

*The Memorial of the Committee of the Lord's Day
Observance Society of London.*

To the Owners, Proprietors, and Managers of Canals, and to all persons interested in Inland Navigation by Canal and River.

GENTLEMEN,—

For many years efforts have been made to improve the condition of the Men employed on Flats, Boats, and Barges, and to educate and christianize their families. The necessity for such efforts was great. As a class Boatmen on Canals and Rivers were debased and ignorant, much addicted to drink, and living in habits morally degrading. Their children, whose only home was the Barge or Flat, grew up without education and without the wholesome restraint of religious associations. Wandering from place to place, away from Churches and Schools, crowded together in narrow cabins, under conditions which set decency at defiance, this class of persons, numbering many thousands, became a byword for immorality and crime.

Impressed with their misery, philanthropic persons sought to elevate and instruct them. Churches and Schools were built at various points on the Canals, Chaplains and Schoolmasters were appointed, and attempts made to give them homes on shore. The Legislature also stepped in, and enacted laws for the better regulation of the conditions in which they lived, and eventually the Canal Boats Act of 1877 was passed, with the object of securing to the classes affected by it the advantages of fixed homes and educational opportunities.

These various efforts have resulted in considerable improvement; and a more stringent enforcement of the Act of 1877 will produce still further amelioration; but it is now felt that neither the religious and educational efforts of owners and other philanthropic persons, nor the enactments of the Legislature, can effectually operate to the elevation of the Boatmen and their families, so long as they have, as a class, no rest on the Lord's Day.

A quiet Sunday is to many thousands of them an impossibility. They

are continually in motion on that day, and cannot, even when they would, avail themselves of the means of grace, or secure for their children the advantages of Sunday School Teaching.

On some Canals there is absolute rest on the Lord's-day—no lock being opened and no boat moving—and on those Canals are found the most steady, sober, and civilized portion of the Boatman class.

On other Canals there is partial cessation of traffic, with partial good results.

It is surely possible, though it may be difficult, so to regulate Canal traffic that the whole class may have their day of rest.

The traffic might be remodelled, so that by the more careful choice of days for the loading and dispatch of boats, the re-arrangement of voyages, and the concentration of rest—which is now taken irregularly and uncertainly—on the one day of the week, as much business would be transacted as now, while the social and moral gain to the Boatmen would be immense; leading, among many results, to more sober and conscientious service, and, in the long run, conferring on employers and proprietors benefits only less important than those resulting to the men themselves.

On this review of facts, and under the conviction above expressed, your memorialists believe themselves fully justified in a very earnest request that you would give effect to the benevolence of those who have built Churches and Schools for the Boatman class, and to the Canal Boat Act of 1877, by making arrangements for the cessation of Canal traffic on the Lord's Day.

It is earnestly requested that those who receive this Circular will kindly communicate any suggestions which may be helpful towards the end sought, so that the way may be opened to conference on the question, and to the ultimate deliverance of the Canal population from the burden and demoralization of Sunday toil.

Signed, by Order of the Committee,

JOHN GRITTON, D.D.,

May, 1881.

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