. If these reforms had been carried out in the liberal spirit in which they were apparently conceived, they would have affected beneficially every department of Russian social and political life; they would have lightened in a hundred ways the burdens which rested upon all classes of citizens; they would have satisfied, temporarily, at least, the growing demand for greater freedom of thought, speech, and action, and would have saved the country from a long, disastrous, and exhausting revolutionary struggle. Unfortunately, however, the government either lost faith * It is hardly necessary, perhaps, to say that this is not a varue, general assertion, made at random. I have particularly in mind the case of a well-known professor of mind the case of a well-known professor of the Moscow university whose name I will not give, because he is not yet an exile; the case of Constine M. Staniukovitch, formerly cditor of the Russian magazine "Diello," who is now an exile in the town of Tomsk, western Siberia; and the case of Ivan I. Pe-trunkevitch, formerly a justice of the peace and a member of the provincial assembly of theories of the source of the Chernigof, who is now an exile in one of the northern provinces of European Russia. They are all moderate liberals, and they have all been punished without a trial or even a hearing.

in its own projected reforms, took alarm at the attitude of independence assumed r some of the provincial sascablies, or scame seriously approhensive that the iberal movement, if not checked and cognition of the evils and wrongs against epressed, would go beyond the limits marked out for it, and perhaps get en-tirely beyond control. Instead, therefore, of carrying out its reforms pre serveringly and consistently, and with a feeling of confidence in the good sense, patriotism, and self-control of the people, the government began nee to restrict, qualify, and abrogate rights and privileges which it had just granted. By means of ministerial cirulars and secret instructions to provincial governors, it limited freedom of discussion in the provincial astemblies. gagged again the partial enfronchised press, withdrew whole classes of important cases from the jurisdiction of the recognized courts, restricted the right of private meeting to discuss questions of political economy, accested persons who assembled for the purpose of conwhich the reforms had created, and in a hundred ways harried and exasperated the liberal element, which sought merely to do its part in the work of reform, reorganization, and regeneration which the government itself had undertaken. The result of this reactionary policy was of course intense popular dis- acts of violence. In pursuance of this satisfaction, which at first manifested itself in outspoken protests, then took the form of determinad opposition, and finally ended in open insubordination. This called forth repressive measures of still greater severity, which only in-creased the feeling of exasperation; and at last the younger and more impulsive members of the liberal party, inding themselves powerless to attain by open and legal methods the objects which they had in view, and believing that the government had never been sincere in its liberal professions, under took to act for themselves, and in their own way, by organizing in all of the larger towns secret circles which they called "Circles for Self-Instruction." These were originally little more than associations for ardent young liberals. who met frequently at private houses to talk over their grievances, and discuss methods of improving the condition of

the peasants; but they were gradually transformed by repressive measures into secret centers of revolutionary activity. About this time began that remarks ble, impulsive, generous but quixotic liberal crusale which was known as "going to the people." Thousands of educated young men, fired with an ardent desire to do something to atone for the sins of their fathers toward the recently emancipated serfs.and filled with pity for the latter's ignorance and misery, went into the RUSSIAN VILLAGES, into the suburbs of the great cities, into factories, into workshops, into all place

and sought, by sympathy, by co-operation, and by personal instruction, to help and elevate the men and women whom their fathers had bought, sold, and flogged. Hundreds of cultivated and refined young women, with that singular capacity for self-sacrifice which is inherent in the Russian character. abandoned their homes and families. put on coarse peasant dress, went into the remotest, loneliest, and dreariest villages of the empire, and, in the capacity of school teachers, midwives, or nurses, shared the hard, prosaic life of the common people, labored with them, suffered with them, and bore their burdens, merely in order to learn how they could best be helped. Sophia Perofs-kaya, one of the five regicides who were

such a crime would be disastrous, if not fatal, to the cause of liberty, determined to make another effort to obtain from the government some rewhich the revolutionists were so flercely protesting, and some promise of a re-turn to the liberal programme outlined in the reform measure of 1861-1866. In order, however, to make this attempt with any prospect of success, it was manifestly necessary to secure a temporary suspension, at least, of the destructive netivity of the extreme revolutionar party. Nothing could be accomplished by peaceful methods if the "terroists continued to alarm and exasperate the government with threats and deeds of murderous violence. In the early part of 1879, therefore, some of THE PROMINENT LIBERALS.

