

LIFE OF  
MATT TALBOT

By Sir Joseph A. Glynn



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# CONTENTS

	<b>Page</b>
Introduction	v – viii
Birth and Early Life	I
Conversion	9
Growing in Holiness	17
Labour Troubles	30
The Daily Round of Prayer	38
The Evening Prayer	52
Fasts and Mortifications	68
Circle of Friends - Charity	79
Illness and Closing Years	91
The Growing Cultus	100

# ILLUSTRATIONS

Granby Lane, Showing Spot where Matt Talbot fell dead	<i>Frontispiece</i>
18 Upper Rutland Street	<i>Facing Page 18</i>
The Timber Yard	23
Church of St.Laurence O'Toole	47
Specimen of Matt Talbot's Writing	63
Note to Dalgan Park	87
The Grave at Glasnevin	99

*The author desires it to be understood that, unless where he expressly states that the Church of the Holy See has recognised the truth of miracles or other super-natural manifestations referred to in the following pages, he claims no credence for them beyond what the available historical evidence may warrant.*

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## INTRODUCTION

In March, 1926, the Catholic Truth Society of Ireland published a short “Life of Matt Talbot, a Dublin Labourer”. The Life came to be written almost by accident, as the name of Matt Talbot was altogether unknown to the writer until a friend and fellow member of a charitable society who had known Matt Talbot for 25 years, told something of the life of that holy man and suggested that the author should write a short sketch for the edification of Matt Talbot’s fellow-workers in Dublin. The book was written and ready before Christmas, 1925 but several unforeseen events delayed its publication until the beginning of Lent of 1926. During Lent in Ireland it is customary to hold, in the cities and large towns, missions and retreats for the parishioners, and the little booklet was used by the various missionaries to point out the spiritual heights to which the lowliest amongst them could aspire.

The effect on the working people of Ireland was remarkable. The first edition of 10,000 copies was sold out in four days, and Edition followed Edition until 120,000 copies had been sold in a few months. At the time this is being written, 140,000 copies have been printed in Ireland. The spread of the fame of Matt Talbot was equally remarkable outside Ireland. The Australian C.T.S. republished the pamphlet under the title of “A Saint in Overalls”. Within a short time, applications for permission to translate it into foreign languages began to arrive, so that within one year from the date of the original publication editions had appeared, or were in course of preparation, in French, German (three separate Editions for Germany proper, Alsatia and German-speaking Austria), Portugese, Spanish, Italian, Dutch, Polish, Hungarian, Czeckish, Yugo-Slavian, Russian, Chinese and Breton. At the same time there arose a demand for more information about this remarkable man, and the writer was asked to prepare a larger life giving more intimate details of Matt Talbot’s daily life. The result is the present book, which contains all that it has been possible to gather from every available source about Matt Talbot from his youth to his death.

Realizing the seriousness of the task which he was compelled by events to undertake, the writer personally interviewed a large number of people who were able to give him any information on the subject. Two sisters gave full details of Matt Talbot’s life,

and their evidence was corroborated in very many essential particulars by fellow-workers and personal friends. In practically every case the statement of evidence was written out and read over to the witness before being accepted by the writer, and where there appeared to be a discrepancy between statements every effort was made to clear it up. Such discrepancies were usually the result of faulty memory. As one sister put it, "We always took Matt for granted and never minded to take notes of what he did. We never thought anyone would want to write his life". Both sisters were very scrupulous in their statements and avoided anything which might savour of exaggeration. The writer found the same care exhibited by all the witnesses, who seemed fully to realize that nothing should be set down which was not in strict accordance with the truth. The only merit the writer can claim is that, having been a lawyer for many years, he was able to appraise the value of the evidence taken by him and not allow his imagination to run away with his discretion. In all, some thirty witnesses were interviewed. It was a wonderful experience. Here one found oneself in touch with the actual friends of a saint, and saw reflected in them the holiness which had spread from Matt Talbot to those around him - the little group which gathered on the steps of St. Francis Xavier's Church, Upper Gardiner Street, at 5.30a.m., winter and summer, waiting for the doors to open; the old lady, bent with age, who still wore the chains which Matt Talbot had given her; the men and women of another rank in life who had known and revered their poor friend and model; the fellow-workers who had worked with him during the long years of common toil. How unconsciously they revealed their own beautiful lives as they told stories of their saintly friend, and how, as one listened to them, one realized that these were the true types of our people, and not the wretched degenerates which a so-called national theatre presents to the world as types of Catholic Ireland.

Those who mix amongst the poor of our Capital know that beneath the squalor, and in spite of it, there exist holiness of life and a wonderful charity; holiness which reveals itself in the resignation with which the poor bear the manifold troubles which are their daily lot; charity which is seen in their kindness to those amongst them who are poorer than themselves. It seems easy to be holy in the cloister or in the sheltered surroundings of a comfortable home, but to see real goodness go to a room in a tenement house and look around you. There is the Perpetual Lamp kept alive somehow, even where there is no bread. There are the objects of piety - crucifix,

pictures, statutes, and the tiny altar decked in coloured paper and tinsel. There a patient wife alone with her little ones, for the husband is gone on the never-ending quest for work, or the lonely widow who earns a pittance from a few days charring each week, will meet you with a smile of welcome, and will thank the good God for the little timely aid you have brought in His name to those, His little ones. Go to our churches on the night when the men's sodalities meet and see the thousands of workers of every class, who, after their day's labour in yard, or shop, or tram, come week by week or month by month, to gain new strength and help from their devotion to the practices of their sodality. Go on the Sunday mornings to the early Masses, and see the throngs of men and women who crowd the altar rails to receive their Lord and Master. If you would go still higher, follow the footsteps of the young men and the young women of the City who visit the poor in their own homes, the wanderers in the lodging houses, the homeless in the Poor Law Union, and the sick in the wards of the Hospital. These are our people, the God-fearing men and women of our City from whom Matt Talbot sprang and who number amongst them many, who, like Matt Talbot, live lives of holiness and self-sacrifice in the midst of their fellow-men. Why did they throng the book-shops for the little booklet which told of Matt Talbot's prayers and penances? Was it not that in the depths of their own hearts they felt spring up the desire for holiness such as his and the thought that what he had done they could strive to accomplish? Was it not because the life of Matt Talbot proved to the world that sanctity is not the preserve of the cloister, nor holiness of life a matter of social position, and that in our own day, as in the days of Christ, His friends are to be found amongst the poor and the lowly.

To the writer the life of Matt Talbot presents two aspects for all workers: rugged honesty in the fulfilling of his contract of service with his employers, and a dignified confidence in the cause of his fellow-workers. Every page of his life reveals these points, as every page reveals how he regulated all his dealings with his fellow-men by the rules of Charity and Justice.

It was in the hope that this larger life of Matt Talbot might lead to still greater devotion to his memory, and, above all, to the greater glory of God that the writer undertook a task for which he felt himself utterly unfitted. However, it is now finished, and he humbly offers to the Christian workers of every land this life of one

of themselves, who, in an age of change and disillusion, never turned from the path of righteousness, but ever sought his true happiness in the bosom of the Catholic Church, in obedience to her laws and in the full knowledge that she alone could shield him from the false gods of modern paganism which sought to drive the supernatural from the lives of the people and would close the doors of Hope on all who labour and are burdened.

One more word. Just as this life was being finished the writer received an anonymous letter which raised two points: One, the use of the name “Matt” instead of “Matthew”; the other, that the original life left the impression that blasphemy was common amongst Irish workers some years ago. On the first point the writer considers that there is nothing irreverent in describing a very holy man by the name by which he was known all his life. Everyone spoke of him with deep affection as “Matt” and the writer thinks that a name which is now so familiar to all Irish Catholics might well be allowed to remain. On the other point the anonymous correspondent is right. The use of the word “blasphemy” was not justified. Our Irish people seldom blaspheme; they speak at times irreverently, through carelessness, and use the name of God or the Sacred Name of Jesus without realizing what they are doing. It is hoped this short explanation will prevent any future misunderstanding.

