

error has not crept into their precepts, or that they have always had that wisdom and moderation becoming to Christians. But remember that a few years ago they were ignorant peasants, for the most part unable to read or write. Hunted by the police, they have not been able to enjoy the benefits of regular organized instruction. It is rather then a source of wonder that these simple people, living by themselves, should have kept so closely to the truth of the Gospels, and that great errors should not have gained footing among them. One is compelled to admire their faith and their heroism, and no less the healthy character of their moral and religious life, which forcibly recalls that of the early Christians.

"They live," writes Dalton, "very peaceably with each other. The religious sentiment, so strong in the Russian peasant, finds in the Word of God the guidance it seeks. They strengthen themselves and direct their lives according to the teachings of the Scripture, often interpreting them in the strictest manner; for these noble men lack instructors, but they themselves are generally a striking proof that the Bible enlightens even the most ignorant, provided only that they search in earnest for Jesus in the Gospel."

One cannot find a Stundist who does not faithfully read the New Testament and consider it a revelation from God; this is the first article of his creed. Often he carries it with him to his work, and in his recreation hour, instead of passing the time in drinking as before, he devotes himself to reading. He holds that all who sincerely believe may understand without the aid of the Church or of priests.

The faith of the Stundists is, in a general way, that of all evangelical Protestants, but they have no recognized confession of faith. Altho one in essentials, they differ somewhat in doctrine and practice—*e.g.*, regarding the sacraments. The majority hold to adult baptism, and consider the Lord's Supper simply a memorial feast. A small number reject these ordinances altogether—a reaction from the materialistic religion of the Orthodox Church, which they condemn with one accord. The worship of "icons" or images of Christ, the Virgin, and the saints, which has so large a place in the religious life of the Russian people, is their especial horror, and herein lies one of the greatest reasons for the persecutions to which they are subjected. Perhaps their zeal sometimes has lacked discretion; if so, they have paid dearly for it. The Russian penal code inflicts from eight months' to three years' imprisonment for any word spoken against the "icons," and banishment to Siberia for the crime of destroying them. But the Stundists have acted according to their consciences, and who of us is ready to cast the first stone?

Moreover, they detest the sacerdotal power which ignorant, avaricious, and often intemperate priests have abused so much. Universal priesthood is one of their dearest doctrines. Reconciled to God by the sacrifice on the cross, they have no longer need of any earthly mediator, and each father is priest in his own household. Nevertheless, however much de-