

SERVIAN PRINCE DEFENDED.

Nikola Tesla Denounces Attack on Lazarovich-Hrebelianovich.

To the Editor of The New York Times:

I am in receipt of a printed statement purporting to express the sentiments of the Serbs of New York. It is an attack on Prince Lazarovich-Hrebelianovich, so vulgar and libelous that its distribution through the mails constitutes a flagrant crime. I understand that thousands have been sent out, and that all the papers in the city have received them. While publicity was refused, much harm has been done, and this is the reason for my asking you the privilege of saying a few words in your columns in the interest of fairness and truth. My motive, however, is not only the just indignation of a man who has done so much for the Balkan cause and the pain and injury inflicted upon a noble American woman, his wife, but the discredit which is cast on my countrymen. I maintain that few of them will be found willing to indorse such an act, and that all those who are endeavoring to live up to Servian ideals will condemn it as emphatically as I do myself.

To make these malicious attacks which have unfortunately found some reflection in the papers effective, misinformation is designedly spread in regard to the status of Servian nobility. On this point it is necessary to enlighten the American public. The political and social changes in Servia bear no semblance to those which took place in America, because of the radically different racial and national traits, customs, and traditions. At the close of the fourteenth century, when the great Servian Empire, under Lazar-Hrebelianovich, fell, the rights of the dynastic family and those of nobility were not lost, although this privileged class was shorn of its worldly power and influence. In the succeeding few hundred years of Turkish rule it almost disappeared through assimilation and emigration. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, when Servia obtained freedom through a revolution, a law was passed forbidding the sovereign to bestow distinctive titles, but nobility still existed, and no special article provided for its extinguishment. Moreover, the modern free State of Servia comprised only a very small part of the mediaeval empire, and any law to this end would be limited to its own territory, and, in any event, would not be retroactive and of effect on those who had emigrated after the battle of Kossovo Polje. So it comes that there are still a few families in Austria, France, Russia, and other countries who can trace their ancestry back to the old Servian nobility, and if they choose to use their titles they can do so with full propriety.

As regards Prince Lazarovich-Hrebelianovich, his title matters little, for he has won a better claim to distinction through his labors and rare intelligence. In his capacity as publisher, editor, lecturer, and author he has rendered great services to the Servian people, which I trust will be fittingly recognized, despite all intrigue and opposition.

NIKOLA TESLA.

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