# LIFE OF MATT TALBOT

## *CHAPTER I.*

### BIRTH AND EARLY LIFE

One thing which seems certain about the ancestors of Matt Talbot is that they came of a mixed Gaelic and Anglo-Irish stock. The family names of the parents are not Gaelic, but on both sides there are amongst their ancestors purely Gaelic names which show that in this, as in so many families in Ireland, there is a large admixture of races. The name Talbot is Anglo-Irish; the maternal name, Bagnel, is English, and as Matt Talbot's maternal ancestors came from County Cavan they were, very probably, originally English settlers who intermarried with the native Irish and adopted the Catholic religion. The family Christian names have the same tale to tell - such names as Robert and Charles being infrequent amongst the Gaels.

The Talbots must have been long settled in Dublin, as the father, grandfather and great-grandfather of Matt Talbot was, each in turn, foreman or charge-hand in the employment of the Dublin Port and Docks Board, a very remarkable fact in itself, and one which proves that they were men of probity and worth. This position carried with it the charge of large quantities of bonded spirits, which remained in the stores of the Board until they had reached maturity, when they were released, as required, on payment of the spirit duty. This post of foreman was held by Matthew Talbot, the great-grandfather of the subject of this biography, by his grandfather, Robert Talbot, and by his father, Charles Talbot.

Charles Talbot was a man of exceptional character. He lived in early life at 13 Aldborough Court, or Place, on the North Circular Road, Dublin, in a small cottage, where he married Elizabeth Bagnel, a Dublin-born girl. They had twelve children, eight sons and four daughters. The eldest son, John, lived to be about 60 years of aged and died unmarried, but all the other sons, except Matt, died young or in early manhood. Three sisters survived Matt. Charles Talbot, their father, was a man of good religious life. He belonged to the Confraternity of the Immaculate Conception attached to the Jesuit Church, St. Francis Xavier's, Upper Gardiner Street, Dublin,

being a regular attendant at the monthly meetings and a monthly communicant, besides receiving Holy Communion on the principal Feast Days of the Church. The beautiful devotion of the Rosary of the Blessed Virgin, which, during the centuries of persecution, was the mainstay of the Catholic Faith in Ireland, was recited every night in his home. He lived until the year 1899, and died at the age of seventy-three, having been for eleven years before his death in receipt of a pension from the Port and Docks Board, at the rate of fifteen shillings a week, which was one half of his wages before his retirement.

Elizabeth Talbot, the wife of Charles, was a woman of great piety, and in her old age had attained to a high degree of holiness. Like her husband, she was a member of the Confraternity of the Immaculate Conception attached to St. Francis Xavier's Church, and for many years had been a daily communicant, a practice which she only gave up when she became an invalid and not able to leave her room. During the last few years of her life she received Holy Communion once a month from the priest in charge of the district in which she lived, and on whom she made so deep an impression that after her death he referred, in an address to the Women's Confraternity, to her holy life. A friend who often visited the house in which she and her son, Matt, lived, states that he never saw her without the Rosary beads in her hands, and that she seemed always to be praying. Both she and her husband were total abstainers; she, probably, from childhood, and he from manhood. The unfortunate habit of indulging in strong drink to which their sons were addicted was not, therefore, attributable to any laxity in this matter in the parental home. Mrs Talbot died in 1915, at the age of seventy-six, having lived alone with her son, Matt, from the death of her husband in 1899.

Matt Talbot was born at 13 Alboro' Court, or Place, on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of May, 1856, and was baptised at the Pro-Cathedral, Marlboro' Street, on the 5<sup>th</sup> day of May. The date originally given by his sister to the writer, 1857, was accepted without verification as he was informed that a search had been made, without success, for the baptismal entry. A further search led to the discovery of the entry, which states that Matthew Talbot, son of Charles and Elizabeth Talbot (nee Mullock), was born on the 2<sup>nd</sup> May, 1856, and was baptised according to the rite of the Catholic Church, on the 5<sup>th</sup> day of May, 1856. Sponsor – Mary Anne Talbot. This entry contains an error, namely, the

surname of the mother, which is given as Mullock instead of Bagnal. This is easily explained, as the parochial clergy state that a very common error is for the woman who carries the infant to the church, to give her own name when questioned, instead of the name of the mother. In the present instance this must have occurred, as Mullock is the name of cousins of the Talbots, and nothing is more probable than that a cousin carried the child to the church. There appears to have been only one sponsor, a sister of the father, Charles Talbot.

When he arrived at school age, Matt Talbot was sent to the Christian Schools, North Richmond Street, where he remained until he was twelve years old. His sisters state that he and his brothers were as mischievous as most healthy young boys of their age, and were in constant trouble with their parents. Their mother told that as she brought Matt and a younger brother to school, they would distract her attention at a street corner and then pulling their hands out of hers would escape down a neighbouring street, leaving her helpless. The beating which awaited their return after a day's freedom was considered as a matter of course and well worth the stolen joys of a day from school. The school records do not contain Matt's name, but one venerable Brother remembers the little lad whom he taught over sixty years ago. Matt's school-days ended when he was twelve years of age. There was no compulsory school-leaving age in existence then, and boys were sent to work about the age of twelve. His first employment was as a messenger boy with the firm of Messrs. Edward and John Burke, wine merchants, North Lotts, Dublin, which did, and still does, a very extensive bottling business for Messrs. Arthur Guinness, Son & Co., brewers. Here the young boy learned to take drink. It was around him on all sides, and, unfortunately, many of the men engaged at the work of bottling were in the habit of drinking to excess. The habit began to take hold of Matt, and before he was a year in the store he came home under the influence of drink. His father gave him a severe beating, removed him from Messrs. Burkes', and got him a post as messenger boy in the Port and Docks Board, where he was himself in charge of the bonded stores. It was a case of "out of the frying pan into the fire". In Burkes' the drink was stout; in the stores of the Port and Docks it was whiskey. The men who worked in the bonded stores gave the young boy whiskey to drink, and this completed the ruin which had begun in his first post. His father tried to save him by persuasion and the more drastic remedy of the rod, but without avail, and as the boy grew to manhood and

could no longer be thrashed into obedience, his father saw him, gradually, become a drunkard on spirits actually taken from the stores under his father's charge. Matt realised the disgrace he was bringing on his father, and when at the age of seventeen years he was old enough to take up a man's job, he left the Port and Docks Board and became a bricklayer's labourer with Messrs. Pemberton, the building contractors, Dublin. He was an excellent workman, and during the day did not neglect his work, but when the day's work was finished he went with some companions to the neighbouring public-house where they continued to drink until closing time, or until their money was exhausted. He never gave any of his wages to his mother, though he would occasionally offer her a shilling, and as he was supported by his father, he thus had the more money to spend on drink. Sometimes, on a Saturday, he deposited his week's wages, about 18s., with the owner of the public-house and had it all expended in drink before the following Tuesday. When the money was gone he sometimes sold his boots, and it was even said that he, on one occasion, came home in his stockings, though, more usually, he had an old pair to replace those sold or pawned.

