

form of sedition, and the press-censorship thenceforth laid its veto upon all publications in which the immorality of the liquor traffic was denounced. In 1865 the people fancied that because they were no longer serfs they could not be treated so unceremoniously as of yore, but they found out their mistake. They were simply dealt with as insurgents, and though not beaten, were fined, bullied, and preached at till there was no spirit of resistance left in them. However, this new rising led to the abolition of the monopolies. An excise was substituted, the price of vodka fell by competition, and the lower orders of Russia are now drunker than ever. According to the latest returns (*Wesselowski's Annual Register*), the liquor duties yield the revenue 800,000,000 roubles (£32,000,000 sterling) a year.

One morning a soft-spoken policeman, in a grey top-coat, calls to say that our coachman, who vanished overnight, is lying at the station, under a charge of assault, committed while inebriate. Is it our pleasure that he should be made to act as public scavenger for three days in the "drunk gang?" We have a private idea that to sweep the streets would do our *istvoschik* no harm, but the point is really this—shall we bribe him out of his scrape, or by declining to do so stir up the police to prefer a charge which may keep him in prison, not for days, but months? We produce three roubles, reflecting that we can deduct them from Ivan Ivanovitch's wages, and by-and-by Ivan turns up, sober and thankful, to explain that he would never have been arrested at all if the police had not felt sure that his master would buy him off. This is so true that the man will be sacred in policemen's eyes for perhaps three months to come. Let him stagger about as rowdily as he pleases, be quarrelsome and insolent, the police will take no notice of him till the time has arrived when they think they may decently

claim three more roubles. As influential persons, such as great noblemen, bishops, diplomatic and consular agents, cannot be called upon for black mail, their servants enjoy full license as to intoxication: so do petty civil servants and military officers, in their own persons; for a policeman who meddled with them might find himself in trouble: but all non-official people, whose servants exceed sobriety, or who do so themselves, must bribe, or take the consequences, which are unpleasant. A person may also be severely punished for not getting drunk, as a certain Polish school-master whom we met one day disconsolately wielding a besom on the quays, in company of a dozen kopeckless rogues who are being made examples of because they have no friends. The crime of our schoolmaster was that he lifted up his voice in his school and in tea-shops against "King Vodki," and tried to inveigle some university students into taking a temperance pledge. He was privately warned that he had better hold his peace, but he went on, and the result was that one evening, as he was walking home, somebody bumped against him—he protested—two policemen forthwith started up, hauled him off, charged him with being drunk and disorderly, and the next day he was sentenced to sweep the streets for three days—a sentence which, fortunately does not involve the social annihilation which it would in other countries. The fact is, that in Russia you must not advocate temperance principles; the vested interests in the drink trade are too many and strong. Nobody forces you to drink yourself; the *Raskolniks* or dissenters, who are the most respectable class of the Russian community, and number ten million souls, are, in general, abstainers—but they, like others, must not overtly try to make proselytes. There are many most enlightened men who hate and deplore the national vice, who try to check it among their own servants, who would support any rational

measure of legislation by which it could be diminished; but if one of them bestirred himself too actively in the matter he would find all his affairs, in some mysterious fashion, grow out of joint. Authors and journalists are still less in a position to cope with the evil, for the press-censors systematically refuse to pass writings in which the prevalence of drunkenness is taken for granted.

Before the abolition of the monopolies a landowner might set up a distillery on his estate, but he was compelled to sell the produce to the vodka-farmers, and these speculators might build a public-house on his land against his consent, though he was entitled to fix the spot and to receive a fair rent. At present the trade being free, licenses to distill and sell are conferred by Government (*i.e.* virtually bought of the *Tschinn*), and almost every landowner of consequence has one. Prince Wiskoff might get one if he pleased, and has more than once thought of so doing; but he has been deterred for want of capital to compete with his intimate enemy and neighbour, Prince Runoff, who has a distillery in full swing and floods the whole district with its produce. The Prince's chief agents are the priests, who in the farming days were allowed a regular percentage on the drink sold in their parishes, but who now receive a lump sum, nominally as an Easter gift, but on the tacit understanding that they are to push the sale of vodka by every means in their power. The pious men do not go the length of urging their parishioners to get drunk, but they multiply the church feasts whereon revelry is the custom; they affirm that stimulants are good for the health because of the cold climate, and they never reprove a peasant whose habitual intemperance is notorious. The Prince's land agent, the tax-collectors, the conscription officers, all join in promoting the consumption of vodka by transacting their business at the village dram-shop, with glasses before them, and even the doctor, who lives by the