Chernigof and Kharkoff, including Prof. Gordeenko (the mayor of the latter city) and Mr. Petrunkevitch (the presiding justice of one of the new courts, and a member of the Chernigof provincial assembly), decided to open communication with the "terrorists," urge upon them the dangers of the path on which they had entered, point out to them the calamities which they might bring upon Russia by this des-perate, unreasonable, murderous policy, and ascertain upon what conditions to stop committing they would agree resolution a committee of liberals, representing several of the zemstvos, or provincial assemblies, of central and southern Russia, made journeys to various parts of the empire, and had personal interviews with a number of the lead-ers of the "terroristic" or extreme revolutionary party. The committee said to the latter:

"We believe that we can bring about re-forms by peaceable and legal methods, and we desire now to make another attempt to do so, but we shall of course fail if you continue these political murders. Our object in com ing to see you is to ask you to suspend you operations for a while and give us an oppor-tunity to act. If we fail to attain our ends by reasonable and peaceful methods, and if yo then think that you can accomplish some thing by your policy of "terror," proceed a your own peril; we shall disapprove and de-plore your mistaken action, but we shall have nothing more to say; first, however, give us a chance." "The "terrorists" declared that their

policy was not one of choice; that the government had forced them to adopt it by closing to them all other avenue of escape from an absolutely intolerable position. They were willing, however to listen to reason, and would solemly promise not to commit any more acts of violence if the government would ever show a disposition to do'three thingsnamely, first, remove the existing re-strictions upon freedom of speech and of the press; second, guarantee personal rights against capricious, illegal, irre sponsible action on the part of the exect tive authorities; and, third, allow the people to participate in some way in the national government. These, they said, were the things for which they were fighting, and if they could be satisfied that the government would grant these demands, they as a party would refrain wholly from acts of violence and "maintain an attitude of expectancy."

The members of the liberal committee returned to their homes and held a consultation with their fellow-delegate as to the best methods of carrying their plans into execution. The only basis upon which they could proceed in legal form was that familished by zemstvos, or provincial assemblics. These were le-gally authorized bodies, representative of the people and recognized by the government, and it was decided to have these zemstves adopt and simultane-ously forward memorials or petitions to the crown setting forth the grievances of the people and asking for a constitutional form of government. The first petition which went in was

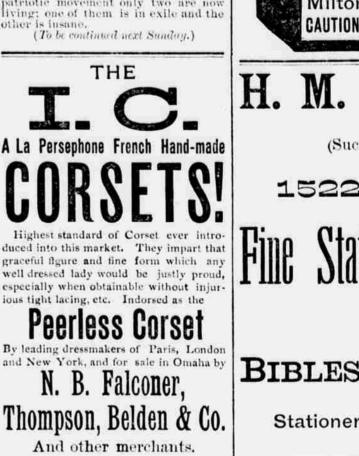
that of the provincial assembly of Kharkoff, which convened earlier than he others, and therefore took the lea This address was not as clear in statment nor as definite in its demands might have been desired, but nevertheless produced a profound impression. The minister of the interior at once sent a circular letter to the marshals of the nobility, who presided over the provincial assemblies, directing them not to permit any memorials to be laid before the assemblies without previous submission to them (the marshals) for approval, and not to permit action of approval, and not to permit action of any kind upon such petitions as that from the assembly of Kharkoff. The next zemstvo to draw up a memorial was that of Chernigof. Its address to the crown was respectful in form and tone, but extremely bold in expression. It declared that the government itself was responsible for the revolutionary movement which it asked the people to oppose, because it had never executed faithfully its own laws; that by constantly violating those laws and resorting to administrative force to attain its illegal ends it had destroyed the people's respect for law, and has thus prepared the way for all sorts of anarchistic teaching; that it had not granted a single reform which on the ery next day it had not tried to mutilate or nulify by administrative regulations and restrictions; that it had deprived the Russian people of the right to express its opinions, not only through the press and through public meetings, but even through the provincial assemblies; and, finally, that the only way to successfully combat revolution and anarchy was to create new national forms and adopt a constitution which would restrain illegal action not only on the

