

Thorne Guy

The Great Acceptance: The Life Story of F. N. Charrington



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CHAPTER I

THE GREAT ACCEPTANCE

In the year 1882 the most popular novelist of his day wrote as follows about the East End of London —

"Two millions of people, or thereabouts, live in the East End of London. That seems a good-sized population for an utterly unknown town. They have no institutions of their own to speak of, no public buildings of any importance, no municipality, no gentry, no carriages, no soldiers, no picture-galleries, no theatres, no opera, — they have nothing. It is the fashion to believe they are all paupers, which is a foolish and mischievous belief, as we shall presently see. Probably there is no such spectacle in the whole world as that of this immense, neglected, forgotten great city of East London. It is even neglected by its own citizens, who have never yet perceived their abandoned condition. They are Londoners, it is true, but they have no part or share in London; its wealth, its splendours, its honours, exist not for them. They see nothing of any splendours; even the Lord Mayor's Show goeth westward: the City lies between them and the greatness of England. They are beyond the wards, and cannot become aldermen; the rich London merchants go north and south and west; but they go not east. Nobody goes east, no one wants to see the place; no one is curious about the way of life in the east. Books on London pass it over; it has little or no history; great men are not buried in its churchyards, which are not even ancient, and crowded by citizens as obscure as those who now breathe the upper air about them. If anything happens in the east, people at the other end have to stop and think before they can remember where the place may be."

It will be a somewhat startling reflection to many of us to realise that Sir Walter Besant wrote *All Sorts and Conditions of Men* thirty years ago, and it is more profitable to inquire how true the words I have just quoted are to-day. It is indubitable that a great improvement has taken place. The East End has been "exploited" by many other eminent writers, following in the footsteps of Sir Walter. It is no longer true in the main to say that the East End of London is wholly neglected: the pages of any decent book of reference will bear witness to the innumerable philanthropic and religious missions which have sprung up in the City of the Poor. Yet, to the average man and woman of some place and position, both in London and in the country, I venture to say that the East End is just as remote and visionary a place as Suez.

As an average man myself — perhaps, owing to my profession as a writer, having seen even more of life than the average man, and being endowed with a rather eager curiosity and liking for new scenes — I had never visited the East End, or been nearer to it than Liverpool Street Station, until the early part of the present year.

About the time of which I speak certain facts came to my knowledge about the work that was being done by Frederick Nicholas Charrington, Honorary Superintendent of the Tower Hamlets Mission. It was in a casual conversation with one of the great experts on inebriety that I first even heard of Mr. Charrington's name. What I heard seemed rather extraordinary and out of the way.

From what was said, I suspected that a strange personality, and one offering considerable interest to a novelist, was hidden away – at least, as far as I was concerned – in the East End of London.

It came to pass that from other sources I heard more of Mr. Charrington, almost immediately afterwards.

I suppose every one knows how, when they have met with some new word, some quotation, or name of a place, entirely fresh to them, they find it cropping up on every possible occasion. Now, this, of course, is not coincidence. It is merely that one's eyes have been opened.

I heard of the subject of this biography as conducting a work unique in its scope and methods among the great charitable organisations of London. I heard of him as being the owner of a sea-girt island not more than forty-five miles away from London! and some vague story of the sacrifice, made in his youth, of an enormous sum of money.

One does not hear of this sort of personality every day, and my curiosity was immediately excited. Then, as chance would have it – or who shall say that it was not some Higher Power than chance? – I made the acquaintance of Mr. Charrington, chiefly through a novel dealing with the subject of intemperance which I had recently published.

It is not necessary to say more about the genesis of this book, save only that from all over the world the subject of it has constantly received requests from people of every class to write his own biography. Publishers have approached him also with the same proposal, but he has consistently declined. In the event Mr. Charrington has done me the honour to appoint me his biographer, and to place the fullest information as to his career in my possession.

I have made personal experience of the work in the East End. I have read through an enormous amount of documents, both printed and written. I have interviewed and had long conversations with friends and fellow-workers of Mr. Charrington, who have been associated with him for forty years. And finally, I have lived with the man himself, upon his island.

The first time that I ever went to the East End was upon a Sunday, after lunch. I was sitting in my club in St. James' Street. After breakfast, in the smoking-room I asked a man there how to get to the Great Assembly Hall in the Mile End Road. His reply, which was prompt and to the point, was, nevertheless, not exactly what I wanted. He said, "Why, take a taxi-cab, of course," but I discovered that he knew no more how to get to the place in question than I did. Shortly afterwards, in my bedroom, I spoke to the head valet – a very old and confidential servant of the club. He, at least, was able to give me more detailed directions, but added, "If I may say so, sir, you will have a rather unpleasant time of it among as nasty a lot of ruffians as you'd find anywhere!"

What experiences I *did* have upon this first visit, and upon subsequent ones, will be related in their proper place in this picture of F. N. Charrington, but the remarks of both member and servant recalled very forcibly the passage I have printed from *All Sorts and Conditions of Men*.

It is, then, to the East End, and to a series of incidents so rich in drama, a time so breathlessly exciting, and at all times so strangely seen in a light which is not of this world, that readers of this memoir are coming with me. To many of them it will be as fresh and as intensely interesting as it has been to me, and, as Thackeray indulged in theatrical simile in the preface of *Vanity Fair*, let me also announce the ringing up of the curtain upon as soul-stirring a drama upon the boards of life in a city as, perhaps, it has ever been the lot of a man to write.

You shall see the wars of the Powers and Principalities of the air against the Angels of Light, you shall hear the menacing drums of the legions of Evil, and the clear, clarion calls of the soldiers of God. Nor shall there be wanting a pastoral interlude also, of a lonely Island of Rest, where summer breezes blow among the trees, and there is a murmur of many waters.

The Mile End Road, which is the great main thoroughfare through the East End – from the City of London west, to the vast glades of Epping Forest in Essex – has no more conspicuous an object than the vast brewery of Messrs. Charrington & Head.

It stands up in the middle of the wide thoroughfare like some Gibraltar rising from the human tide at its feet. It is a huge pile of almost goblin masonry, with its colossal ladders, towers, and vast receptacles for malt. It is surrounded by a high wall, and covers an enormous expanse of ground. It hits the eye like a blow with its vastness, its suggestion of mighty, vested interests, solidity, and wealth. It dwarfs everything else in the neighbourhood.

On almost every public-house that one meets one reads in huge gilt letters the words, "Charrington & Co.'s Entire." If you go off the main roads it is the same thing – every little public-house flaunts the same legend. From the mighty portals of the brewery, day by day throughout the year, a never-ending flood of alcohol is pouring, and in those enormous vats who shall say how many souls have been dissolved?

I quoted above from Sir Walter Besant's *All Sorts and Conditions of Men*. The quotation was more *à-propos* to commence this life than most people are aware. The story of "Miss Messenger," the heiress to the great East End brewery of "Messenger & Co." in the Mile End Road, and how she went to live among the struggling millions of the East, was inspired by the life story of Frederick N. Charrington. It was his career that, in the first instance, made it possible for Sir Walter to write one of the most popular novels of the last fifty years.

A great many people will remember the description in chapter four, where the heiress of the brewery is taken over her own possession for the first time in her life.

It is a singularly vivid picture Sir Walter has given us, and one which is substantially true to-day.

"The walk from Stepney Green to Messenger and Marsden's Brewery is not far. You turn to the left if your house is on one side, and to the right if it is on the other; then you pass a little way down one street, and a little way, turning again to the left, up another – a direction which will guide you quite clearly. You then find yourself before a great gateway, the portals of which are closed; beside it is a smaller door, at which, in a little lodge, sits one who guards the entrance.

"Mr. Bunker nodded to the porter, and entered unchallenged. He led the way across a court to a sort of outer office.

"'Here,' he said, 'is the book for the visitors' names. We have them from all countries: great lords and ladies; foreign princes; and all the brewers from Germany and America, who come to get a wrinkle. Write your own name in it too. Something, let me tell you, to have your name in such noble company.'"

"'Ah! it's a shame for such a property to come to a girl – a girl of twenty-one. Thirteen acres it covers – think of that! Seven hundred people it employs, most of them married. Why, if it was only to see her own vats, you'd think she'd get off her luxurious pillows for once, and come here.'

"They entered a great hall, remarkable, at first, for a curious smell, not offensive, but strong and rather pungent. In it stood half-a-dozen enormous vats, closed by wooden slides, like shutters, and fitting tightly. A man standing by opened one of these, and presently Angela was able to make out, through the volumes of steam, something bright going round, and a brown mess going with it.

"That is hops. Hops for the biggest Brewery, the richest, in all England. And all belonging to a girl, who, likely enough, doesn't drink more than a pint and a half a day.'

"He led the way up-stairs into another great hall, where there was the grinding of machinery, and another smell, sweet and heavy.

"This is where we crush the malt,' said Mr. Bunker – 'see!' He stopped, and picked out of a box a great handful of the newly-crushed malt. 'I suppose you thought it was roasted. Roasting, young lady,' he added with severity, 'is for Stout, not for Ale.'

"Then he took her to another place, and showed her where the liquor stood to ferment; how it was cooled, how it passed from one vat to another, how it was stored and kept in vats; dwelling perpetually on the magnitude of the business, and the irony of fortune in conferring this great gift upon a girl.

"I know now,' she interrupted, 'what the place smells like. It is fusel oil.' They were standing on a floor of open iron bars, above a row of long covered vats, within which the liquor was working and fermenting. Every now and then there would be a heaving of the surface, and a quantity of malt would then move suddenly over.

"We are famous,' said Mr. Bunker, 'I say we, having been the confidential friend and adviser of the late Mr. Messenger, deceased; we are famous for our Stout; also for our Mild; and we are now reviving our Bitter, which we had partially neglected. We use the Artesian Well, which is four hundred feet deep, for our Stout, but the Company's water for our Ales; and our water rate is two thousand pounds a year. The Artesian Well gives the Ale a grey colour, which people don't like. Come into this room now,' – it was another great hall covered with sacks. 'Hops again, Miss Kennedy; now, that little lot is worth ten thousand pounds – ten – thousand – think of that; and it is all spoiled by the rain, and has to be thrown away. We think nothing of losing ten thousand pounds here, nothing at all!' – he snapped his fingers – 'it is a mere trifle to the girl who sits at home and takes the profits.'

