

Drunkenness.

The heavy loss from the Church because of drunkenness has been well known for many years. In this country today, according to available data, 5% of every dollar is spent on alcohol. Charles Lamb and Matt Talbot offer us a study in contrast. Neither started out to be alcoholics. Their "occasional" drink became more and more frequent--then too frequent. The tyrannical habit inevitably formed. The craving for liquor became a necessity, finally an obsession.

Charles Lamb....

....knew by experience the frightful effect of alcohol on mind and body. He cries out, in despair, toward the end of his life, preaching a timely, practical sermon to the youth who would begin to drink:

The waters have gone over me, but out of the black depths, could I be heard, I would cry to all those who have but set foot in the perilous flood. Could the youth (to whom I speak) to whom the flavor of his first wine is delicious as the opening scenes of life...look into my desolation and be made to understand what a dreary thing it is when a man shall feel himself going down a precipice with open eyes and passive will; to see his destruction and have no power to stop it, and yet to feel it all the way emanating from himself; to perceive all goodness emptied out of him;....to bear about the piteous spectacle of his own self-ruin; could he see my fevered eyes--feverish with last night's drinking and feverish-looking for this last night's repetition of the folly; could he feel the body of death out of which I cry hourly with feebleness and feebleness outcry to be delivered....But is there no middle way between total abstinence and the excess which kills you? There is none--none that I can find. In the stage which I have reached, to stop short of that measure which is sufficient to draw on torpor and sleep, the benumbing apopleptic sleep of the drunkard, is to have taken none at all.

Matt Talbot....

....The Irish laborer, at the early age of twelve became a drunkard. For sixteen years he lived in and out of his cups. After a good day's work he and his companions would "hit it up" in their favorite tavern, stumbling home late at night in drunken stupor. During his drinking years Matt neglected the Sacraments, although, to his credit, he never missed Mass on Sundays, nor did he indulge in impure escapades.

When twenty-eight Matt's whole life changed. He changed it himself, with the grace of God, because he had been snubbed, cut to the heart, by his own tavern friends who had refused to set him up when he had been down and out. On this particular night, when they ignored him, Matt went home for the first time in years sober. After supper he said to his faithful mother: "Mother, I am going to take the pledge." He took that pledge and kept it, without breaking it once, for forty-one years until his death....Matt found a new friend in Christ--daily Mass, Communion, long hours in prayer, physical austerities. His daily schedule: retiring at 10:30 p.m., rising at 2:00 a.m., praying until 4:30 on his knees in his room. At 5 o'clock--off to Church for Mass and Holy Communion. His entire evenings were now spent in prayer and spiritual reading.

Matt's penitential life ended abruptly--at the age of 71 he dropped dead in the street on his way to a second Sunday Mass. As his worn-out body was being prepared for burial, the good Sisters discovered heavy chains wrapped around his body, deeply imbedded in his flesh. He was buried not far from Dublin, June 11, 1925.

PRAYERS URGENTLY REQUESTED: Jack Donahoe (Wal), critically injured.