A friend, to whom Matt related the following incident, states that on one occasion, when Matt was drinking with some companions, a fiddler joined them. As money was running short, Matt and another took the fiddle and going out to a neighbouring public-house pawned it, and brought back the money they had received. Further supplies of drink were ordered and the fiddler, all unconscious that his fiddle had provided the wherewithal to purchase the drink, entered into the carouse with great zest, only to find when the party broke up that he was without the means of earning his livelihood and that his companions were without money. In after years, Matt Talbot searched the common lodging houses of the City, and both Poor Law Unions, in the endeavour to find the fiddler, so that he might make restitution for the price of the fiddle; but he never found him, and as restitution for his action he had Masses offered up for the spiritual and temporal welfare of the victim of their cruel, if thoughtless, act.

He was not quarrelsome when drunk, but went quietly home to bed when the public-houses had closed for the night. No matter how much drink he had taken the night before, he was up in time for his work, which started at 6a.m., and left the house clean and tidy in his person. He acquired the habit of taking the Holy Name in vain and of

using strong language when talking with his fellow-workers, and he began to neglect the Sacraments, though he went to Mass on Sundays. His prayers consisted of blessing himself when he got up, as he was, usually, too drunk to say any prayers going to bed. For two, if not three, years before his conversion he had not been to the Sacraments of Penance or the Holy Eucharist.

The picture which Matt Talbot presents to us at this period is that of a young fellow going fast on the road to ruin; the craving for drink gradually mastering him; the duties of his religion almost neglected; and the duties to his parents entirely ignored. The picture is dark, but it is not all black. All his troubles came from the one sin - indulgence in drink. He had no other vice and his moral character was irreproachable. The writer has been at some pains to substantiate this statement. Matt's sisters state that "he was the purest of creatures". He had only men friends; he was never known to be friendly with any persons of the other sex, and in his home he was modest in his demeanour. When one considers the crowding of a large family in a small house, the full meaning of this statement will be realized.

It is not unusual for young men of his age to marry as soon as they are in a position to maintain a home, that is, when they are in receipt of a man's wages. Matt's mother was anxious that he should marry, and, by taking on the responsibilities of family life, try to stay his downward course, but he always put her off with a laugh and the reply, "Mother, you are the only wife I want".

*CHAPTER II*  
HIS CONVERSION

At the time of his conversion, Matt Talbot was in his twenty-seventh or twenty-eighth year. He was then working at Messrs. Pembertons', though he had worked for other builders in the City when work at Pembertons' was slack.

For a week before the day in question he had not gone to work. He had spent the time drinking, and had thus earned no wages, so that when Saturday, pay-day, arrived it found him sober from necessity, thirsty, and without a penny in his pocket. Still he was hopeful that his friends in the yard would come to his assistance and enable him to quench the terrible thirst for spirits which consumed him. There was no use going to the yard in the morning at the usual hour, as he would not be employed for a half-day, which was all the men worked on Saturday, so he decided to wait until the men were paid and were leaving the yard. He dressed with his usual care and left the house about midday accompanied by his younger brother, Philip. They stood at the corner of Newcomen Avenue, where the family then lived, and the North Strand, so that the labourers coming from Messrs. Pemberton's had to pass them by. As the men passed in twos and threes they nodded to the brothers with a "Good-day, Matt", but none of them stopped to ask if he would like a drink. The reason for this was very obvious to the brothers; their company without wages to spend was too expensive for their old companions. Matt became silent, and, as he often told afterwards, he was cut to the heart by the conduct of his friends. At last he could stand it no longer, and turning to Philip he said, 'I'll go home'. Philip replied that it was too early, as the dinner would not be ready, but Matt remained firm and returned alone. His mother was busy preparing the midday meal when he arrived, and, looking up with surprise, said, "Oh, you're home early, Matt, and you're sober!" He only answered, "Yes, mother, I am". Gradually the other members of the family arrived and dinner was partaken of, after which they again left the house for their Saturday half-holiday, leaving Matt alone with his mother and one or two of the young children. Matt was silent for a time, and finally turning to his mother said, "I am going to take the pledge". She smiled rather incredulously, and said, "Go, in God's name; but don't take it unless you are going to keep it". He answered, "I'll go in the name of God". He went to the room in which the boys slept, washed himself carefully, and taking his

cap, turned to leave the house. As he stood at the door his mother turned to him and said gently, "God give you strength to keep it". He made no reply, but went out. His objective was Holy Cross College, the Diocesan College for the Archdiocese of Dublin, which was only a short walk away from his home. This famous seminary takes its name from a large relic of the True Cross which is kept in the College Chapel. It was founded in 1859, and was then under the Presidency of Father Fitzpatrick, afterwards the Right Rev. Monsignor Fitzpatrick, Dean of Dublin, and one of the Vicar-Generals. Matt always stated that he took the total abstinence pledge from the Rev. Dr. Keane at Clonliffe College. It is not easy to reconcile this statement with the dates. The Rev. Dr. Keane was a Professor in Clonliffe College until 1879, when, at his own request, he was transferred to a curacy in St. Anne's Parish. He remained in St. Anne's until sometime in 1883, when he joined the Dominican Order. Matt took the pledge in 1884, though the time of the year is not known. His sister, Mrs. Andrews, fixed that year by her own marriage, which was in August, 1882, and she states that she was about two years married when Matt's conversion took place. Dr. Keane was a constant visitor at Clonliffe College during the years he was a Curate in St. Anne's, and it is possible that he met Matt Talbot there on the Saturday afternoon in question and administered the pledge. It is, of course, quite possible that Matt made a mistake in the identity of the priest who heard his confession and administered the pledge, though this is difficult to imagine, because Dr. Keane was a very well-known man in the public life of the country during these years and his name must have been familiar to all Dublin working men. Eleven years later Matt went to Confession to Dr. Keane, then a Dominican attached to St. Saviour's Church, Lr. Dominick Street, and in the course of his confession told Dr. Keane that he had taken the pledge from him eleven years before. Dr. Keane was very pleased to find a labouring man so ardent a total abstainer. On the present occasion, Matt had made up his mind to take the pledge for three months as he doubted his ability to keep it for any longer period. He had been about three years from confession, so he went to confession in the College and took the pledge when his confession was ended. He then returned home, and on Sunday morning attended the 5 a.m. Mass at St. Francis Xavier's Church, Upper Gardiner Street, where he received Holy Communion.

He had now to consider what steps he should take to enable him to keep his pledge. If he continued his ordinary course of life it would mean meeting his companions at the

most dangerous hours, namely, after the day's work had finished. To avoid them without giving offence he would not remain in the neighbourhood of his home after working hours, and he should, therefore, go where they would not think of looking for him. His decision was to go to daily Mass at 5 a.m. in St. Francis Xavier's Church, Upper Gardiner Street, and after the day's work was done to visit a distant Church where he could pray for strength to keep his promise. On Monday morning he began the fight for his soul's freedom by attendance at Mass. He then went to his work at 6 a.m., and worked during the day as usual. When evening came, and he had finished his evening meal at home, he walked to a distant church on the North Side of the City, either the Vincentian Church at Phibsboro', or the Parish Church at Berkeley Road, where he remained in prayer until it was time to return home to bed. The first Saturday provided a temptation. As the men left work it was usual to turn into the nearest public-house and take a drink. Matt was in their company and did not like to refuse to enter, but whereas the others drank either whiskey or porter, he drank a bottle of mineral water. It was his last visit, as afterwards he declined to enter and passed on home. He suffered intensely, for the craving for drink was strong in him and the effort to pray, after so many years' neglect of prayer, was very wearying. All the week evenings, every Saturday afternoon and all day on Sunday, except during meal time, he spent in a church or near one. Coming home at night weary and dispirited, he would say to his mother, "It's no use, mother, I'll drink again when the three months are up." She encouraged him by gentle consolations, and to use the very graphic words of his sister, "During the three months, as the religion gripped him, he got fonder and fonder of the Church, and used to live in it after his work was done." He gave up all company, and, save for his mother he had no one in whom to confide. His wages he handed to her every Saturday and then went out to the Church to fight out his battle before Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. Needless to say, such heroic action won, and when the three months expired, he returned to Clonliffe College and renewed the total abstinence pledge for a year; and at the end of that further probationary period, for life.