"Then they went into more great halls, and up more stairs, and on to the roof, and saw more piles of sacks, more malt, and more hops. When they smelt the hops, it seemed as if their throats were tightened; when they smelt the fermentation, it seemed as if they were smelling fusel oil; when they smelt the plain crushed malt, it seemed as if they were getting swiftly, but sleepily, drunk. Everywhere and always the steam rolled backwards and forwards, and the grinding of the machinery went on, and the roaring of the furnaces; and the men went about to and fro at their work. They did not seem hard worked, nor were they pressed; their movements were leisurely, as if beer was not a thing to hurry; they were all rather pale of cheek, but fat and jolly, as if the beer was good and agreed with them. Some wore brown-paper caps, for it was a pretty draughty place; some went bareheaded, some wore the little round hat in fashion. And they went to another part, where men were rolling barrels about, as if they had been skittles, and here they saw vats holding three thousand barrels; and one thought of giant armies – say two hundred and fifty thousand thirsty Germans – beginning the Loot of London with one of these royal vats. And they

went through stables, where hundreds of horses were stalled at nights, each as big as an elephant, and much more useful.

"In one great room, where there was the biggest vat of all, a man brought them beer to taste; it was Messenger's Stout. Angela took her glass and put it to her lips with a strange emotion – she felt as if she would like a quiet place to sit down in and cry. The great place was hers – all hers – and this was the beer with which her mighty fortune had been made.

"Is it?' she asked, looking at the heavy foam of the frothing stout; 'is this Messenger's Entire?'

"This is not Entire,' he said. 'You see, there's fashions in beer, same as in clothes; once it was all Cooper, now you never hear of Cooper. Then it was all Half-an'-arf – you never hear of any one ordering Half-an'-arf now. Then it was stout. Nothing would go down but Stout, which I recommend myself, and find it nourishing. Next, Bitter came in, and honest Stout was despised; now, we're all for Mild. As for Entire, why, bless my soul! Entire went out before I was born. Why, it was the Entire that made the fortune of the first Messenger that was – a poor little brewery he had, more than a hundred years ago, in this very place, because it was cheap for rent. In those days they used to brew strong Ale, Old and Strong; Stout, same as now; and Twopenny, which was small beer. And because the Old Ale was too Strong, and the Stout too dear, and the Twopenny too weak, the people used to mix them all three together, and they called them "Three Threads"; and you may fancy the trouble it was for the pot-boys to go to one cask after another, all day long – because they had no beer engines then. Well, what did Mr. Messenger do? He brewed a beer as strong as the Three Threads, and he called it Messenger's Entire Three Threads, meaning that here you had 'em all in one, and that's what made his fortune; and now, young lady, you've seen all I've got to show you, and we will go.'"

To a brewery identical with the one described in almost every respect, owning hundreds of tied public-houses, producing the revenue of a prince for its proprietors, Frederick Nicholas Charrington was heir.

He was born in the Bow Road, in the East End of London, on February 4, 1850, and is now, therefore, in the sixty-second year of his life.

A dear venerable old lady (Mrs. Pratt), still retained under Mr. Charrington's roof, well remembers his mother, a deeply religious woman, driving in a pony and chaise visiting the sick and needy, and relieving them according to their several necessities, for miles round the neighbourhood of the brewery. She always took with her a cordial which was made up in her own home, and for which there was a great demand from the poor, who regarded it as an infallible remedy for all kinds of diseases.

Mrs. Pratt remembers carrying "Master Fred" in her arms when he was about two years of age, and how excited he became when she took him to see a balloon passing over what was then known as Charrington's Park, open fields by which the brewery was then surrounded, but which have long since been built over.

She also remembers Master Fred at nine years of age, taking a bundle of bank notes from his father's table in the counting-house, and throwing them into the fire. When asked by his father why he did so, he characteristically replied that "he wanted to see a blaze."

Surely the child was father to the man!

In all the great breweries of London the rule has been made, and is very generally adhered to, that the partners share and share alike, so that it must be explained that Mr. Charrington was not sole heir to the business. The revenues, however, are so enormous, that, roughly speaking, a million and a quarter pounds would have come to the boy who was born in 1850. Mr. Charrington's parents were members of the Church of England, and belonged to the Evangelical school of thought. Frederick was educated at Marlborough, but during his stay at the famous public school he was laid low by a fever, which necessitated his removal at the time. Subsequently he was entered at Brighton College, where he finished his school career. He lived the ordinary life of a boy born to great wealth, and, when school days were over, he was given the choice of proceeding to the University of Oxford or of Cambridge, whichever he preferred. A University life, however, offered no attractions to the young man's cast of mind. His first experience of the larger world of men and things was made upon the Continent. It must be remembered that, at this time, the tradition that it was necessary for every young man of position to make what was known as "the grand tour," had not yet died away. Travelling was then a most costly affair, and only possible to the rich. Sir Henry Lunn and Messrs. Cook and Sons had not, at that time, made the chief Continental cities practically suburbs of London. It was thought, and rightly thought, that a Continental tour was in itself an education, and this was the means selected to widen the young man's mind. All his subsequent life Mr. Charrington has been a great traveller, and there are few parts of the world which he has not at one time or another visited, and where he has not been welcomed. So that this first foreign excursion must have been a time of great pleasure and enlightenment.

He was accompanied by the Rev. Thomas Scott, a clergyman, and had for his companion Mr. J. H. Buxton, another wealthy young brewer, who subsequently became chairman of the London Hospital. The lads visited the Paris Exhibition of 1867, and travelled through both Switzerland and Italy.

Upon his return Frederick Charrington at once elected to learn the details of the great business which there was, at the time, every prospect of his superintending. He went to the smaller brewery of Messrs. Neville, Read & Co., who were brewers to the Queen at Windsor. There he shared rooms with a young curate, the Rev. John Stone, who, by the way, was the author of the two famous and beautiful hymns, "The Church's one Foundation," and "Weary of earth and laden with my sin."

The young man's pursuits, even at this time, were by no means those of his contemporaries. Although he had the command of large sums of money if he had wished, the pleasures of ordinary young men did not appeal to him. It is not to be understood that he was in any way a milksop. He was a good waterman upon the river, and at a time when young men of position did not indulge in cricket, football, and other field sports to anything like the same extent that they do to-day, he was yet a fearless, skilful rider. There had always been many horses in his father's stables, and from his earliest youth Mr. Charrington had been an expert equestrian. In those days a young man so fond of horses, and so good a horseman, nine cases out of ten owned horses or took great interest in betting and the affairs of the turf, while an alternative was the driving of a four-in-hand coach, generally in the company of people of both sexes, neither desirable nor worthy for them to know.

Mr. Charrington did nothing of the sort. The attractions of the gilded youth of his adolescence passed him by without any appeal, and at the end of the twelve months' experience at Windsor, he entered his father's great brewery in the Mile End Road.

A rather interesting little episode in connection with Mr. Charrington's horsemanship might be mentioned here. One day, during his time at Windsor, he was riding a very spirited chestnut in a quiet and narrow lane in the environs of the town. Suddenly a groom upon horseback turned the corner, galloped up to him, and with a rude and overbearing manner ordered him to turn round and go away. Extremely surprised at the man's insolence, Mr. Charrington refused to do anything of the sort, and it seemed that almost a scrimmage was imminent.

The man then explained that the Queen was coming, and Mr. Charrington asked him why on earth he had not said so before. It was now too late. A carriage and pair, with outriders, came down the road in the opposite direction, and Queen Victoria was seated within.

Mr. Charrington realised at once what was happening, although the man had given no reasons, and he backed his horse as well as he could into the hedge. The lane was very narrow, and there was hardly room for the carriage to pass. Mr. Charrington made his horse rear upon its hind legs and took off his hat as he did so. It was only by the display of the most magnificent horsemanship that he was able to keep his seat, and allow the chaise to pass, and her Majesty smiled and bowed very graciously as she went by.

Soon after this he accompanied his parents upon another Continental tour. Upon this occasion he met with Mr. William Rainsford, son of the Rev. Marcus Rainsford, of Belgrave Chapel. The two young men returned to England together, and Charrington invited his friend to stay with him at his father's house.

It was during this visit that Mr. Rainsford spoke to his friend about his soul, and plainly asked him if he knew whether he was saved.

The question struck Mr. Charrington as singularly unpleasant. It startled him, and seemed also in bad taste. He had lived a moral and decent life in every way, and, moreover, a definitely religious life. Such a point-blank question appeared unnecessary, and he protested against such a subject of discussion, referring to the pleasant time spent upon the Continent, and hinting that a reminiscent talk of their adventures would be far more *à-propos* at the moment. Mr. Rainsford, however, pressed the question home, and would not be denied. Eventually he made his friend promise that the next time he was alone he would read the third chapter of the Gospel of St. John. The promise was kept, though the reader expected no new spiritual experience whatever.

As he opened the Bible an incident of the past struck him, and before reading he paused to recall it.