governor. Amid a scene of great excitement and confusion, Mr. Petrunkevitch rose to present the address to the crown, which had been almost unanimously adopted by the delegates at the informal session of the previous day. The presiding officer refused to allow it to be read or considered, and when Mr. Petrunkevitch persisted in his attempt to obtain formal action upon it, the marshal peremptorily declared the ses-sion of the assembly closed and the hall was cleared by the gendarmes. The delegates, however, prepared copies of their address, and sent them to all the zemstyos of the empire, and many other assemblies-eight or ten, if remember rightly-followed the example set by the zensivos of Chernigof and Kbarkoff, and drawing up memorials, and trying to

get them acted upon. Their efforts, however, were rendered fruitless by ministerial prohibitions enforced by gendarmes, and on the 14th of April, 1879, this form of agitation was stopped by the attempt of Solivioff to assasinate the czar. Another spasm of alarm, renction and repression followed; martial law was declared throughout the greater part of European Russia, and executions, arrests and the indiscriminate exile of all persons who dared to remonstrate or protest, silenced once more the voice of the Russian people Mr. Petrunkevitch and other members of the provincial assemblics of Chernigof and Kharkoff were arrested and banished by administrative process, and, to adopt the language of the official reports, "order was re-established in the lisaffected provinces.

Thus ended another attempt of the Russian liberals to put a stop to violence and bloodshed, and to obtain for the people of the empire by peaceable methods the reforms which the whole protesting class demanded. Of the eaders in this temperate, courageous, patriotic movement only two are now living; one of them is in exile and the other is insane.











purpose in the press my purpose in the present paper to even make an attempt to deal with it as a whole. I desire merely to correct some widely provalent errors and then to present one phase of the Russian protest against authority, namely, the peaceful legal argumentative phase which proceeded the appeal to force, and out of which ultimately the appeal to force came, as the necessary and inevitable result of the failure of the peace-

ful protest. There is a widely prevalent impression in America that the protesting party or class in Russia is essentially homogeneous; that its members are all "nihilists;" that they prefer violence to any other means of redressing wrongs; that they aim simply at the destruction of existing institutions, and that there is in this so-called "nihilistic" form of protest against authority something peculiar and mysterious - something which the occidental mind cannot fully comprehend, owing to its ignorance of the Russian character. This impres-sion, as I hope to show, is almost wholly an erroneous one. In the first place, the protesting party in Russia is not, in any sense of the word, homogeneous, Its members belong to all rauks, classes, and conditions of the Russian people; they hold all sorts of opinions with regard to social and political organization, and the methods by which they propose to improve the existing condi-tion of things extend through all possible gradations-from peaceful remon-strance, in the form of collective petition, to "terroristie" activity, in the shape of bomb-throwing and assassination. The one common bond which unites them is the feeling which they all have that the existing state of affnirs has become insupportable and must be

changed. changed. In the second place, there is no pro-lesting party in Russia to which

THE TERM, "SHILLISTIC, can be properly applied. This may, perhaps seem like a paradoxical state-ment in view of the fact that we have not heard of any other protesting party in Russia; but it is a true statement, nevertheless. There is no party in the empire which deliberately chooses vio-lence and bloodshed as the best possible means of attaining its ends; there is no party which aims merely at the overthrow of the existing institutions, and there is no party which preaches or practices a philosophy of negation and destruction. 1 make these assertions confidently, because my acquaintance with so-clalled "minilists" is probably more extensive and therough than that of any other foreigner, and I have discussed these question with them for many hundreds of hores. Liber-gis, reformers, socialistic the-prists, revolutionists, and "ter-prists" I have met in all varities, both in Fourier and Design and warities. in European Russia and among the exiles in Siberia; but a nihilist in the proper or even in the popular signifination of that word-never. Of course, if you use the term "nihilist" as you would use the term "know-nothing," merely to denote a certain social or political party and without reference to the original significance of the appellation, you may apply it to any body of men-to the Kuights of Labor, for example; but if you use the word with a consciousness of its grimnry signification, as you would use the word yellow to describe an orange, you cannot properly apply it to any branch of the protesting party in Russia. There is in the empire no party, organization, or body of 'men to which it is applicable. THE WORD "NIHILIST"

yas introduced in Russia by Tur.