During the period of his first pledge his father introduced him to the Confraternity of the Immaculate Conception at St. Francis Xavier's Church, and enrolled him as a member in his own Section, a membership which lasted without a break for over forty years.

One little episode of this time is not without its humorous side. The eldest sister, Mary (Mrs. Andrews), had been married a few years, and hearing from her mother of Matt's pledge, bought and gave to her mother for Matt the book known as "Hell open to Christians," which contained very realistic, but very crude, pictures of the damned in torment. One would have imagined that poor Matt's torments at the time were sufficient without this added horror, but he read the little book which he told his mother "frightened the life out of him." He kept it all through his life, and it was found after his death at the bottom of his box of books neatly rebound by himself in imitation leather.

His conversion was not without many grave struggles. Two incidents related by himself refer to the early years of his change of life. In one case he stated that when about to enter St. Francis Xavier's Church, shortly after he had taken the total abstinence pledge, he was violently pushed away from the door two or three times by an unseen hand. He persisted, and believing that the action was diabolical, he used some vigorous language towards his unseen opponent and passed into the church.

The second incident was a very remarkable example of his pertinacity in following out the course of life he had now adopted. The date is uncertain, but it was within two or three years of his conversion. On one Sunday morning he attended the 6.30 a.m. Mass at St. Francis Xavier's Church, and at the end of Mass rose in his place to approach the altar rails in order to receive Holy Communion. The moment he stood up he was assailed by a violent temptation to despair. He heard an inward voice telling him that it was useless for him to try to keep from drink, that all his pious actions were worthless, and that he would not persevere. He was physically incapable of approaching the altar, and after a time was compelled to leave the Church. He wandered about the streets unconscious of his direction, but now quite free from the temptation, and after a little time he noticed that he was outside the Pro-Cathedral, in Marlboro' Street. It was just 8 a.m., and he entered to attend 8 o'clock Mass and receive Holy Communion. Nothing occurred during Mass, but, at the end, when he rose to approach the altar rails, the temptation assailed him with all its previous violence. He was actually driven from the church, and again found himself in the streets. He began walking along, again quite unconscious of the direction, until he found himself at the parish church on Berkeley Road, just at 9 a.m. He entered,

attended the 9 o'clock Mass and endeavoured to go to the rails to receive Holy Communion. It was useless, the temptation returned, and he could not move. In great distress he left the Church and continued his course through the streets until, about 9.45 a.m., he was back at St. Francis Xavier's. Instead of entering the church he threw himself on his face on the steps, with his arms outstretched in the form of a cross and said, "Surely, oh Lord! I am not going to fall again into the habits I have left." He prayed very fervently to the Blessed Virgin to intercede for him, and after about ten minutes he felt the weight of depression suddenly lifted from him. He entered the church, attended 10 o'clock Mass and received Holy Communion at the end without any return of the temptation. The struggle had lasted from about 7 o'clock, the end of the early Mass, until 10 o'clock, and it was never repeated. The man, J.R., to whom Matt had related this incident, was a very close friend, with whom he had worked for years.

As already mentioned, one other bad habit which Matt had acquired was taking the Holy Name in vain. He found it by no means easy to correct this fault and invented a simple but ingenious method of reminding himself of his failing. He fixed two pins in the sleeve of his coat in the form of a cross so that he could not look at his hands without seeing the cross and being reminded of the Crucifixion. The sight of the pins conveyed no information to others, as it was taken for granted that they were kept there for use.

*CHAPTER III.*  
GROWING IN HOLINESS

The year 1884 would appear to be the year of Matt Talbot's conversion. At that time his brothers were addicted to drink, and Matt endeavoured, but without success, to get them to take the total abstinence pledge. He saw that his parents were suffering from the strain of the presence in their little home of young men who were constantly coming there under the influence of drink, and expecting their father to feed them while they spent their wages in the public-house. When Matt's efforts at reform failed he announced that he would leave the house unless his brothers left, and as they refused to go, he took a room in Gloucester Street, which was not far from his old home. When living in Gloucester Street, his sister, Mrs. Andrews, who lived near, looked after his room and cooked his meals. It was during his stay in Gloucester Street that he first used a plank bed. His sister saw two planks in his room and asked what they were intended for. He replied "for a purpose," and gave her no further information. The planks were of rough, unplanned timber, and were nailed together. A little time later, coming into the room late in the evening when he was absent, she went to the bed to turn down the coverlet, and saw the planks under the coverlet, so that it was obvious that he used to lie on the boards without any covering over them. The bedstead and planks were the same as he had in his room at the time of his death. The bedstead, which is made of iron with strong iron laths, is six feet long and about two feet six inches wide. It looks small, but Matt was a small man and it fitted him.

When in Gloucester Street he fasted, but not to the same extent as when he went to live in Rutland Street. During this earlier period he abstained from meat on Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays, but at no time, nor any day, did he eat a full meal.

He continued to attend the 5 o'clock Mass, and spent most of his spare time in prayer. After some time, his brothers having left their parents' home, Matt returned there, bringing with him his iron bedstead and planks, and continued to live with his parents, who then resided in Middle Gardiner Street, until the death of his father in 1899. Very little is known of his life during the period from 1884 to the time he went to work at Messrs. T. & C. Martin's, about the year 1892. One old lady, who was a lifelong friend, remembers him, because she was one of the few who went to Holy

Communion at the 5 o'clock Mass in St. Francis Xavier's. This Mass was discontinued in 1892, and the hour of the first Mass on weekdays fixed at 6.15 a.m.

It was during this period that the incident occurred which decided him not to marry. His mother related the story to her daughters. While working on a building job at the residence of a Protestant clergyman, Matt attracted the attention of the cook by his holiness. The cook, who was a pious Catholic girl, seeing that Matt did not speak to the maids as the other men did, decided to speak to him and finally suggested marriage. She informed him that she had considerable savings and was in a position to furnish a home for themselves. Matt said he would let her know his answer after he had performed a novena asking for enlightenment. This he did, and at the conclusion of the novena he told the girl that he had got an answer in prayer that he was to remain single. He was very firm in this resolution, as when some of his fellow-workmen, in later years, spoke of marriage to him he always said he would never marry, as it would interfere with the manner of life he had decided to live. To a confidant he said that "the Blessed Virgin told him not to marry."

During these early years he worked for several building contractors in Dublin besides Messrs. Pemberton, and in later life he often spoke of the men for whom he had worked when they were in a modest way of business, and who, subsequently, became well-known builders in Dublin. One who knew him well in these later years says he often spoke of the building trade with real interest, and discussed matters connected with the trade with great intelligence.

The change of the hour in the first Mass in St. Francis Xavier's brought about a complete change in Matt Talbot's life. The hours of a bricklayer's labourer, which was his trade, were from 6 a.m., so that if he continued at that trade he should give up daily Mass and daily Communion. He, therefore, looked for employment where the hours were later, and found what he required in the firm of Messrs. T. & C. Martin Ltd., North Wall, Dublin, where he was first a casual and afterwards a permanent labourer. This took place about the year 1892, and his employment with the firm lasted to the date of his death.

