

open-air service is held on the canal bank, where a large shed is available in case the weather should prove unfavorable.

But to understand the real influence which Mr. Bamber undoubtedly has over these people one must see him in his daily work of cabin to cabin visitation. I was privileged to accompany him on some of these visits, and shall not soon forget the kindly tact and the gentle, affectionate earnestness of his words and manner. About three hundred families form Mr. Bamber's "parish," though of course only a few are at Brentwood at any one time. He seems to know most of the people quite intimately, addressing them by their Christian names and asking after friends and relatives. It was pleasant to see how warmly the missionary was welcomed by men, women and children alike. After inquiries about business and family affairs, he would read a few verses of Scripture, adding a few earnest words of appeal and admonition, and perhaps, offering a prayer.

The words spoken are always of the simplest. It is not theological subtleties that these people want; they have no concern with Darwinism or the Higher Criticism. They are only to be reached by "the old, old story," told as simply as to a child. For they are a simple folk, and sometimes astonishingly ignorant. Mr. Bamber has met men and women who could not tell how Christ died and who did not know the Lord's Prayer, and others who, remembering some few words of prayer or Scripture learned in childhood, would say, in answer to his inquiry, "Oh, I don't know nothing about the meaning." Many of them can have had scarcely any religious instruction in their lives until they came under Mr. Bamber's influence at Brentford. "It is only here," said a boatman to Mr. Bamber one day,

"where we get cheered and lifted up in our struggles."

On the top floor of the mission house is a maternity room, which has proved a great boon to some of the women. Last year four babies were born in the room, and the work is likely to be further developed if better accommodation can be obtained. This work is not a charity in the ordinary sense of the word; the women pay 2s. 6d. a week for the use of the room, and make their own arrangements for the services of a nurse. The canal folk are not, as a rule, desperately poor; their great need is not alms, but sympathy and brotherliness. And that is one of the chief reasons of Mr. Bamber's success amongst them. Never did pastor or missionary give himself to his work with more whole-hearted devotion. His great hope is that he may be able to work for the rest of his life among the canal folk whom he loves, his one ambition being to serve their highest interests.

An important development of the work at Brentford is likely to take place in the near future. A site has been acquired and plans have been prepared for a new Canal Boatmen's Institute, which will replace the present inadequate mission premises. The new building, for which more than half the cost has already been subscribed, will not only provide improved accommodation for the day-school and the maternity room, but also reading and recreation rooms for the men and women. At present these people have no meeting place except the public-house. The provision of warm and well-lighted rooms, where they can gather on winter evenings to improve their education or indulge in innocent recreations and pleasant social intercourse, should prove an effective way of counteracting the evil influence of the drink shops.