Upon one occasion whilst staying at Hastings he became friends with a Mr. Canning, who subsequently became Lord Garvagh. This young man was at the time at the watering place with his tutor, and when he first met Charrington had just come from hearing Lord Radstock preach. Fired with enthusiasm, he straightway told his new acquaintance the history of the meeting, and made a special reference to the third chapter of the Gospel according to St. John. He related that he believed that he was now a saved man. He definitely stated that conversion had taken place. Now to Mr. Charrington the whole thing was a riddle, and he thought it was at least indecorous for a youthful aristocrat to go and hear a Dissenter, even though that same Dissenter was a peer himself. Moreover, the word conversion presented no very special meaning to him, and was associated in his mind with suggestions of sudden hysteria, and no particularly lasting result. He did not know, as Mr. Harold Begbie has pointed out in his brilliant psychological studies of spiritual experiences, that conversion is in reality nothing of the sort. As Mr. Begbie says —

"... And these critics with their 'cortical susceptibilities' and 'explosions of nervous energy,' limit their investigations of conversion to those examples of the miracle which become public property through the chronicles of revivalism. It is now a vulgar idea that conversions only follow upon the hysterical absurdities of professional revivalists. It would be fatal to religion if such were the case. No one, I think, could more detest the professional revivalist than myself, and than myself no one could more entirely doubt the lasting effect of the majority of the conversions accomplished by this means. I can see the need for revivalism, and I can see in the future a development of revivalism which will be of noble service to humanity; but I dislike the un-Christly character of this worked-up excitement and I am utterly uninterested by its result. Conversion, real conversion, is almost always the effect of individual lovingkindness, of personal and quiet love, of intercourse between a happy and an unhappy soul in the normal colloquies of friendship, and passionate seeking of the lost by those whose lives are inspired by unselfish love. It may possibly have its culminating point in a public meeting; the act

of standing up and publicly declaring for righteousness may have tremendous effect; but even in such cases, such rare cases, the preparation has usually been long and difficult, secret and gradual.

"... Conversion is a quite common experience among ordinary men, is very often nothing more than a secret turning of the face towards God, a private decision to live a new life, a personal and wholly tranquil choice of the soul for Christ as its Master and Saviour. No priest appears to be necessary, the excitements of the revivalist preacher are absent. In the privacy of its own soul, the spirit turns from evil and faces towards God."

As Mr. Charrington began to read the suggested portion of Scripture, he remembered this Mr. Canning and his allusion to exactly the same chapter, and it seemed a singular thing that two of his friends of a similar age should agree in giving a certain passage the same interpretation. The remembrance made him read the chapter with the very greatest care, and the words "Marvel not that I said unto ye, Ye must be born again," came to him with a singular force. And though, perhaps, he was unaware of it at the time, in looking back upon it, Mr. Charrington is convinced that this moment was the great turning-point in his life. There was no sudden conversion, let it be remembered – that is, using the word in its more widely accepted sense. It must not be lost sight of that Mr. Charrington had always lived a religious life. But, certainly, whatever name we may give to the spiritual change which passed over him at the moment, it was a real and lasting one.

I have in my possession a letter written by Mr. Charrington a good many years ago, describing the occurrence exactly as it happened, and, as I am allowed to quote, it may be as well to supplement my own account with Mr. Charrington's own words.

"To begin with, I was travelling on the Continent along the Riviera, or the South of France, and just before I returned from Cannes I met with my friend William Rainsford, the celebrated episcopal clergyman from New York. We travelled home together to England, and when we got to London I invited him to come and stop at my father's house at Wimbledon. At the time I was living a very moral life, and not without some interest in eternal things, but my only belief and trust was in the Book of Common Prayer, and especially the statement, 'Wherein I was made a member of Christ, the Child of God, and an inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven.' When we got to my father's home, to my great astonishment Rainsford suddenly said, 'I feel very guilty, we have travelled together all the way over the Continent, and enjoyed ourselves very much, but I have never spoken to you about your soul. The fact is, I am a Christian, but I have spent the winter in the South of France for my health, and I have been in very worldly society; but now that I have got back to old England, these things seem to rise in my mind, and I feel that I must ask you if you are saved.' I said, 'Really, Rainsford, we have had a very good time on the Continent, and I think it is a very great pity that you bring up such a debatable subject just now.' He said, 'I only will ask you to do one thing, and that is: when I am gone you will promise me to read through the third chapter of St. John's Gospel.' I promised him I would, and accordingly the next night, while smoking a pipe before I went to bed, I read the third chapter of St. John, and as I read it I thought to myself, 'This is a very curious thing: here are two men, my new friend Rainsford, and my old friend Lord Garvagh, both say the same thing, that they are "saved" '; and as I read the chapter, Light came into my soul, and as I came to the words, 'He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life' I realised that I, too, possessed the 'eternal life.'"

We are come, then, to a certain definite point in the life of this young man. As a result of what I have just described, he felt that he ought to be doing something to help others, to be setting his hand to some good works.

In its proper place, I shall tell of these first tentative efforts at work for Christ, and how they broadened out into such a magnificent life work. It is not in the scheme of this chapter, which I have headed "The Great Acceptance," to give details at present. It is sufficient to say that this early work prospered and became engrossing, and it gradually led up to the astounding event, almost without parallel, one fancies, which I am about to describe. Mr. Peters, a nephew of Mr. Cunard the great steamship owner, used to help Mr. Charrington in the ragged school for boys, conducted in a loft over

a stable. One evening at this period Mr. Charrington was walking from the brewery to the horrible slum where the school was held.

He passed a horrid-looking little public-house, known as the "Rising Sun."

When I say a horrid little public-house, I speak from experience. There are dozens of varieties, from the magnificent bars of the West End, with their columns of marble, their gleaming glass and silver, rich carpets and sumptuous good taste, to the flaunting gin palaces or even the picturesque, flower-covered country inn, and there are mean little holes in back streets which are absolutely destitute of any personality whatever. I think, for my part, though it is pure personal opinion, that I have never seen a more utterly unlovely alcohol shop than this same "Rising Sun." I went personally to look at it before writing this chapter. It lies in an appalling neighbourhood, where even the police patrol in couples, and it is about as hideous an erection as can be found anywhere in England.

Mr. Charrington, then, upon the memorable evening of which I speak, came up to this place. I quote his own words in the account of what occurred here.

"As I approached this public-house a poor woman, with two or three children dragging at her skirts, went up to the swing doors, and calling out to her husband inside, she said, 'Oh, Tom, do give me some money, the children are crying for bread.' At that the man came through the doorway. He made no reply in words. He looked at her for a moment, and then knocked her down into the gutter. Just then I looked up and saw my own name, Charrington, in huge gilt letters on the top of the public-house, and it suddenly flashed into my mind that that was only one case of dreadful misery and fiendish brutality in one of the several hundred public-houses that our firm possessed. I realised that there were probably numbers of similar cases arising from this one public-house alone. I thought, as if in a flash, that, whatever the actual statistics might have been, there was, at any rate, an appalling and incalculable amount of wretchedness and degradation caused by our enormous business. It was a crushing realisation, the most concrete, unavoidable object-lesson that a man could possibly have. What a frightful responsibility for evil rested upon us! And then and there, without any hesitation, I said to myself – in reference to the sodden brute who had knocked his wife into the gutter – 'Well, you have knocked your poor wife down, and with the same blow you have knocked me out of the brewery business.'

"I knew that I could never bear the awful responsibility of so much guilt upon my soul. I could not possibly allow myself to be a contributory cause, and I determined that, whatever the result, I would never enter the brewery again."

Mr. Charrington went to his father and announced his intention of absolutely giving up all share in the brewery. The opposition he met with may easily be imagined. Mr. Charrington senior was amazed and angry. The thing seemed the height of quixotic folly. It verged on madness, and had neither rhyme nor reason to the older man, himself, it must be remembered, a liberal, God-fearing Churchman of the Evangelical school, as well as one of the most successful men of business of his day.

The arguments used against Frederick's determination were all such as keen common sense and the logic of this world would naturally employ.

Mr. Charrington senior pointed out that he had been many years in business, and that during every day of them he had been studying the drink question. His interest in it was old, and at least as close and personal as his son's could possibly be after a mere casual ramble in the slums of the East End. It was to drink that Frederick Charrington owed the position to which he was born. It might be distasteful to the young man – though to the older it was nothing of the sort – but whether it was agreeable or not, the plain fact was that beer had made Frederick Charrington one of the richest young men in England.

It was suggested to him that he had suffered a kind of first nausea, just as young surgeons are supposed to do when they first handle the knife – or, more general still, and as has been so well described by Sir Conan Doyle, medical students when they first see an operation. But because medical students suffered nausea, it was quite unlikely that operating or dissecting rooms were going

to be done away with, and certainly breweries and public-houses would not be done away with though a million fanatics were to call for their suppression. For his own part, Mr. Charrington had made it his business to brew as good beer as could be brewed. His business was conducted with conspicuous regard to decency and order, but, at the same time, he entirely declined to be responsible for the actions of fools. He asked no man to drink more of his beer than was good for him. He was not in the least responsible for drunkenness. It was the drunkard himself who was responsible for it. To indulge in sweeping condemnation of the brewery because there were drunkards, was, so Mr. Charrington senior imagined, just as logical and reasonable as to condemn religion because it makes fanatics and maniacs.

In reply, the young man stated that his convictions were unaltered. It was a question between himself and his conscience, his conscience and the God whom he served. Nothing could possibly affect the issue.

"My father," Mr. Charrington has told me, and I record our conversation here, "was terribly distressed. At first, I think, he was more angry and astonished than pained, but afterwards his distress was very great, and I would have done anything I could to alleviate it but continue to take money from the brewery. I do not want to go too much into this – your own father is alive, and you can imagine what a son's feelings were. Of course, my decision was a very heavy blow to the pride of the family. I am afraid I did not realise that sufficiently at the time, but I do now, and I see what pain my decision must have caused, although it was inevitable. After the first shock, however, my father was extremely kind to me, when he realised that I could not change. He certainly sympathised with my wish to do good among the poor, and he had always helped me in my early efforts among the very rough juvenile population, and himself paid for more suitable premises in which we could carry on the work.

"Shortly after my decision was made my poor father met with a very severe accident. He was thrown from his horse while out riding, and he never recovered. When he was upon his deathbed I was sent for, and what occurred between us at that solemn moment has always been a most precious memory to me. Several other members of the family were gathered round, but he said, 'You all go out of the room for a little time. Let Fred remain with me. He is the only one who knows about these things.'

