

A CLOSER VIEW OF NIHILISM.

The late attempt upon the life of the Czar has again drawn attention to the principle of Nihilism. We who enjoy the blessings of constitutional government have been taught, for fear is a mighty persuader, to look upon Nihilism as the offspring of Atheism and Socialism, or at best of oppression and ignorance. The truth is, that ignorance will none of it. The Nihilists, far from being ignorant peasantry, are made up of the educated young people of the higher and middle classes, who, chafing under a most tyrannical system of government, have learned to hate even the most necessary and salutary forms of restraint. Young military officers, whose necks have not yet become hardened to the yoke, patriotic students at the universities and young ladies' seminaries, toiling editors, unemployed teachers, noblemen impoverished by the abolition of serfdom, sensitive, high spirited children of a despised clergy, starving professional men,—these are the apostles of Nihilism. The works of foreign writers, especially those which have a socialistic tendency, are read with avidity by people to whom almost any political change would be an improvement. In fact, no topic of discussion is more fashionable in Russian society than the latest political fads of English, French, or German writers.

It will thus be seen that ignorance is not the proper soil of Nihilism; rather it is imperfect political intelligence, under the influence of tyranny. Indeed, to reach the peasantry has been the main difficulty of the Nihilist propagandist. In order to accomplish this, refined young ladies have made themselves cooks and house-maids; university students have handled the pick and shovel; and a vast mass of foreign literature is being industriously smuggled into Russia, and translated into the native dialects. Still, the sluggish Russian peasant is in no hurry to adopt new theories, especially as those theories call for action, and it may be a very dangerous action.

The aims of the movement, as announced by the chief official organ are:— 1st. A regular representative assembly, elected by universal suffrage. 2nd. Local self-government of all provinces and districts. 3rd. The creation of the village commune. 4th. The appropriation of all land by the state. 5th. The handing over of all factories and workshops to co-operative associations. 6th. Liberty of conscience and expression for all assemblies and for the press. 7th. Universal suffrage; and 8th. The abolition of the standing army, and the substitution of a national militia. The terrorist methods which have been adopted by one wing of the party since the division of 1879, are intended to intimidate the Czar into granting the main demand, a national assembly. During the last three years, no serious attempt has been made to assassinate the Czar, the time having been spent, as has been suggested by a writer in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, in spreading Nihilistic doctrines among the peasantry. How successful these efforts at propagandism will be, remains to be seen. It may be that the Russian peasantry are too benighted to understand political questions, or too hopelessly dejected to oppose a government backed by an army of four millions. As for the Nihilists themselves, we must confess there are too good grounds for their agitation; and their claims are only slight modifications of political theories which have lately found so able an advocate in Henry George. We may not approve of their methods of procedure, any more than we do terrorism in Ireland; but we must give the Nihilists credit for untiring zeal, unflinching courage, and devoted patriotism.

THE FISHERIES QUESTION.

As announced in our last issue, the official correspondence *in re* the fisheries question, has been laid by the government on the table of the House of Commons at Ottawa. It comprises a somewhat bulky volume of 255 pages, or enough matter to fill every column of THE CRITIC for fully eight weeks to the exclusion of everything else.

The correspondence, as brought down, covers the period from the 17th of June, 1885, to the 27th of April last past, and is to a large extent entertaining reading.

In the season of 1885, that in which the fishery clauses of the Washington treaty were annulled, American fishing vessels were, by mutual consent, permitted to prosecute their calling in our waters. During the summer of 1886, however, the most rigid interpretation of the treaty of 1818 was enforced. By comparing the results we can arrive at a just appreciation of the facts involved in the situation.

Last year a number of American fishing vessels were seized on various pretexts, but it is a rather singular fact that not a single reprisal was made for fishing within the three-mile limit. All the seizures were made for technical violations of customs regulations, and it was so evident in most cases that these violations were innocently committed, that the vessels concerned were released and their fines remitted.

It is true that the American catch of fish was far below the average of a series of preceding years, but, at the same time, that of our fishermen, though they had "full swing" and ample protection, was also lamentably diminutive, and prices for what we did take ruled low, because we were practically shut out of the United States markets.

To "boil down" the facts and the correspondence, it is evident that the allegation that the Americans do not want to fish in our waters, is a true one. The most valuable fishing grounds are proved to be outside and not inside of the three-mile limit.

All that the American fishermen seem to require is what they claim the comity of nations grants them—the right to buy all needed supplies of food, fuel and bait, and to come and go in our harbors without let or hindrance, so long as they do not do what is forbidden to our own vessels, indulge in smuggling—and, also, to land their catch in bond in our ports for transshipment to their principals.

