

the boats were found to be infringing the regulations in one way or another.

Altogether 1,101 cases had reference to the sanitary state of the cabins, but of these 231 related only to the temporarily dirty condition of the interiors, very often due to the nature of the cargo or the weather at the time; and the inspector reports that as a rule the boat people took a pleasure in remedying the fault as soon as possible. It would seem, therefore, that as regards the sanitary conditions of the canal boatman's life, a great improvement has been made; and my own restricted observations would lead me to suppose that a canal boat is a far healthier dwelling-place than a city slum.

In order to get a fair impression of the life of our canal population, and to gain information on many matters which cannot be recorded in official reports, I recently spent some time among the canal folk at Brentford. To very many of these wandering canal folk Brentford is a sacred place. In the parish church they were married and their children were christened, and in the churchyard some of their friends and relations, their last voyage made, are sleeping their long sleep; here is the school where many of their children receive, during the occasional days spent in the town, all the schooling they will ever get, and here is the only place where very many of them ever hear the Good Tidings of Great Joy, or receive any impulse towards the higher life.

The centre of the good work among the canal folk at Brentford is the Canal Boatmen's Mission, which is under the care of a City missionary, Mr. R. Bamber, who may well be called "the bargee's parson." For twenty-three years Mr. Bamber has worked among canal dwellers, and no man in England understands them better or is more

generally loved and respected by them. It was under his kindly guidance that I had an opportunity of visiting some of the boat folk in their curious little homes.

It is evident that the women for the most part take a commendable pride in keeping their tiny homes as clean and cheerful as possible. Some are models of neatness and cleanliness: the stove is blackleaded and polished, the household utensils are of brass and copper, and they shine like mirrors, the walls are adorned with pictures, and a little of the precious shelf room is spared for a few china ornaments. Even if we find a cabin which is untidy, and where the children are dirty, the mother will apologize and explain that we have caught her at an unfortunate time. Nevertheless, Mr. Bamber and any one introduced by him are sure to be welcome. You cannot stand upright in these cabins, and the captain, if he is a very tall man, may touch one wall with his head and the other with his feet as he lies in bed. Many of the fixtures "contrive a double debt to pay": the seat is a locker for household goods and also the children's bed; one cupboard door is a dining-table and another is the bed for the captain and his wife; there is thus more accommodation than one might at first suppose.

The bargee has a terrible reputation; but it would be a mistake to suppose that he spends his whole time in drinking, swearing, and kicking his wife. There are rough characters on canal boats, but the typical bargee, though he has a rough tongue, has a kind heart: he is an honest, manly fellow, and if he can keep away from drink—the besetting weakness of his class—is a good husband and father. The canal boatwomen are a hardworking race; not only have they to see to the cleaning and cooking and to look after