"When we were left alone together, my father said, 'You are right, Fred. You have chosen the better part, which will never be taken away.' We prayed together then, and the next morning he again said to me, 'After you prayed with me, my sleep was like an angel's slumbers.' Finally he whispered, 'I am afraid I have left you very badly off, but it is too late now.' Shortly afterwards he passed away."

Here is another picture in this astounding history of the Great Acceptance.

One day in February, 1873, the whole traffic of the Strand at a certain point was disorganised. Thousands upon thousands of people were gathered in the vicinity of Exeter Hall. Exeter Street itself was impassable. The Strand was blocked for many hundred yards. The crowd was composed of people from all parts of London and the suburbs, but it was obvious – as the *Daily Telegraph* remarked in its issue on the following morning – that many of the thousands present were East-enders. "Troops of the East End saints were seen wending their way to Exeter Hall" – was how the *Telegraph* was pleased to put it.

And what was the occasion which brought such an enormous crowd together? What spell was there over them all that they pressed onward in phalanx after phalanx to the doors of Exeter Hall? The fact had been noised abroad that the young ex-brewer had accepted the invitation of the Band of Hope Union to preside over their Annual Meeting, under the presidency of the Rev. Charles Garrett, the most famous Temperance reformer of his day.

No other man living than Mr. Charrington has ever caused the Strand to be blocked for hours. No such sight was ever seen before or has been since. The interest created was universal. An eye-witness of the scene has told me that it will never be obliterated from his mind while life lasts. Here was a young man, only just entering his twenty-third year, called upon to preside over an immense

meeting for which many of his seniors in the Temperance Cause thought it an honour to receive an invitation.

When the wishes of the Union were first conveyed to him, and the formal invitation made, it gave him food for deep thought. He had left the brewery, and the world's eyes were upon him. He shrank from the great ordeal which acceptance would mean. Still, he was not a man to turn his face from anything he considered to be his duty, and for the welfare of the cause he had at heart. He assented to the wishes of the committee.

"On the night in question," writes a friend who was with him, "Mr. Charrington and I started from Stepney Green and mounted one of the City omnibuses about 7 o'clock. In those days travelling by 'bus was an entirely different thing to what it has since become, and there was always an element of adventure, inasmuch as it was extremely problematical whether the vehicle would keep any sort of time, or even arrive at its destination at all!

"We arrived, however, at last, but it was with great difficulty that we managed to get into Exeter Hall, and had almost to fight our way through the crowd which was already gathered, and which had not then anything like the dimensions it afterwards assumed. The front of Exeter Hall was blocked on both sides of the roadway with police drafted to keep the traffic through, and others who were keeping back the non-ticket holders. Shortly after this the task of keeping this great artery of London clear was finally left, and the traffic was diverted into the side streets. Dr. Newman Hall, one of the speakers who arrived late, sat next me on the platform, and he told me that he had been three-quarters of an hour getting into the building.

"When Mr. Charrington appeared the whole vast audience rose to its feet. The cheering was deafening, and the waving of hats and handkerchiefs continued for several minutes. Again, when he rose to speak the audience broke out into a most extraordinary demonstration of appreciation, and it was a long time before he could get a hearing, so great and electrical was the excitement. It was said that no such gathering had ever congregated at any meeting held in that historic building."

While the meeting was proceeding, large reinforcements of police had to be sent for, as the crowd outside could not be persuaded to go away, or convinced that it was impossible for them to get into the hall. The "Hall Full" placards placed outside were of no use whatever in making them disperse. There was an enormous desire to catch a glimpse of Frederick Charrington as he left the building. On that memorable night many hearts were uplifted in earnest prayer that the young man might be kept true to the profession he had made, and become pre-eminently useful in the service of Christ – prayers which have been so abundantly answered.

Such is the history of Frederick Charrington's Great Acceptance, and it is as well to consider for a moment exactly what it means.

Mr. Charrington gave up, for the sake of conscience, the enormous sum of a million and a quarter. It is very difficult for ordinary people to realise what this sum means. In the first instance, it means about fifty thousand pounds a year – roughly a thousand pounds a week, or about a hundred and forty pounds a day. And yet the figures quite fail to convey the reality. For those who set store by honours and high places, a million and a quarter means a peerage, a singling out and setting above the vast majority of one's fellow-men. It ensures the adulation of almost every one. Plenty of people say, "I do not value the man for his possessions, but for himself," and such a remark may be made perfectly sincerely. But in point of actual fact, there are very few people who can listen to the *obiter dicta* of a millionaire without unconscious deference, and, for my part, without the least wish to be cynical, I have always thought what truth there is in a certain celebrated passage from "Vanity Fair" *à-propos* of the rich Miss Crawley.

"What a dignity," says Thackeray, "it gives an old lady, that balance at the bankers'! How tenderly we look at her faults if she is a relative (may every reader have a score of such), what a kind, good-natured old creature we find her! How the junior partner of Hobbs and Dobbs leads her smiling to the carriage with the lozenge upon it, and the fat, wheezy coachman. How, when she comes to pay

us a visit, we generally find an opportunity of letting our friends know her station in the world! We say (and with perfect truth) 'I wish I had Miss MacWhirter's signature to a cheque for five thousand pounds'... Is it so, or is it not so?"

We must remember also that, while the millionaire of sense does not pay much attention to vulgar flattery, it is very pleasant to have people of charm, intellect, and position around one, and to be great among them. A million and a quarter, if a man has artistic tastes, enables him to buy the finest pictures, the most perfect pieces of statuary, the rarest and most beautiful of books evolved by the genius of mankind. If Mr. Pierpont Morgan, for example, had not a passion for beautiful things, he would certainly not own the greatest art collections that exist. But above all, a million and a quarter means Power – the most eagerly sought for, the most satisfying possession that this world has to offer.

All these things, and the list might be prolonged indefinitely, Frederick Charrington threw away.

You remember – "And behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?"

And again, "Jesus said unto him, if thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in Heaven: and come and follow Me.

"But when the young man heard that saying he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions.

"Then said Jesus unto His disciples, Verily, I say unto you, that a rich man shall hardly enter into the Kingdom of Heaven."

We all know the story of the rich young man, which has been referred to over and over again as the Great Refusal. In this book you read the true story of what I beg leave to call "The Great Acceptance."

Christ Jesus came to this young man, Frederick Charrington, with exactly the same appeal as to that other in Palestine so long ago.

The challenge has been given many, many times since the words of our Lord were first spoken, but how seldom has it been responded to! The rich man went away in sorrow, for he had great possessions. It was probably not only the loss of worldly wealth which troubled him. The sacrifice demanded of him involved far more than this, great as this indeed was. We must remember that the expenditure of vast amounts of money on philanthropic objects have often been made with very unworthy motives. There are to be found dozens of men and women – most people will have a case of their own in mind – who would, and do, gladly spend thousands in order that they may obtain a reputation of superior piety, and, in short, become what one might call social saints. They lay the flattering unction to their souls that they "are not as other men." But surely it was the concluding words of Jesus that were the most important, it was the last condition which demanded the greatest sacrifice of all – "Come and follow Me."

When Agrippa said, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian" – if the words were not merely ironical, as some scholars will have it – he seems to have been convinced in his judgment of the truth of Christianity. The native King of Judæa makes no objection whatever to anything the prisoner Paul says. He neither disputes the statement he makes of his astonishing conversion, nor denies the inference he draws from it, that the Jesus he preached was indeed the Christ. But Agrippa stopped at "almost." He could not give up his darling vice, so sweet just then, such a Dead Sea apple afterwards. He could not abandon Berenice; he could not face the sneers and the scorn of the gilded gang which were his companions at Cæsar's court. There are many Agrippas still in the world; there are many young men of great possessions who are convinced that the words of our Lord are true, who will bear to hear the Gospel, even love to hear it, are often deeply affected by it, and seem to themselves and others on the very point of being won over to it – honest, candid men, who are neither afraid nor ashamed to avow their feelings.

And yet, day by day, the Great Refusal is made.

I must not linger upon this starting-point in Frederick Charrington's career, fascinating as the discussion of it is.

How many others are there who have made this Great Acceptance? What sort of young man was this who started out upon life with such a record? As we go further we shall see.

CHAPTER II

BEGINNINGS

There is a certain passage at the end of the "Apostles," by Ernest Renan, which has always seemed to me to be one of singularly penetrating beauty.

Translated, it runs as follows: "I am impatient to tell again that unparalleled epic, to depict those roads stretching infinitely from Asia to Europe, along which they sowed the seed of the Gospel, those waves over which they fared so often under conditions so diverse. The great Christian Odyssey is about to begin. Already the Apostolic barque has shaken forth her sails; the wind is blowing, and aspires for naught save to bear upon its wings words of Jesus."

I am reminded of this passage now, as I begin to tell of Frederick Charrington's life work for Christ. The Great Acceptance has been made, the journey is about to begin. The soldier has girded on his sword and is marching to battle.

Among the first work which the young man undertook was that of helping in a night-school under the direction of the Rev. Joseph Bardsley, then Rector of Stepney. During his work among the very rough he heard of something of the same sort which was being carried on by two young men in the neighbourhood, and not far from the night-school itself. One was Mr. Hugh Campbell, junior, the other Mr. E. H. Kerwin, who has been secretary of the Tower Hamlets Mission ever since its inception, and one of Mr. Charrington's most loyal helpers.

Mr. Campbell and Mr. Kerwin conducted their Evangelistic work in a hayloft over a stable. It was all the shelter that they had, it was all they could afford, and yet from Mr. Charrington's association with it has sprung a mission so wide-reaching in its effects, so world-embracing in the influence that has radiated from it, that we may well marvel at such results from a beginning so humble.

Not long ago I was telling the story of these early days to a lady whose life has been passed in works of charity. She smiled when I spoke of the little hayloft, and she said, "The Light of the World streamed forth from the manger at Bethlehem."

One evening Mr. Charrington visited his new friends and made personal experience of their efforts.

He found the entrance to the stable guarded by a small boy, who showed him up a terribly rickety staircase of open boards to a long room lighted with cheap paraffin lamps which hung from the rafters.