As this well-known Irish firm bulks so largely in the life of Matt Talbot a short account of it will not be out of place. The founder was John Martin, who, in the closing year of the eighteenth century, opened a timber yard on the river Liffey, at the North Wall. In those days the timber business was carried on by means of auctions, and the time came, principally, from the Baltic. The firm had many vicissitudes during the Napoleonic Wars, owing to the interruption of trade, but on the declaration of peace, trade was resumed with all its former activity. The firm still possesses one of the old auction advertisements, dated 27<sup>th</sup> May, 1817, which sets out the quantities of timber to be sold. Shortly after this date the firm became John Martin & Son, by the addition of James Martin, the son of the founder, and the business was changed to a different site, which is now part of the present extensive premises. In 1861 three of James Martin's sons started the saw mills at the North Wall, adjoining the storage yards of John Martin & Son. The two firms were independent of each other until 1883, when they were amalgamated under the name of Messrs. T. & C. Martin, which, in 1886, was formed into a private limited liability company. The business of the firm was largely extended during the period 1861 to the present, and, besides being a very large importer of timber, it deals in all classes of building material; manufactures furniture, and has creosote works.

The day in Martins' began at 8 a.m., the men coming to work after breakfast, and ended at 6 p.m., there being, thus, only one break in the day, namely, the dinner hour from 1 p.m. to 2 p.m. The timber yards and offices during Matt Talbot's time were in two divisions. One section extended to the river front and was intersected by roads. This section contained a large drying shed, in which the timber for the joinery and furniture works was stored, and in which Matt Talbot was storekeeper for many years. Another section was known as Castle Forbes, from a mansion formerly erected on the side by the Forbes' family, the ancestors of the Earls of Granard. This section consisted of one large yard with a gate and gate-lodge, and with sheds around the walls in which timber was stored. Matt Talbot was transferred to this yard as storekeeper about 8 years before his death. In the corner of this yard, under a shed, was a small office made of timber, with a telephone which was put up during the Great War, when the timber and all other similar trades were controlled by the military authorities. This office, after the war, was taken possession of by Matt Talbot, and was known as "Matt's Office." In the drying shed in the first-mentioned section on the Quays there

was no office, but there was a space some six or seven feet high between the ground and the timber which was stored in one portion of the shed, and under which Matt Talbot used, when alone, to retire to pray. In the centre of the shed, quantities of the better quality timber stood on end drying, and were used for the furniture making. Practically adjoining Messrs. Martins' yards is the parish church of St. Laurence O'Toole, which Matt Talbot visited going to and coming from his work.

In the early days of his work in Martins', Matt Talbot worked as labourer and had to unload ships, load carts, and do the ordinary work usual to his class. He disliked the work of unloading the ships because of the profane language which, in those days, was not uncommon amongst quay labourers. He never heard the Sacred Name of Jesus pronounced without lifting his hat, and that was observed by some of the more irresponsible workmen, who, in a spirit of mischief and not from any real malice, used irreverent language in order to annoy Matt Talbot still more. He never openly rebuked the men except when something very exceptional occurred. He would then say, "Jesus Christ is listening to you." When the Angelus bell rang at noon, he ceased work, removed his hat and said the Angelus, simply and unostentatiously. When he was better known in the yards his example was so good that no bad language was hard in his vicinity. If he saw a young man, whom he knew to be leading a decent life, laugh at some coarse story or joke, Matt would call him aside when no one else was present, and would quietly rebuke him for having laughed at what was said. "You cannot avoid listening," he said, "but you need not laugh at a dirty story." He would often, in such cases, follow up his chat with the loan of a book which he made his young protégée read. During all this time he was not morose nor a "spoil sport." He enjoyed a good story, provided it was clean, and laughed heartily at a joke. A carter (D.R.), who worked in the early years with Matt Talbot, states that Matt's work at this time consisted in filling the lorry with timber which was being removed from one yard to another. While the lorry was going back and forward (about 15 minutes) Matt was usually idle, and this spare time he spent in prayer behind the piles of timber. D.R. relates some interesting incidents of this period, one of which he was told by Talbot and one of which he witnessed. Matt Talbot told him that he used to smoke for some time after he had given up drink. One day, after he had bought a new pipe and an ounce of tobacco, he was going along the road with his purchases in his pocket, when he met a fellow-worker, who, being without tobacco, asked Matt for

“a fill.” Matt took out the new pipe and the ounce of tobacco, gave both to his friend, and never smoked again. The second incident had to do with the use of bad language by a fellow-worker. The wife of the latter came during the dinner hour with her husband’s dinner. An altercation took place between them, and the husband used very vile language towards his wife. When he had finished his meal, Matt Talbot went up to where the man and his wife sat, and producing from his pocket a large crucifix which was attached to his Rosary beads, he held it before the face of his fellow-worker and said, “Do you see Who you are crucifying?” No more was said; Talbot moved away and the man addressed hung his head and made no reply.

D.R. relates that Matt always got away from the yard a few minutes before 6 p.m. and ran to the Church so that he might be there when the Angelus bell rang. This was before he became storekeeper, as in later years he had to close the yards when the men left.

As already stated, he did not like to work on the quays, and after he had become a regular worker in the firm he asked his foreman not to send him to work there. “You know my little failing,” his impatience at hearing bad language. He also asked the foreman not to send him to work at the guano or creosote yard, because he did not wish to have his clothes smell of tar. He explained that he went to Mass and Holy Communion every morning, and that “he did not like to go to Holy Communion with his clothes smelling of guano.”

At the creosote yard where railway sleepers were made and soaked in tar, the sleepers when prepared were put into a press for a time. If this occurred just before the 10 a.m. Mass in St. Laurence O’Toole’s Church, Matt ran to the church, heard Mass, and was back before the sleepers were ready for removal. Some of the men who resented Matt’s disapproval of their conversation, reported to the manager that Talbot left the yard during working hours. The manager sent for Matt and asked him about the matter, but when he heard the explanation and realized that no time was really lost, he at once gave permission to Matt to go to Mass in similar circumstances.

After he had been some years working as a labourer he was appointed storeman, when his duty was to select timber required for special orders or for the joinery business.

These he loaded on to a handcart, and if there was no one else available he wheeled the handcart to the workshop. The post was a responsible one, as it required strict honesty owing to the many opportunities for petty thefts of timber. It was never known during the years Matt Talbot had charge of the store that he allowed even waste to be removed by any unauthorised person. On one occasion when he required a small portion of wood for his own use, he purchased some and got a formal receipt lest anyone should think he had taken it without permission.

Although his principal work at this later period was in the timber shed, the foreman, when there was a rush of work on the quay-side, sent Talbot to help. It was on some of these special occasions that the men were paid two shillings extra for their work. This incident was not correctly stated in the original little life, as it was there stated to be for overtime. The actual fact was more in keeping with Matt Talbot's character than refusing payment for overtime would have been. The correct story is: When a cargo of timber had to be unloaded within a limited time, and during the ordinary working hours of the day, so that the ship might catch the outgoing tide, the men were promised a bonus of two shillings each, provided they had the ship unloaded in time. If they failed they got nothing for the extra labour. It meant working at very high pressure for some hours, and was exhausting work. On the first occasion on which Matt Talbot was sent to this work he did not call at the office for the two shillings bonus, and on being questioned by the foreman the next day as to his non-appearance, he replied that he scrupled taking money for the extra labour as there were many hours of the week when he was idle waiting for lorries to arrive, and that he thought the idle hours should be set against the extra work. The foreman replied that he could not upset his accounts for Talbot's scruples and paid him the two shillings. Afterwards the foreman had to bring the money to Matt, who accepted it as a gift, but declined to claim it as a right.

All the foremen under whom Matt Talbot worked agree that they never knew him to be late in arriving at the yards. On one or two occasions he was missed from the gang which had to unload a lorry, and when called was seen coming from under the timber in the shed where he was known to retire to pray. He was asked why he was late and said he had not heard the lorry entering the yard. To this place under the timber he would retire after he had heard grossly irreverent language from any of the men, and

there he would recite the Divine Praises. Sometimes he spoke to the men about the lives of the saints, and told them interesting stories he had read the evening before. He did not deliberately start a discussion on religious matters with the men, but should the conversation turn on such subjects he spoke openly and frankly about them. He was very friendly towards any men he saw leading pious lives; he encouraged them and lent them books. If they were married and required help owing to illness of themselves or of members of their families, he would give or lend them money. If the cause of the trouble was drink he would endeavour to reclaim the erring one, but he was never known to lend money to anyone who required it simply to purchase drink.