thus went "to the people;" Madame Ravalefskaya, who is now serving out a hard-labor sentence in Eastern Siberia, was a teacher in a peasant school; Anna Paviovna Korba, who is dying by inches at the convict mines of Kara, was a Red Cross nurse, and treasurer of a local benevolent society, before she became a member of the dreaded "Nihilist" executive committee; and hundreds of other young women threw themselves with passionate self-abnegation and self-devotion into the work of educating, elevating and helping the lower classes. Something analogous to this took place in our own country soon after the close of the civil war, when educated and refined young women from the New England states went south to teach in negro schools; but the movement in the United States never became epidemic, as it did in Russia, nor was it ever characterized by the reckless, heroic self-sacrifice which illumines so many dark pages of

Russian history. Of course the "Circles for Self-In-struction" and the unprecedented movement of the youth of Russia "to the people" did not escape the vigilant attintion of the government. Both were regarded and perhaps with good reason. as seditious in their character, and steps were at once taken to put a stop to what was believed to be nothing more than a secret revolutionary propoganda. The "Circles for Self-Instruction" were broken up; all persons suspected of disloyalty were put under strict police supervision or banished to distant provinces; educated young men and women found in peasant villages were required to satisfactorily explain their presence there; the more active opponents of the govern-ment were exiled to Siberia by "administrative process' and arrests were made by the hundred in St. Petersburg. Moscow, Kiev, Odessa and all the larger towns of the empire. The feeling of exasperation meanwhile grew more and more intense and the revolutionary movement more and more formidable, notwithstanding the increasing severity of the government's repressive measures until at hast the prisons were liter-ally crammed with political offenders, most of them young people from the educated class. The cruel treatment of these prisoners and of the exiles in Siberia, who were regarded by their fellow revolutionists as martyrs in the cause of freedom, finally provoked re-prisals and in 1878 General Mezzentzef

the chief of gendarmes, was assassin-ated in the street in St. Petersburg, and General Trepoff, the chief of police, of the city, was shot by Zassulitch, for ordering the flogging of a political pris-oner named Bogeeuhoff. During all this, time, the Russian lib-

rals, as distinguished from the revolutionists, had been endeavoring to dis-courage the resort to violence on the one side, and to secure justice, consistency, and adherency on the other. Their efforts, however, were not suc-cessful in either direction. The revolutionists believed that the time fo peaceful remonstrance had passed, and

regarded further discussion as useless. while the government resented the intermediation of the liberals as an im-pertinence, if not a manifestation of sympathy with the declared enemies of the state. Such was the situation of affairs in 1878 and 1879, when the first political assassinations announced the adoption

by the revolutionary party of the policy of "terror." The liberals, forseeing that this policy would almost certainly

part of individual citizens, but on the part of the government. At an informal meeting of all the delegates of the Chernigof provincial assembly this bold address was adopted with only two dissenting votes, and was then given to Mr. Ivan I. Petrunkevitch for formal presentation to the assembly at its regular session on the following day. In the meantime Mr. Petrunkevitch submitted it the presiding officer for approval as required by the recent ministerial circular. The marshal after reading it said. "I cannot allow you to ay this paper before the assembly

"Why?" demanded Mr. Petrunke-

"Because it is forbidden." "Can you show me any law of the em-pire which forbids a delegate to lay before the assembly of which he is a mem-

ber a perfectly respectful petition to the Crown? "No," replied (the marshal, "but I have an order from the minister of the interior which has all the force of law so far as I am concerned, and I must

obey it. "If," said Mr. Petrunkevitch, "you cannot show me a law which forbids such action as that which 1 propose to ake, I am acting within my legal rights, and I shall lay this petition be fore the assembly to-morrow unless I amprevented by force." "Very well," replied the marshal, "I

must take my measures." When, on the following morning Mr.

Petrunkevitch went to the assembly hall he found the public for the first time excluded. There were gendarmes at the door to keep out all persons ex-cept delegates, and there were gendarmes in the hall itself. As soon as the assembly had been called As soon as the to order, several members sprang to their feet and protested against the presence of the gendarmes, which they declared was a menace and lead sooner or later to the assassination of the ezar, and believing that the reaction which must follow



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