There was a platform, none too elaborately constructed, at one end of the loft, and the floor was covered with rude benches.

The odour of the stable below ascended in all its pristine richness and mingled with the smell of the crude oil lamps, while the atmosphere was still further complicated by the fact that the roof of the hayloft was a low one, and the ventilation almost non-existent.

Yet, on that night, with a congregation of the roughest and most untaught lads to be found in that part of the East End, in such unpropitious surroundings, the guest nevertheless heard addresses to the lads about the love of Christ for them, which made a lasting impression on his mind.

As he stood at the end of the hall and watched, something must have come to him to tell of the mighty work that, under God's blessing, he himself was destined to do in the future. New and unaccustomed as was the scene, strange as some of the methods must have been to him, yet, at that moment, some hinting, some prophetic vision, came to him. He had arrived at last upon the field. He was present at a mere skirmish with the forces of evil, but it was a foretaste of the great battle to come. He had arrived at the front.

He has told me that as he watched and listened he thought, "This is far more like real work for the Lord than my own more secular night-school work," and when the service was nearly over, as the lads sang —

Shall we gather at the river,
Where bright angel feet have trod;
With its crystal tide for ever
Flowing by the throne of God?

such an impression was made upon his mind that within another night or two he was again present at the service. He proposed at once that he should join forces with his friends, and brought immediately a fresh and burning enthusiasm, a fierce energy, a daring originality, which almost at once began to alter the whole character of the little mission.

The difficulties, the discouragements, were enormous. The neighbours who surrounded this oasis in the desert were entirely unsympathetic. They scoffed and jeered at the whole thing. Hard words, however, break no bones – there are few men living who believe more thoroughly in the adage than Mr. Charrington – but hard words were not the only thing that the young missionaries had to endure.

The man from whom the stable loft was rented was a burly, ruffianly fellow, who, when under the influence of drink, would do his best to upset the meetings.

Once this man burst into the room with an explosion of horrible oaths. He was in a fury, his face was livid with hate, and with every circumstance of violent speech, he bawled out that his poor horse, who had to work hard for its living all day long, could not sleep on account of the noise made by the lads singing hymns!

This ferocious, but singularly ineffectual person, on another occasion stood at the foot of the staircase leading to the loft with a horrible bulldog by his side, daring his tenants to approach the scene of their devotions.

But little circumstances like these had no effect whatever upon the work. Every form of opposition was only like the call of a linnet in a hedge as a regiment of soldiers marches down the road.

Boy after boy came thronging to the standard which the friends had unfurled, and the hayloft became far too small for the purpose. At this moment the Rector of Stepney very kindly placed his schoolroom at the disposal of the three Evangelists. This kindly act, however, was not productive of much success. The lads who attended the meetings were of such a low character – I quote the opinion of the parents of the day-scholars who attended the schools – that the day work began to be seriously interfered with, and "respectable" people complained.

To overcome this difficulty, and perhaps not a very unreasonable opposition on the part of the parents of the day-scholars, a capacious workshop was next taken at Hertford Place, and fitted up by Mr. Charrington's father, at a cost of three hundred pounds, as a mission hall for boys. Another room was rented in Heath Street, Stepney, and this was for girls. In both these halls religious services were held nightly by Mr. Charrington and his friends. There is a brief account in my possession of what was being done at this period, which Mr. Charrington wrote a little later.

He said —

"These premises in Hertford Place, situated at the back of the building represented in our engraving, were secured in May 1870, and fitted up as a school and mission room for boys. Here we had accommodation for over three hundred lads, and the rooms were soon filled with some of the most troublesome roughs of the neighbourhood, including a number of boys known as 'The Mile End Gang,' who had long been a trouble to the police. This gang was soon broken up, in consequence of several of its members, including their leader, professing

conversion. An interesting incident occurred soon after this. A number of lads from Whitechapel, known as the 'Kate Street Gang,' or 'The Forty Thieves,' all of whom were by their own rules convicted thieves, came down one Sunday night, with thick sticks up their sleeves to fight our boys; but after our gaining their confidence, and assuring them that we were not in connection with the police, they were induced to enter the building and join in the boys' Sunday evening service.

"After we had continued these meetings for some time, many of the parents expressed a wish to attend them. At first we could not see our way to accede to their request, but after a time they became so pressing that we agreed to hold a service for them at the close of the boys' meeting. These services soon became so crowded that we had to seek a larger building.

"We started a Boys' Home, which was an outcome of the work among the lads. Often after a service boys would come and plead for their companions, who were without home or shelter for the night. This led to our taking a small house in the court in which we were working, and fitting it up for their accommodation. The numbers so increased, however, that we had to take another cottage, and finally, with the aid of kind friends, we purchased a building, which was previously a beer-bottling warehouse.

"In connection with the Home was a savings bank, which gave the boys the opportunity of putting by their spare money. Many instances could be given of the good resulting from the training in this home. Many of our lads were sent to Great Yarmouth, where, through the agency of the Rev. Mr. Nicholson, they were employed on the fishing smacks. Through the kindness of Lord Polwarth, with whom I stayed at his place on the borders of Scotland, several lads were sent to Scotland, and gave the greatest satisfaction. A boy came to us direct from prison. After a time he was sent to Yarmouth. A few months afterwards he had a holiday, and called to see the Master of the House. The first thing he said was, 'I have come to pay you what I owe, and to thank you for enabling me to make a fresh start in life.' The Home was exclusively for boys who were willing to maintain themselves by their own industry. Over 1000 boys received the benefits it affords. Many of them were orphans."

Frederick Charrington had by this time definitely given up his huge inheritance, had left a luxurious home, and had taken a house in Stepney Green. In one of a series of long talks with Mr. T. Richardson, Registrar of the Eastern Telegraph Company, his life-long friend and helper, I have gathered some curious and amusing details about the life lived in Stepney by the young Evangelist.

"In his early days," Mr. Richardson told me, "Mr. Charrington's one idea was for self-denial – personal asceticism."

This early ideal he has persisted in throughout his life. Like other workers for God in different fields, he has chosen celibacy as his lot, in order to give his whole time and all his interests to his work.

"He took a house in the East End," Mr. Richardson continued, "near the brewery, and in furnishing it went in for self-denial with an almost monkish enthusiasm. Although it is many years ago, I remember it all perfectly well. He had only a table and one or two chairs, and when there was nothing else to sit upon, an empty packing-case did as well as anything else. He had no carpet at all. One day his mother came to see him, and was dreadfully distressed to see him living like this. Expostulations on the part of Frederick were in vain, and Mrs. Charrington drove immediately to the biggest furnisher's in the City of London and told them to take no denial, but to go at once and furnish her son's house properly.

"He was red-hot and full of enthusiasm. I remember we had been out to a meeting together one night, and somewhere about one or two o'clock in the morning we found ourselves sitting on a

costermonger's barrow in a blind alley. Charrington clutched me by the arm and almost shook me. 'We must do something,' he said, 'we must do something to call attention to this cursed liquor traffic. We must get a gang of men armed with cudgels and go and smash the fronts of the public-houses. We shall never do anything till we call attention to it!'"

I shall have much to say shortly of the beginnings of what is perhaps the greatest Temperance crusade that England has ever known, but meanwhile these little glimpses I am able to afford my readers of the quaint house in Stepney so many years ago are curiously interesting.

"Mr. Charrington's house," – so Mr. Richardson told me – "was the house of call in the neighbourhood, and by strange coincidence, everybody went there about mealtimes! Once, when Mr. Marcus Rainsford was staying in what was locally nicknamed the 'Monastery,' a certain zealous and holy man of God looked in. It was during the evening. Now, a peculiarity of the gentleman to whom I refer is, that when he goes anywhere, he never knows when it is time to leave. On the particular occasion that I remember, he stayed on and on until he missed the last omnibus that could take him to his home. He said to Mr. Charrington, 'You will have to put me up for the night.' Mr. Charrington told him that he hadn't a spare bed. Accordingly, Mr. – , nothing daunted, replied that he would sleep with Mr. Rainsford if he didn't mind. Mr. Rainsford did not seem at all delighted at the prospect, and said he preferred to take his rest undisturbed as a rule, but that for one night, at any rate, he didn't mind.

"Accordingly, the matter was arranged thus, and in the morning Mr. – got up first. There was a bathful of water in the bedroom, and the guest inquired if he could take his bath at once. Mr. Rainsford was still almost asleep, and mumbled some sort of an assent. When Mr. – had completed his ablutions, he asked Mr. Rainsford where he should empty the water, and Rainsford, who was by no means awake yet, and who hated being disturbed, growled out that he could pour it out of the window. The too literal Mr. – obeyed blindly, with the result that the bath-water descended in an unbroken stream upon the poor old housekeeper, who was breaking coal in the area below."

It must indeed have been a most curious establishment at Stepney Green! Comfort, as ordinary people know it, appears to have been entirely absent. The strangest characters foregathered there, all day and all night the place hummed like a hive. Mr. Charrington, as will be seen later, has always had a fondness for strange pets. In the house at Stepney a monkey was added to the *entourage*, and shortly afterwards a well-known Evangelistic preacher, who must also, I beg leave to think, have been a considerable prig, called at the "Monastery." Mr. Charrington, who was smoking his inevitable pipe, introduced this person to the monkey. The Evangelist threw back his head, rolled his eyes upwards, and lifted his hands. "Not very spiritual, Charrington," he said, "not very spiritual!" "I wonder if your tom-cat is very spiritual?" was Mr. Charrington's retort.

Mr. Mowll, who is now vicar of Christ Church, Brixton, a college friend of Keith Falconer, who frequently visited the house at Stepney Green, always went to bed very late indeed. One night he rigged up a figure of a man with cushions and an overcoat, put a hat on its head and a pipe in its mouth, and then went to bed, leaving all the gas burning. The next morning, when the housekeeper went into the room to dust it, the poor thing was frightened out of her life to find, as she thought, a strange man sitting there in the full glare of the gas. She was so upset that Mr. Mowll, a most ardent Temperance reformer, was perhaps rightly punished by having to fetch the old lady some brandy from the nearest public-house.