His demeanour towards his foremen and towards the heads of the firm was respectful but frank. He never tried to curry favour with anyone, and if he were in the right he spoke perfectly bluntly to all, high or low. He never lost his self-control, though he could speak vehemently on the point at issue. On one occasion the foreman thought that the men were not working hard enough and spoke severely to them, Matt Talbot being amongst the men and listening quietly. At the end of the talk one of the men lifted a scaffolding pole to carry it away, and, turning rather suddenly, struck Matt a severe blow on the head. The latter was hurt but did not make any comment, and proceeded to his work as usual. On another occasion he had a rather heated discussion with the same foreman in connection with subscriptions to charities and stated that the foreman, who had a good salary, could subscribe much more easily than he, Talbot, could. The foreman thought that Matt had exceeded the bounds of respect and told him so. Matt left without saying more, but returned a day or so later and apologised, saying that "Our Lord had told him that he should beg pardon for what he had said," and that he had come to do so.

On one occasion all the men in the yard got an increase in their wages except Talbot and another. They thought they should have got the increase as well as the others, and, on pay-day, Matt presented himself to the managing director and asked for the increase. He was refused and left the office without any comment; nor did he allude to the incident afterwards. When in charge of the drying shed, a workman, on one Saturday morning, came in just when the yards were about to close and hid himself in the timber to avoid meeting the managing director, who was looking for him because

he had gone away the previous Saturday without leave. Seeing Talbot, the managing director asked him had he seen X. Talbot, instead of replying, said, "I wish you would not ask me these questions. You know I do not want to answer them." As the managing director knew he would neither tell a lie nor give the workman away, he contented himself with saying, "Well, if you see X, tell him I want him." He then left the shed and Matt, calling to the delinquent, asked, "Did you hear that?" "I did," was the reply. "Well," said Matt, "attend to it, as I will not tell lies to save you." This incident was typical of the man. He hated untruths, and his bluntness came from the love of truth and his horror of prevarication. He told a friend that a curate in Berkeley Road parish church, Rev. J. O'C., had taught him to love truth and hate lies.

*CHAPTER IV*  
LABOUR TROUBLES

It is not the intention of the writer to enter into a long discussion of the various Labour troubles which disturbed Ireland from 1911 to 1914, particularly during the great strike of 1913. It is necessary, however, to say something about these matters in order to understand the position taken up by Matt Talbot in reference to them.

Prior to 1908, Irish workers were, for the most part, members of trades unions which had their headquarters in Great Britain. They formed only a small percentage of the union membership, and their interests were altogether subordinated to the larger interests in England. Unskilled labour in Ireland was unorganised and the conditions of employment were, on the whole, bad. The housing conditions in Dublin were a disgrace to a Christian city, and the tenement houses with thousands of families each living in one room were, and to a great extent are still, the common form of home for the unskilled worker. Wages were low, and, for married men with families insufficient to provide the ordinary necessaries of life. Low as were the wages of the labourers, they were still further depleted by the system then prevalent on the quays, of paying dockers in public-houses. About the year 1908, all unskilled and casual labourers in Dublin, and indeed in Ireland generally, were being organised into one union, known as the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union. An immediate effort was made to improve the conditions of the workers, and strikes became common. A new and disturbing feature of these strikes was the introduction of what is known as "the sympathetic strike," where men who had no quarrel in regard to their own conditions of employment, were, with a view to forcing a settlement, called out in sympathy with their fellows who were on strike. By 1911 the crisis was approaching, as the success of the smaller strikes had encouraged workers to join the new union, and thus from attacks on small firms, the struggle spread to the larger industrial concerns. The industrial war was not confined to Ireland, as Great Britain was involved in the prevailing unrest, and on a scale which dwarfed the Irish troubles in comparison.

The importance of the struggle was recognised by the Catholic Church in Ireland, so much so, that at the meeting of the Maynooth Union, in July, 1912, a very far-seeing

paper was read by the Rev. M.J. O'Donnell, D.D., on "Strikes." It was a clear, impartial statement of the law of God and of his Church, and was filled with a deep sympathy for the worker in his efforts to improve his position. The paper met with the unanimous approval of the clergy assembled at Maynooth, and it called forth the warm thanks of some of the leaders of the Labour movement in the City of Dublin.

The issue, however, was knit. One employer of labour, the chairman of the Dublin Tramway Company, the late William M. Murphy, declared war on the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union, and, in August, 1913, the company, which was about to start new works, gave notice that no one would be employed who was a member of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union. The employers now formed a union in defence of themselves, and both sides fought with all the energy of Irishmen. The employers refused to employ members of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union. This declaration was followed by a "lock out" by many employers, with the result that the unemployed in the City mounted rapidly, first to 15,000, and eventually to 30,000 persons. The Press was hostile to the men, and eventually public bodies passed resolutions asking for a conference. This was called, but broke down almost at once. The employers now dropped the words "lock out" and a form of undertaking was prepared and submitted to the employees whereby they were to undertake to carry out all orders given by or on behalf of the employers; to handle and deliver all goods from any source whatever; and to work amicably with all other hands. This brought the trouble into the building trade of which Matt Talbot was a member, as some 300 men employed by the timber merchants refused to sign the proposed undertaking and were accordingly locked out.

Riots were common in the City, and prosecution of the Labour leaders followed. As is inevitable in times of such struggles, excesses were committed and weapons used which alienated sympathy from the workers in many cases. This was notably the case when it was proposed to send the children of the unemployed to England to be supported by the workers there. This proposal was as short-sighted as it was fatuous and raised a storm of protest amongst the workers themselves, with the result that it was not carried out.

Efforts at conciliation were made, and an official enquiry was opened, but broke down on the important question of re-instatement of all workers. The winter of 1913-1914 saw the struggle intensified and the miseries of the workers increased. The end came when the English Union withdrew their financial support from the Irish workers, so that with no alternative to starvation except submission, the men returned to work on the employers' terms. Any men who had been publicly identified with the quarrel were refused re-instatement, amongst those being a brother of Matt Talbot, who had been particularly active in the fight.

The outbreak of the Great War changed the face of the world, and it also changed the conditions of labour in Dublin, but the old bitterness took many a year to die down, and the strike of 1913 is still, when it is referred to, a sore subject with employers and workmen. If one may venture an opinion after the years that have passed, it is contained in two pronouncements of the protagonists of the employers, when the fight was over and the men were beaten – the *Irish Times*, in February, 1914, declared in an editorial that “Larkinism was a revolt against intolerable conditions,” and Mr William M. Murphy, at a Conference of Dublin employers, said that “their sweating wages and bad conditions had produced Larkinism.” These two statements seem to the writer to describe the industrial conditions in Dublin prior to 1908.

In the meantime we have apparently parted company with Matt Talbot. How did all these strikes affect him? In fact he went through it all quite serenely. He took the view that he was not competent to judge the matter in dispute, and, therefore, left the decision to the men as a whole. He did not attend any meetings, but when the men left work or were locked out, he left with the others. He refused to march in processions or to picket the works, and on that account did not ask for strike pay. Some of his fellow-workers state that when the question of the weekly allowance which was to be made to the men who were out was under consideration, Matt's name was mentioned and it was unanimously agreed that he should share with the others although he had refused to picket. They recognised that Matt was on a different plane, and that argument or force was useless where he was concerned. Accordingly, every week he was paid the same as the others. One of his worker friends spoke to Matt during the strike and asked him what he thought were “the rights of it”? Matt replied that the strike had troubled him also, and that he had spoken to one of the

Jesuit Fathers in St. Francis Xavier's Church on the question; that Father had lent him a book on the subject, and having read there that no one had the right to starve the poor into submission, it was enough for him and had settled his conscience. This answer shows that he considered the cause of the unemployment as a "lock out," and not a strike in the ordinary sense of the word.

