

Contrast with this the moral deadness of the Russians yet untouched by the religion of the Stundists, "sunk in an abyss of foulness . . . and unrestrained by any of the moderating instincts of the brutes." Another writer adds: "I must say, with all due respect to them, that they are of all the nations the most addicted to drunkenness." "But many a noble heart lies hidden under an unpromising exterior . . . and if the government aided but a little to make him a man instead of a beast, as he is now, Russia would soon become one of the richest nations in the world." Not only to an insatiable thirst for vodka (raw alcohol), but to idleness he is a regular slave. This is fostered by the large number of holidays in his church. Including Sundays, there are about a hundred and twenty days of rest. This gives him only eight months for work: and as he cannot be induced to go to church, he spends the other part of the year drunk.

Peter the Great and his three successors, painfully conscious of the awful state of their people, made a strong effort, by penal laws and edicts, to force them into the church and the observance of its sacraments, but all in vain. On the other hand, the all-transforming power of heavenly grace made men of the Stundists, —Christians, the image of the Son of Man. They, for their humanizing zeal in uplifting the fallen and ministering to the needy, became objects of admiration, wonder, and then fear. New converts flocked into their communion, and those who might have been the salvation of the degraded peasantry, became the victims of cruel and relentless persecution. No sooner did the clergy discover in the Stundists a foe to their sacramental fees, than they sought the sword of the State for protection. The Stundists were ranked as incendiaries and murderers; were flogged, ruined, condemned, banished from their homes.

The clergy seem to have utterly forgotten the sacred character of their office, in their shameful devices to ruin the people. The crime of drinking milk on Wednesdays and Fridays, and of chanting hymns and reading the Bible, was laid against the Stundists in '65. Another serious charge was preferred by the government investigator, viz., that "a very close bond of service and love unites in one body all the members of this sect." This was sufficient. Many of the Stundists were arrested, questioned,