These incidents are all trivial enough, but I give them as illustrating the happy and boyish natures of the young men who found themselves together under the leadership of Mr. Charrington. When the bathroom tap was left on, and the whole house was flooded, their equanimity was not disturbed. When there was no proper dinner, they ate bread and cheese. The vagaries of the housekeeper, the odd behaviour of the monkey, were all subjects for mirth. The moral of this sort of life is obvious enough. These men cared nothing for personal comfort or pleasure. Their life was lived in an unceasing warfare with the powers of evil. Their swords were always girded on – the rest was as nothing.

The late Earl of Kintore stayed for some little time at the East End house, and, as it unhappily turned out, just before his death. As he was leaving after his visit he shook his host's old housekeeper – whose name was Mrs. Pilgrim – by the hand and said, "Well, good-bye. You're a pilgrim and I'm a stranger, and we shall soon be at home." As a matter of fact the earl died suddenly only a fortnight afterwards.

I continue the record of the early beginnings of the great work that was to come, for it was now that the East End Conference Hall first came into being.

"About this time Mr. Charrington received a letter from the late Mr. Pemberton Barnes, who was said to own the largest number of houses of any one in the world (then nearly a stranger to him), stating that he held a site known as Carlton Square, which he was anxious to devote to a Christian work. He had originally intended it for the erection of a church, but being deterred by the rapid advances of Ritualism, of which he was an opponent, he resolved to build a mission hall instead. The result was the erection of the present building, which seated 600 persons, and was opened on Friday, November 1, 1872.

"The following extract is from *The Christian* of that day.

"Another very interesting movement has been inaugurated in the East End. On the 1st of this month a new and very elegant iron structure, capable of accommodating 600 people, was opened for public worship and evangelistic effort of various kinds. T. B. Smithies, Esq., editor of the *British Workman*, presided, and addresses were given by Revs. Jack Kennedy, H. Barton, Dr. Sharpe, Dr. Barnardo, and other friends. A statement of the circumstances which led to the erection was made by Mr. F. N. Charrington, the honorary superintendent, who said, some time ago, being anxious to establish a boy's lodging house, he asked Mr. Pemberton Barnes to devote an old house (situated in the East End, and belonging to him) to that purpose; but Mr. Barnes said he had, unfortunately, given it into the hands of the builders a week previously, and so the matter dropped. A short time ago, however, he had received a letter from that gentleman saying he was desirous of doing something for the Lord; he owned a square on which he proposed building a house with a small hall attached. Mr. Charrington visited him the next day, and Mr. Barnes agreed to build a hall in which the Gospel might be preached, and in which the work would be thoroughly unsectarian. The meetings held on the four Sunday evenings since the opening have been numerous and attended, and not one has passed without distinct testimony of blessing received by some of those present. With much regret we add that Mr. Pemberton Barnes, the kind friend to whom the East End of London is indebted for this addition to its means of evangelisation, died within a fortnight of its opening."

At this East End Conference Hall Mr. Charrington took up the question of adult baptism. His work there was in no sense at all sectarian, nor has it ever been so from those early days until the present moment – a point which I shall enlarge upon at some length when I come to the story of the Great Assembly Hall itself and my own experiences there.

At the same time, Mr. Charrington's own personal conviction was that a form of baptism by immersion was warranted by his interpretation of Scripture, and was a means for good. Mr. Richardson, in one of our conferences, has told me the following curious anecdote. There was a baptistry built in the new hall at Carlton Square, but there was no water laid on. Accordingly, Mr. Charrington sent to the great brewery in the Mile End Road and asked for a supply of wagons containing hogsheads of water to be sent to the hall. The request was immediately complied with, but there was considerable consternation among the neighbours of the new mission when they saw great brewery wagons delivering barrels at the hall – barrels which it certainly never occurred to them, contained nothing but harmless water.

In addition to this central hall, interesting work was also being done in Bethnal Green, where there was a building attached to the now rapidly growing mission in Bonner's Lane. The neighbourhood, in 1875, was a singularly interesting one. It took its name from the fact that Bishop Bonner, of infamous memory, in the days of "Bloody Mary," had his palace in the immediate vicinity,

and additional antiquarian interest was that the faith the then Bishop of London sought to extinguish was afterwards propagated in that very neighbourhood by the French Protestants, who settled there in 1572. The descendants of these people occupied the neighbourhood at the time Mr. Charrington started work there, and extremely picturesque their lives and habits were. A record has been placed in my hands, and it tells of a day when green fields and trees made pleasant a quarter now a wilderness of bricks.

I read —

"I know an old inhabitant who has seen the changes of the last fifty years, and he told me that a man he knew kept a farm a few hundred yards from Bonner Lane. This man's great desire was to possess a hundred black cows. For years he tried to collect them, but never managed to collect more than ninety-nine. As soon as he made the number up to a hundred, one always died, or was lost; and the old man said to him, 'It always reminds me of the lost sheep in Scripture.' The neighbourhood is well known by the name of Twig Folly, and there is an inscription placed upon some houses built by a man who obtained his property in the following way. There was living there a man who made twig baskets. He was greatly troubled by the boys robbing him of his fruit. One day, seeing a boy in one of his fruit trees, he shouldered his gun and shot him. Fearing the consequences, he made over all his property to a friend, on condition that he himself should have it back at the expiration of whatever punishment he might get. But when he came to claim his property, he found his friend not so faithful as he had anticipated; for, instead of delivering it up, he kept it. In building these houses with the proceeds of the property, the friend asked a neighbour what he should name them, and received the following reply: 'What could be better than to name them after the old twig basket maker, for his folly?' So it was named Twig Folly.

"The place is now inhabited by the working-classes. A few of the old silk weavers are still left, who carry on a small trade which cannot be very remunerative. In our hall for the last three months some happy hours have been spent by many who formerly could never be induced to enter any place of worship.

"The plan of the services has been as follows: Meeting on Sunday evenings at six o'clock, and going out with a band of good singers, we invite the people in; then small handbills are distributed, setting forth the order of the services, which consist of singing by a good choir formed for the purpose, and a short address; sometimes a few will tell their experiences. We have by this means been able to fill the hall. This has greatly encouraged us, for if we can obtain such a good congregation in the summer months, we may expect nothing less in the winter. But we are thankful that we can go further and say, that many who have lived without God, and been careless as to their future state, have been awakened and converted. A man came in one Sunday, and stayed after the service to be spoken to. He said he was a prize-fighter, and on the Wednesday following he was to fight. But before he left that night, he delivered his will over to God, and determined by His grace to lead a new life and to keep away from the fight. He has been seen since, and we are thankful to say that he kept his word."

The work in Bonner Lane went on for some three years. After that the activities at the Central Hall demanded so much of the Evangelist's time that it was felt impossible to give the necessary supervision to the offshoot of the mission.

Mr. Charrington was therefore glad to leave this field of labour in the hands of the Rev. T. Bowman Stephenson, who purchased the Hall from the chief organisation and carried on the work himself, though still with friendly relations with the organisers of the chief mission.

How my readers feel about this record I shall never be able to know. I myself am impatient to proceed to a certain point where the immense drama of Frederick Charrington's evangelistic life may be said to commence. But in a life of this sort it is obviously necessary to continue the story of small beginnings.

Throughout all these accounts of what happened in those early days I see Mr. Charrington as the main force, the apostle. But I see him thus only in imagination, only in the light of what he afterwards did. His own memories of this period in his career are simply those of a man who remembers that he was always hard at work, was always sacrificing himself, his money, and his time for the good of others. But the picturesqueness of the days which were to come so soon has somewhat obscured in my mind – and I know in his also – the intimate and personal point of view.

At the same time, as this life is written once and for all, the story of the beginnings must be faithfully told, and told in such detail as I can.

CHAPTER III

MORE BEGINNINGS

As I know him now, a marked characteristic of Charrington is his extreme love of the open air. He has built the largest mission hall in the world. I should be afraid to say how many erections of stone, wood, and brick owe their inception to his courage and his work. But, at the same time, the open air – under God's sky – has always appealed to a man with a mind as clear and simple as running water.

The idea came to him that, while he could get large congregations into his various missions, the great tide of human life must necessarily pass them by. In that vast area of misery known as the East End, the halls where the gospels were preached were indeed but insignificant milestones upon the hard and tortuous way to salvation.

Open-air meetings were begun at a time when Mr. and Mrs. Booth, who afterwards invented and started the Salvation Army, had certainly given a lead, but were absolutely new factors in the attempted reclamation of the masses. The great success of the indoor services had had one inevitable effect. Accommodation for the great crowds who thronged to hear the truths of the supreme philosophy which is called Christianity, became inadequate.

As the work progressed, the originators, organised bands of converts, who entered with willing hearts into the service, held open-air meetings almost incessantly. Open-air work was immediately successful. Large audiences were attracted in Victoria Park on Sunday afternoons, and on the Mile End Waste on mornings, afternoons, and evenings. Services were even conducted in the common lodging houses.

In Victoria Park there was a band of devoted adherents to the Mission who secured an excellent position under the trees near the fountain given by the Baroness Burdett-Coutts.

On the Mile End Waste, on Sunday afternoon, at the close of the preacher's address, a very handsome young man came up to the speaker. A faded document, with all that pathos which attaches to the records of the past, is in my hands now. I read that this young man came up to the preacher, and taking him by the hand, said, "It is all true what you have said, but I am so unhappy! I have spent in waste and pleasure between two thousand and three thousand pounds, and I am ruined."

The Preacher had a long interview with this young man, and ultimately he persuaded him to decide for Christ. He came afterwards to one of the East London meetings, upon a Tuesday evening, a new man in soul, mind, and body.

The open-air work was not, however, confined entirely to services. The hoardings offered a great opportunity, and it was Mr. Charrington's idea that these possibilities of advertisement should be made use of. Large posters were prepared and set up upon the walls of half-ruined buildings, the wooden palings which circumscribed the erection of new houses.