There is no question about his sympathy with his fellow-workers, as he often stated that in his opinion the labourers, especially married men, were not sufficiently paid, and he expressed his sympathy with men who had children in their efforts to rear a family in decency on the scanty wages paid in those pre-war days. Frank and outspoken as he always was, he spoke with warmth on these matters, and was ever ready to assist from his own poor wages those who were poorer than himself.

Although it has nothing to say to the Labour question, a slight reference to Matt Talbot's attitude towards politics will help to complete the picture of this period. Parallel with the Labour war, 1908-1914, ran the political fight which centred round the Home Rule struggle and the preparations for arms resistance in the North of Ireland. In one respect they were intermixed, as the advanced wing of the Labour Party in Ireland formed what was called the "Citizen Army," which took an active part in the rising in April, 1916. In view of questions asked on this matter, the writer made inquiries from Matt Talbot's most intimate friends, including two sisters, a brother-in-law, and fellow-workers, all of whom agreed that Matt Talbot took no interest whatever in politics; that he was never known to vote at an election; and never discussed political events. During the Rising of April, 1916 popularly known as "Easter Week," he never missed attendance at morning Mass, and when others feared to pass the military cordons he went through them undaunted, day after day, until normal conditions were restored. Meeting a friend soon after, the latter questioned him on the subject of the Rising. Matt's reply was both shrewd and far-seeing. Referring to the executions of the leaders and the arrests and deportations which followed the failure of the insurrection, he said, "Our boys will all go into secret societies now." During the Anglo-Irish War of 1919-1921 he never was drawn into discussions on the subject. If anyone asked him had he heard of such and such a matter, he replied that he had not, as he did not read newspapers nor look at the placards. On one morning the North Wall Hotel, then a British military centre, and

which adjoins Messrs. Martins' yards, was blown up. The military immediately searched every place in the vicinity. It was just before the opening hour at Martins' - 8 a.m. – and Matt Talbot, who was then working at the Castle Forbes' yard, had arrived to open the yard. He was arrested in his little office, brought with his hands up, across the yard to the entrance gate, placed against the wall and searched. He was then released. Later on, when he met Mrs. M., who lived in the gate-lodge, he did not make any reference to his morning adventure, and when she tried to discuss the matter with him he turned the conversation.

During the later troubles, when, alas, our own people fought one another, he was equally reticent, and carefully avoided expressing any opinion on the merits of the dispute which occasioned the fighting. His friends were most emphatic in their denial of his having ever done more than express his sorrow at seeing Irishmen fighting amongst themselves.

To sum up his views on these two questions of Labour and Politics. In Labour matters he stood by his fellows when their action was in accordance with the laws and teaching of the Catholic Church, which for him was the voice of God. In politics of any description he took no part or interest.

*CHAPTER V.*  
THE DAILY ROUND OF PRAYER

In the last Chapter it was necessary to anticipate a little in order to give a connected account of Matt Talbot's relations to his employers and his fellow-workers. It will now be necessary to retrace our steps in order to consider the day from the spiritual aspect.

Reference has already been made to his plank bed, his fasting, his attendance at Mass. Even at the risk of repetition, it will be necessary to reconstitute his daily life, so that a clear picture of the extraordinary nature of his devotions may be given.

From the death of his father in the year 1899 onwards, Matt Talbot lived with his mother in 18 Upper Rutland Street.

Matt retired to his plank bed about 10.30 o'clock and always slept with a statue of the Virgin and Child in his right hand, which he crossed over his breast, so that the statue rested against his heart. He found that the ordinary form of statue, in which the image of the Divine Infant was held on the right arm of the Blessed Virgin, prevented him from sleeping, because the image of the Divine Child hurt his side. Accordingly he got his sister, Mrs. Fylan, to search the shops until she found one with the image of the Divine Infant on the left arm of Our Lady, and this form he always used, his head resting on the wooden pillow and the statue firmly clasped in his hand, resting by his left side. He did not remove the chains which he wore, an account of which will be found later on, and he slept on the bare boards covered with half a blanket, which was his only covering except on very cold nights, when he allowed his sister to add an old sack. A small alarm clock awoke him at 2 a.m., when he rose to pray. A perpetual lamp showed a dim light through the room, so that his mother, at the other end of the room, could see what passed during the hours of prayer.

On the first occasion that his mother slept in their new home she was awakened sometime after 2 a.m., and saw Matt in his room kneeling up on his bed. She thought his face looked very strange, and asked, "Is anything the matter, Matt?" He did not reply, and after a little time she fell asleep again. During the ensuing years she often

watched him without his knowledge, and had no doubt in her mind that he was in a state of ecstasy. He knelt erect, either on the bed or on the floor, in his night-shirt, and prayed with his hands outstretched. Sometimes he fell or threw himself forward on his face on the floor, and remained in that position with arms outstretched praying in an audible voice. She heard him address the Blessed Virgin and speak to her for a considerable time; not as in ordinary prayer, but holding a regular conversation as if he was actually speaking to Our Lady face to face. His mother was fully convinced of this and said to her daughter afterwards, "There is nothing surer than that Matt used to see the Blessed Virgin." Matt never told her so, but she formed this opinion from the conversations with Our Lady which she overheard at night. He always seemed, on such occasions, to be looking at the Blessed Virgin. Though he never discussed these night vigils with his mother, he often said to her, "No one knows the good Queen that is to me"; when saying this he held the little statue in his hand and referred to it. If his prayers were finished before 4 a.m., he lay down on the planks to rest until 4 o'clock, when he rose, dressed himself, and resumed his prayers until it was time to leave for Mass, sometime before 5 a.m.

In later years, he usually went to St. Francis Xavier's Church to 6.15 a.m. Mass, but in his younger days he often went to St. Teresa's Church (O.D.C.), Clarendon Street. On one occasion when he arrived at the little laneway leading from Grafton Street to St. Teresa's, sometime before the house door was open, he heard the step of one of the night policemen coming along the laneway. He stood back into a doorway to avoid being seen, but this only attracted the attention of the policeman, who stopped and questioned him closely as to his reason for being there at such an unseasonable hour. As there were side entrances to business premises in the little passage, the policeman suspected Matt of loitering with intent to commit a burglary. The latter explained that he had come to Mass, but the policeman was sceptical and said the church would not be open until 6 a.m. and that it was now only 5 o'clock. Matt said that the sacristan would soon open the presbytery door and that he would be admitted. While this conversation was going on, another policeman, hearing the voices, came in from Grafton Street and seeing Matt, whom he already knew from having seen him waiting at the church door, called away his colleague and told him not to trouble more about his suspect. The door was opened almost immediately and Matt took refuge in the Church. He found the walk from his home to Clarendon Street, which was quite

a considerable distance, took up too much time to enable him to return home, have breakfast, and be at his work by 8 a.m., so he went to St. Francis Xavier's instead. This church opened at 5.30 a.m. and Matt usually arrived at the entrance about 5 a.m., if not earlier. He knelt in prayer on the steps of the convent adjoining, or at the iron railings of the church, waiting for it to be opened. Even if the morning were wet he did not take shelter in the doorway, although sometimes asked to do so. On some occasions, either before the opening of the church, or after Mass, he would chat with a friend for a few minutes. To one such friend who knew him very well, and who acted as his almoner on more than one occasion, he confided that he had asked for the gift of prayer and that he had got it in abundance. Whenever he knelt down he knelt on his bare knees. To do this without attracting attention he resorted to an ingenious device: he cut the knees of his trousers lengthways, so that when standing up or walking, the opening did not show, but when he knelt down he was able to pull the trousers aside and leave the knees bare. To hide this from the public he pulled his overcoat, which he invariably wore in the church, around his legs. The sharp eyes of the lay-brother who had charge of the church, however, discovered the secret which was so carefully concealed from all others.