Early in the current year, the U. S. Government proposed to the Imperial authorities the appointment of a joint commission to adjudicate on

the entire matter of dispute, and that, pending the work of such commission, both parties temporarily revert to the treaty of Washington. On the 24th of February last the British Colonial Secretary cabled to Ottawa expressing a general concurrence in the proposals of the U. S. Secretary of State and adding:

"Her Majesty's Government, while endeavoring to procure this *ad interim* arrangement, feel it right to intimate to you that they are disposed to think, after much consideration of the entire subject, that the best and simplest settlement of the present difficulties might be arrived at if both parties would agree—so as to permit the discussion of the more extended commercial arrangements—to revive, for a term at least, if not permanently, the condition of things which existed under the treaty of Washington, fish and fish productions being again reciprocally admitted duty free, and the fishery being once more reciprocally thrown open.

"They are, however, of the opinion that it would be the clear interest of the Dominion that no suggestion of a pecuniary indemnification should be made in proffering this arrangement."

On Feb 26, the Canadian Government answered by cable:

"Referring to your telegram of the 24th February, the Canadian Government is prepared to accept your suggestion of reverting temporarily to condition of things existing under the Treaty of Washington without at present raising question of indemnity."

Canada, or rather Great Britain, which is the only party in the negotiation recognized by our neighbors, is bound to give foreigners all the rights that are theirs by the law of nations. If what they ask are rights, there should be no question of indemnity, and until more is asked than what is clearly right under that law, and irrespective of special treaties, we should be above demanding a monetary consideration for what we cannot in justice, or with any degree of self-respect, withhold or refuse.

On the 24th of March the Imperial Government addressed a communication to that of the United States, which, after referring to the proposal for an International Commission, added:

"But there is another course which Her Majesty's Government are inclined to propose, and which, in their opinion, would afford a temporary solution of the controversy equally creditable to both parties.

"Her Majesty's Government have never been informed of the reasons which induced the Government of the United States to denounce the Fisheries Articles of the Treaty of Washington, but they have understood that the adoption of that course was in a great degree the result of a feeling of disappointment at the Halifax award, under which the United States were called upon to pay the sum of £1,000,000, being the estimated value of the benefits which would accrue to them, in excess of those which would be derived by Canada and Newfoundland from the operation of the Fishery Articles of the Treaty.

"Her Majesty's Government and the Government of Canada, in proof of their earnest desire to treat the question in a spirit of liberality and friendship, are now willing to revert for the coming fishing season, and, if necessary, for a further term, to the condition of things existing under the Treaty of Washington, without any pecuniary indemnity."

In response to that despatch Mr. Bayard, U. S. Secretary of State, has submitted a draft of a proposed treaty on the subject. This draft calls for the appointment of a mixed commission, to agree upon the limits which shall separate exclusive from the common right of fishing off the coasts of the British North American colonies; to agree upon the regulations to secure to the fishermen of the United States the privilege of entering the bays and harbors for the purpose of shelter, repairs and purchasing wood and water, and to agree upon the penalties for violations of such privileges. Pending definite arrangement, Great Britain agrees to instruct Canadian officials not to molest fishing vessels of the United States unless they are found actually fishing within three miles of the coast. Both governments agree to send each to the Gulf of St. Lawrence a national vessel, and also one each to cruise during the fishing season on the southern coast of Nova Scotia. When a vessel is seized for violation of the foregoing provisions the matter shall be reported to the officer in command of one of these national vessels, who, in conjunction with the commander of another of the said vessels shall constitute a court of inquiry. If both are of opinion that the seizure was not for a good cause the vessel shall be released, and in the event of a difference of opinion between the commanders, a third person shall be selected to act as umpire. It is proposed to give fishing vessels the same commercial privileges in Canadian ports as are enjoyed by other United States vessels, including the purchasing of bait and supplies. All vessels now under seizure for alleged violation of the fishery law are to be released, and all fines exacted in such cases are to be refunded. Great Britain is asked to agree to appoint a joint commission, to ascertain the amount of damage caused to American fishermen during 1886 by seizure and otherwise, the commission to make awards therefor to the vessels injured.

It is to be hoped that the main feature of this suggested treaty will be adopted. Some of the details will bear amendment, and will doubtless be altered, but the general outline is satisfactory, and such a settlement would be worthy of the civilization and enlightenment of the two great nations interested.

We believe that such an arrangement is but fair and equitable. It is certainly a great advantage for inhabitants along the shore to have the privilege of selling bait, ice, and other supplies to the American fishermen, but as, without these, the Americans are practically cut off from the deep sea fisheries, we should be allowed to compete with them in their own markets on an equal footing. Nova Scotian fishermen are obliged to buy their ice, bait, and supplies in this province, but if we extend the same privilege to the Americans without their allowing our fish to enter duty free, the Americans would, in fact, reap the harvest.