"Christ died for us," stared at the passer-by from every corner. I have in my possession a wood-block drawing which represents one of the hoardings of that period, covered with messages of religion. I cannot reproduce it here, as there are other and more important illustrations which must have a place in this biography. But the texts which blazed out on a callous and only half-believing world were ones that must have indeed arrested the faltering one, have turned the eyes, if not to God, at least to a consideration of the fact that there was a God, who watched unceasingly over His children.

"I am the Light of the World." "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life." "He that believeth on the Son hath Everlasting Life." "Fools make a mock of sin."

It is now necessary to mention another offshoot of the Central Organisation, known as the "Oxford Street Hall." The Oxford Street to which I refer is not the Oxford Street of fashion, or of De Quincey. It was a "street in the East."

This Branch of the Mission was opened in August, 1874. The Hall was used previously as a school and for other purposes, and being situated in a street leading from a main thoroughfare to a territory of working-men's dwellings, was admirably suited to mission purposes.

The house was accessible from the Hall, and was occupied by the missionary in charge of the work. There were no paid labourers; those who helped were all engaged in daily toil, and were chiefly converts from the Central Hall. The experiences of the first were somewhat peculiar. Their efforts taught the workers the real wants of the neighbourhood, and being cemented by brotherly love, which abounded among them, they settled down with a doggedness of purpose that bore great fruit.

This Branch of the Mission was carried on there for some years, until the new site was secured and the Assembly Hall erected in Mile End Road. This being but a short distance from the Oxford Street Hall, and the lease of that building having nearly expired, the work was transferred to the Great Assembly Hall. The hall in Oxford Street was afterwards pulled down by the landlord, and a dwelling-house erected in its place.

It soon became necessary to "move on" from the Conference Hall. The place was too small for the enormous work which was now being done, and of which it was the centre, so that a more important site became imperative.

It was not long before a piece of ground in the Mile End Road, at the corner of White Horse Lane, was chosen – a spot that had hitherto been anything but an ornament to the neighbourhood. The largest portion of it had been used for years by travelling showmen with wax-works, merry-go-rounds, penny theatres, and every variety of exhibition. The local authorities considered that a great boon had been conferred upon the neighbourhood, and especially the police, who expressed their thanks when Mr. Charrington bought this land and removed the dilapidated buildings which stood there; while the respectable inhabitants hailed with delight the demolishing of the old place which had afforded facilities for persons of the lowest character.

It was a splendid situation, and the Hon. Elizabeth Waldegrave, sister of Lord Radstock, kindly paid the rent, besides giving much of her time and energy to the work. Here a tent was erected and evangelistic services were conducted every night with great success during two whole summers.

The speakers were chiefly soldiers of the Guards, who came all the way from the West End barracks, many of them walking the whole way there and back (a distance of ten miles) on purpose to preach the Gospel night after night.

These soldiers were, of course, very far from eloquent, but they were terribly in earnest, and even their rough, but heart-felt words had a tremendous influence with the people they addressed. One can imagine well how these splendid, scarlet-coated men, in the full height of physical power, virile and disciplined, must have swayed the minds of those to whom they appealed.

Charrington's close association with these soldiers came about owing to a visit that he paid to a Mr. Fry, an Irish solicitor, at whose house on Dublin Bay Mrs. Charrington stayed.

His old friend Mr. Richardson has told me of this particular visit, and to what it subsequently led.

Mr. Fry had a little daughter, a young girl of seventeen, who took a great interest in the soldiers. One morning she asked Mr. Charrington to accompany her round the barracks. He complied, and she showed him everything. At the conclusion of their tour, she said to him, "Mr. Charrington, all these soldiers are soon coming to London, where they will have a great many temptations to drink, etc. I wish you would be so kind as to try and do something for them when they are there." He promised that he would. When he got back to the East End, he went to the barracks to which they had been transferred, and asked them all to come to the Hall. The soldiers came in their busbies and scarlet uniforms, and as they were all over six feet high, they formed a magnificent group on the platform. He set them all to work, and they gave their testimonies. They could not, of course, speak well, but just the recital of their experiences was far more effective than the oration of the greatest speaker. They also used to accompany Mr. Charrington's procession through the streets, and were known as

"Charrington's Bodyguard." They made a scarlet ring round him, and their great height made it very effective indeed. One man was over six feet four inches high, and was broad in proportion. He used to preach, saying, "Well, dear friends, I cannot preach. I never have preached. But I can tell you that if you don't give up the drink and turn to God you will be damned. Give up the drink! I cannot preach, but I can tell you that I was a drunkard myself, but I turned to God, and was saved. Give up the drink!" Several of these men afterwards became missionaries and preachers – notably Mr. W. R. Lane of the Free Church Council.

The great tent was set up upon a waste piece of land on the 21st of May, 1876. The inaugural meeting was very largely attended, and Mr. Samuel Morley, the millionaire M.P., who, till the very day of his death, was one of the most generous supporters of Mr. Charrington's great work, was in the chair. He spoke as follows —

"I am here at the request of Mr. Charrington and other friends, at least to have the satisfaction of showing my earnest sympathy with the work which is to be carried on by them. The presence of several clergymen around me evidences that it is fully understood that in holding tent services there is no attempt to draw from existing congregations, but rather to reach those classes of which chapel and church know but little; it is wanted to get at the masses of the people. Born in London, bred, and brought up in the midst of that kingdom – for such London is – I have arrived at a conclusion that makes me anxious to co-operate with those who are seeking to lift up the masses of the people from the degraded condition in which they are now living. I fear that more than one million of the population of London never enter a place of worship, and if on the morning of any Lord's day there was a desire to attend a place of worship on the part of those who could go on the Sabbath, there would be needed 800,000 more sittings than are at present provided. That is proof positive of the neglect of public worship, which can be viewed by Christians only with deep grief and pain. I state this to stimulate to effort, not merely clergymen and other Christian workers, but all classes. I would quote from the Bishop of Lichfield, who said that immorality and drunkenness were destroying our nation. Well-to-do people who mix but little with the lower classes can have no conception of the condition in which they are now living. I would advise that, instead of suggesting and inquiring as to what others should do, they should set about to find what, as Christians, they themselves should do. In the erection of this tent, you have raised a standard declaring the observance of the Lord's day. You can do this on physical grounds. The weekly day of rest is not only desirable, but necessary, and for that besides we have the authority of the Scriptures, and our great national boast and thankfulness is that England has an open Bible. Mr. Forster, addressing the children at the Crystal Palace on a late occasion, said that in every circumstance of life, whether of joy or sorrow, the Bible would be a boon to them. To this I would add that it not merely helps us amidst the joys and sorrows of this life, but it tells us what awaits us in the next. It tells – and this is the foundation-stone of this movement – it tells us that 'God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' This will be the basis of the utterances which will be delivered from this platform. Believing this, I desire to offer to my Christian friends – who, I am assured, have no idea of advancing a sect, or preaching a particular doctrine – my most earnest and heartfelt sympathy in their enterprise."

Such an inspiring speech as this, from a man so well known and of such high place, who was a life long friend of Frederick Charrington, was the happiest augury for the success of this new departure.

Success it was, and in the highest degree, but everything to which Frederick Charrington has put his hand has been a success. Already my readers will be wondering at the ceaseless activity of this still very young man and his band of devoted workers. They are, however, as nothing to what is to follow.

"Rescue bands" were organised at this time.

The various mission halls, and the great tent were in full swing. Upon the hoardings of bare spaces of the East End the texts of Holy Scripture were seen on all sides, interspersed with advertisements of Christian literature, and advertisements of forthcoming meetings.

Crowds of people were daily gathered round these stations, eagerly reading the words of life. On Sunday mornings working men, taking their weekly stroll, men who had never opened a Bible in their lives, would stop to read the parable of the Prodigal Son. In the dead of night the poor lost girl, as she passed along to her *via dolorosa*, was startled to see the familiar text which she had learnt as a child in the Sunday schools. The guardians of law and order on their solitary beats at night turned the lights of their lantern upon the hoardings, and in the darkness and the silence of the night read the story of Christ's love for them – the profligate returning from scenes of revelry was arrested for the moment by the words "Prepare to meet thy God!" Such a revival, at such a time, was absolutely unknown. A great light, growing larger and larger every moment, began to shine in upon the dark places of the East End. It was as though some great lighthouse of God had been built by living hands, growing rapidly, like some building in a fairy story, and flooding this part of London with radiance. And in the height of the tower, directing the unflagging rays of hope, was Frederick Nicholas Charrington.

The Rescue bands which he organised and accompanied himself, penetrated to the lowest, and often most dangerous, neighbourhoods. London has changed since those days, and not, perhaps, in the direction of the picturesque, and the earnest workers for Christ moved among the strangest scenes imaginable. Space will not allow me the pleasant task of recalling some of those vanished scenes, but I may make a passing reference to one environment which certainly holds the imagination.

When the Huguenot refugees fled from the persecutions of their enemies to the peace and security of Spitalfields, they obtained a living by weaving, and Bethnal Green and Spitalfields were the recognised headquarters of this branch of industry. Machinery had done much to cripple the trade, but had not yet entirely destroyed it. The prices, however, paid to the weavers in this locality were barely remunerative, and a great amount of poverty existed. In Club-row and thereabouts, the upper windows of the houses were of that long, arched pattern which was sufficient evidence to show that these tenements were occupied by weavers, as they were built to admit as much light as possible. The connection between silk-weaving and bird-selling is not very clear, nor is it obvious how the ground floors of the weavers' houses were transformed into bird shops. But then every other shop, at least, engaged to provide for the wants of the "Fancy," whether it required poultry, pigeons, or small birds, not to mention rabbits, dogs, rats, guinea-pigs, mice, hedgehogs, and goats. An extensive trade was driven in these and other objects of interest to fanciers, but the great Bird Fair, when business is at its full height, was reserved for Sunday morning.

A member of the principal Rescue band, that worked in Bird Fair, wrote —

"One bright Sunday morning we passed down Sclater Street as the fair was commencing. The glad sunlight was flooding the streets, searching every nook and cranny, and putting new life into the caged prisoners, so that they poured forth their hearts in song. A strange contrast, the sweet heavenly music of the country, and the pent-up, confined surroundings presented. At any rate, so it appeared to us; but the 'Fancy,' which was disporting itself in great numbers, clad in a variety of garments, usually with a blue-checked neckcloth, and a short pipe between its teeth, had eyes alone for lark, linnet, or chaffinch, and naught else. The 'Fancy' seemed to repeat itself every way one turned. Here was a man with a cage enveloped in a black handkerchief under his arm, and there another – his counterpart in every particular. They differed only in this, that they were variously laden; one had under his arm a cage, whilst another had a fowl, and another a dog; but cages and dogs seemed to be

the most numerous, the former being more in favour than the latter. These men and their cages are inseparable. Walk in the park, they are there; walk into the country, they are there; go to their homes, they are there. Give a man his cage and his pipe, and he is content."

And again —

"The work in Bird Fair is especially interesting. As we entered one of the largest of these houses, we found scores of men congregated in the side-parlour, and as soon as we could distinguish the objects on the other side of the room through the dense clouds of tobacco smoke with which it was filled, we saw that every available mantel-shelf or ledge was filled up with small bird-cages, each containing its little captive. A man just then came into the room, calling out, 'No. 6 and No. 2, are you ready?' from which we conjectured that a raffle or bird club was being carried on. They looked at us somewhat surprised, but civilly received the invitations to be present at the services in Lusby's Music Hall in the evening. We found another house where none but dog fanciers assembled. Ferocious looking bulldogs (carefully muzzled), and delicately reared little pug dogs were seated on their owners' laps, or squatted on the ground at their feet. Here, with the exception of one man whose language was not very choice, we received a kind welcome; and after we had visited the room at the back, the landlord, to our great astonishment, invited us to come round one Sunday evening and talk to the men in the parlour. We almost thought that this was a joke on his part, but on paying him another call on the following Sunday morning and asking him if he really meant what he said, he replied, 'Come to-night.' Accordingly, the same evening we sent off two members of the Rescue band to hold a service at the time appointed. They found a number waiting for their visit, and in a few minutes had forty of these men seated with the landlord in their midst. They talked to them for over an hour of what the Lord had done for them, and what He is willing to do if they would only come to Him. At the close of the meeting there were many requests for them to come again on the following Sunday, and the publican said on leaving that they might come as often as they liked. As they passed the bar, those who had not come into the meeting explained to them which of the bulldogs would fight, and which would not, etc., etc.; and as they patted the dogs on the head, they got a word with their owners about their own souls."

Support poured in to the multifarious activities of the mission from all sides.

The young Earl and Countess of Aberdeen attended, and were warmly interested. The great Lord Shaftesbury, for many years one of Mr. Charrington's most intimate friends, was also among those highly-placed Englishmen and women who gave their unwavering support.

Mr. Samuel Morley, M.P., has already been mentioned, and one of the richest men in England, Mr. T. A. Denny, was a magnificently generous subscriber, and never ceased in his unflagging patronage of the work. It was Mr. Denny who generously bore nearly all the pecuniary burden of opening a certain East End music hall on Sunday nights — a music hall which will be seen, as the story of Mr. Charrington's career advances, to have had a most extraordinary place and influence in his life.

The music hall crusade was Mr. Charrington's idea, and it proved an inestimable blessing to the population among whom he worked, hundreds being reached there who could never otherwise be brought within the sound of the gospel.

At the Foresters' Music Hall, the famous Evangelist, Mr. Sankey, consented to sing, and for three years the most enthusiastic meetings were held there.

Both the Hon. Jon. Keith-Falconer and Lord Mount-Temple addressed the congregation. One service in this hall was broken up by the loud roarings of some caged lions who were to be shown there on the next night. The audience was terrified and refused to stay, despite Mr. Charrington's assurance that there was no danger. The great beasts were only separated from the Evangelist by the drop curtain, and the experience must certainly have been very unpleasant and nerve-shaking — though Frederick Charrington does not rejoice in "nerves."

Lusby's Music Hall, the place of amusement to which I first referred, and which was the largest music hall in the East End, was opened for several seasons.

Work was begun there on a night in November, 1877. The crowd was so great that it extended beyond the tram-lines, which were seventy feet from the entrance, while before the doors were opened the line itself was invaded, and the police had to regulate the crowd in order to let the trams pass through it.

The hour of this first service was seven o'clock, but at half-past six there was not a single vacant seat in the building, and wherever standing room could be found, it was immediately occupied. Madame Antoinette Stirling came down and sang "O rest in the Lord."

I wish especially to insist on the fact, ample record of which is in my possession, that these music hall services on Sunday nights were *continuously* crowded. People who would not have even gone into the great tent or the ordinary mission halls were to be found in the transformed haunts of their ignoble week-day pleasures, and the souls that were led to the foot of the Cross were incalculable.

In connection with Lusby's Music Hall, in particular, I cannot refrain from recalling at least one case of very special interest.

A poor man, a dock labourer, who had not attended a service of any kind for several years, entered the hall one Sunday evening when Mr. Joseph Weatherley was the preacher. The sinner's need and the Saviour's power to save him were clearly set before the people, and the man that night rested his soul on the finished work of God. The next day, while at work in the dock, he fell down a ship's hold, and was carried to the London Hospital very much injured. The nurse (a Christian woman), under whose care he was placed, saw that he was dying and spoke to him of Jesus. She found him happy in the assurance of sins forgiven, and on asking how long he had been a child of God, he replied, "Last Sunday night, through the preaching in Lusby's Music Hall." He died rejoicing.

I shall have so much to say of Lusby's Music Hall in a forthcoming part of this book that I will not attempt, in this place, any word-picture of the services there.

In connection with another establishment of the same kind, and, if possible, much lower and more disreputable than the usual thing, I am able to reconstruct a typical scene of the many that occurred there when Mr. Charrington and his friends turned it for one night in each week from a place of sin and corruption to a stronghold of our Lord.

Wilton's Music Hall, or, as it was affectionately called by its habitués, "The Mahogany Bar," was a music hall opening on a quiet square notorious as the Ratcliff Highway, then regarded as the most disreputable street of its kind in the whole world. Ratcliff Highway – has it not obtained an evil immortality in the words of innumerable songs which are minor classics in their way? – was the resort of the lowest characters of all nations, the very scum of the earth. It was here that "Poor Jack" fell a prey to the vilest harpies in Christendom, it was a den of prostitution, vice, drunkenness and crime, tenanted by fiends in human form, who made their unholy gains out of the passionate outbursts of the misguided sailors, who, by their orgies, their desperate affrays, and frightful excesses, did so much to confer its evil notoriety upon the street.

One Saturday night, Mr. Charrington and a friend, armed with handbills announcing that Wilton's Music Hall was to be opened on Sunday and that seats were free, turned into Leman Street, en route for some of the lowest drinking, dancing, and singing saloons that East London could boast.

They entered fifty public-houses and singing saloons of the worst type. There was a sink of iniquity known as "The Paddy's Goose." "The Gun Boat," "The Jolly Sailor" and "The Kettledrum" were hardly any better.

Hardly any middle-aged women were to be seen, seafaring men, from the apprentice to the mate, from the nigger to the English tar, men of all stamps, sizes, nations, and colours; girls with shawl-covered heads, usually in parties of three and four, under the supervision of horrible old hags, made up the crowd that thronged these dens. Elbowing their way through a group of sailors and wretched girls gathered at the door of one of the establishments, and brushing past one or two ragged little urchins who were peeping in at the chinks, wishing, perhaps, to catch a glimpse of the comparative comfort within, they entered those swinging portals, which move so easily inwards, but with so much difficulty

outwards. They found themselves in a large and crowded drinking saloon. With the reflection that "the righteous shall be bold as a Lion," they met the stare of the many eyes turned upon them with a rather painful composure. The landlord, a sporting-looking character, received them with evident astonishment and curiosity.

He was soon acquainted with their mission – "Would he kindly allow a bill or two to be placed upon his counter?" Appealed to in this fashion, he could not refuse. In one case, such was the obliging condescension, yet amazing incongruity, exhibited, that the monarch of the bar declared that "he would do anything to help the cause."

The company were soon supplied with notices, and acknowledged them with varying degrees of politeness. Some hardly looked at them, while others criticised them narrowly. "Ah! it's not for the like o' me," exclaimed one man, with the marks of many a tempest upon his brow. "Take it away, it only adds to my sins." "What! the Mahogany Bar opened on a Sunday!" objected a would-be wit, "No, no; we'd go there to-night, but on Sunday – " And the speaker concluded his sentence with a well-affected pretence at remonstrance.

The opening service was on Sunday. For the first time within the "Mahogany Bar" Music Hall, God's praises were sung on February 24, 1877. Never before had the cry "Stand up, stand up for Jesus" rung from its benches, and never before, perhaps, had the Spirit of God descended in mighty power, breaking the hard heart, subduing the rebellious will, and making light to shine even in the stronghold of Satan. Most encouraging it was to find that, notwithstanding the service had been only scantily advertised by posters, and by the bills alluded to, the hall was at seven o'clock very fairly filled, and filled, too, by those same individuals that the Rescue party had addressed the night before. Such a congregation was rarely seen in those early days. Seafaring men were there in scores; and the girls of loose character they had brought with them – "the sailors' women," as they were known, almost entirely composed the audience.

Mr. Charrington conducted, and Mr. J. Manton Smith preached. Considering they were on their good behaviour, and evidently felt the restraint of silence during the prayers to be irksome, the people were much quieter than was expected. The sailors, however, sat with their arms round the girls who accompanied them as if it were quite the right thing to do – otherwise they remained quiet and listened most attentively to the preacher.

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