On the church door being opened he knelt at the door and kissed the ground. He then went to the altar rail, and, having prayed for some little time, he performed the Stations of the Cross. In connection with this devotion a friend once said to him that he had seen a priest in the Passionist Church at Mount Argus going round the stations entirely on his knees without standing up to walk from station to station. Matt replied that he would like to perform the stations in a similar manner were it not that his doing so would attract attention. Having finished the stations, he knelt at the extreme right hand end of the rail in front of the high altar, where he received Holy Communion during Mass. He then returned to the rail which runs across the church, dividing the nave from the upper portion of the church and the transepts, and remained there until the end of Mass. After his illness he changed his place to the centre of the third bench opposite St. Joseph's altar. During Mass he never used a prayer book, but prayed with his eyes shut. He knelt erect in the bench, with his hands clasped in front of him, nor did he allow them to rest on the rail in front of him. He was, therefore, without any support whatever and remained in this position for the entire period he was in the church. This lasted on Sundays until about 1.30 p.m. He

did not stand up for the Gospels. This has been commented on as not in accordance with the usual procedure. He explained it by saying that he had read in the life of a saint that this saint had never stood up, so that he might avoid distractions. Matt had, therefore, a sound authority to guide him in the matter. He was most careful not to attract attention to himself, and the brother who knew him best at St. Francis Xavier's, states that except for his extraordinary spirit of recollection there was nothing to attract attention to him in church. One of the Jesuit Fathers who had given Matt Holy Communion remarked to some of the other Jesuits that there was a saint attending their church, so struck was he by the wonderful fervour with which he had received the Sacred Host. He did not know who the man was, but after the publication of the first life he learned that it was Matt Talbot, and identified him by the place he occupied at the altar rails. After Mass, Matt made no delay, but left the church, walking quickly out and not looking to the right nor the left. The only pause he made was to fondle a beautiful collie dog which lay in the outer porch waiting for his mistress, who was in the church. This lady who, through the dog, made Matt's acquaintance has later on some interesting facts to relate of the friendship thus begun.

On his return to his room he had breakfast, which consisted of cocoa prepared the evening before by his sister, and reheated by himself, and some dry bread.

Sometimes if he were pressed for time he drank the coca cold, and then walked rapidly to Messrs. T. & C. Martins', halting on the way to pay a short visit to the Church of St. Laurence O'Toole, Seville Place, "to see Our Lord on the way down," as he told one of his foremen.

From about the year 1918 he was storeman in the Castle Forbes' yard. He arrived at the yard about 7.45 a.m., in order to open the main gate for the men and lorries at 8 a.m. On arrival he removed his coat and hat, which he hung up in the little office in the timber shed, which has been referred to already, and put on an old coat and hat. From that hour until 12.30 p.m. he did his ordinary work in the yard, receiving orders, selecting timber and sending out lorries. His dinner hour was 12.30 p.m., as he had to remain in the yard while the men were at dinner, from 1 p.m. to 2 p.m. Mrs. M., who lived in the gate-lodge at Castle Forbes, states that she only knew Matt Talbot to see him in the yard until she began to prepare his midday meal. One day, in the year 1920, at 12.30 p.m., he knocked at the back door of the gate-lodge, and when Mrs. M.

came to the door he handed her a workman's can, and asked her to boil the kettle and put some boiling water in the can to make his "cocoa". She said "Yes," and he, thereupon, put a pinch of cocoa and a pinch of tea into the can and went away. When the kettle was boiled, Mrs. M. filled the can with water and closed with the cap, which was cover and cup combined. She noticed that the can was of tin and the cap of enamel, as if he had found old ones somewhere. She then left the can outside the back door. He did not remove it, however, until it was quite cold, and then went to the end of the yard carrying it in his hand. She never saw him take his meal, but she heard that he took a slice of bread with it. During the time from 1 p.m. to 2 p.m. his duty was to open the gate to admit the lorries, and if necessary to load them with the man in charge of same. When not so employed, he retired to the little office or to the end of the yard, where Mrs. M.'s children saw him praying. He did not mind the children, but if a grown person came in view he rose from his knees and came out of the office, or from behind the timber. Mrs. M. notices that the inside of the can and of the cap were coated with cocoa sediment and she asked Matt if he would allow her to wash them, but he refused to allow this to be done, and as he was exceedingly clean in his person, she assumed he did this from a desire of mortification.

When he called with the can she sometimes tried to enter into a conversation with him. He would not discuss news, but always brought the conversation round to the lives of the saints. He was most unassuming and gentle in his manner and when she spoke of some incident in the fighting which was going on in Dublin during this period (1920-1922) he always said he never heard of it because he had made a resolution not to look at the placards. The incident of the blowing up of the London North Western Hotel was already been spoken of and his action in connection with same.

He often said to her that it was a pity men did not love God more; that he went to Mass every morning; and that others could do the same if they liked. When he spoke like this, it seemed quite natural to him, and he never gave Mrs. M. any other impression than that of a holy man who could only speak of God. Sometimes he found eggs which had been laid by Mrs. M.'s hens amongst the timber. These he always brought to her, and when she asked him why he did not keep some, he replied that they were not his to keep. When she offered him some, he declined to accept them.

He was very fond of Mrs. M.'s children, especially Teresa, because of his devotion to the great St. Teresa. He allowed the children to play near him when he was at prayer, and sometimes he would lead Teresa by the hand down the yard speaking to her of God and the angels. Teresa was then about eight years old, and Matt, when he wished to instruct her, would join her hands together and hold them in his own hands. He told her always to pray to St. Teresa for anything she wanted and that she would get it. When he spoke of her guardian angel he told her that when she was tempted to commit a sin to remember that her guardian angel and the devil were fighting together for her.

The children were never forgotten at Christmas. When work ceased on Christmas Eve, Matt arrived at the gate-lodge and asked for the children. A regular performance was then gone through while the children waited anxiously for their presents. First he proceeded to search his pockets most carefully, pretending that he found it difficult to find the money. He next produced three sixpences, each carefully rolled up in a number of bits of paper, which he solemnly unrolled until the sixpence was uncovered, and finally each child was presented with a sixpence. However, the number of children increased until there were seven, so Matt, finding it difficult to produce seven sixpences, reduced the amount to threepence, and went through the same procedure with the seven threepenny pieces.

At 2 p.m. on the ordinary work-day he resumed his work until closing hours. He then took off the old coat and hat, proceeded to the water-tap where he thoroughly washed his face and hands, drying them in a big red handkerchief, put on his out-of-doors coat and hat and went to St. Laurence O'Toole's Church to pay a short visit before returning home. He told Mrs. M. that he kept his working clothes in the yard as he did not wish to enter the House of God in them.

The foreman in this yard (E.C.) states that as Messrs. Martins' were Catholics they did not open the yards on Catholic Holy Days until 8.45 a.m., to enable the men to go to Mass before coming to work. As one of the foremen was a Protestant and could not be expected to know the dates of these Holy Days, Matt invariable went to him on the eve of the Holy Day and told him "not to forget that to-morrow is a Mass

morning.” This was done to prevent misunderstanding in the morning when the men arrived late, and also to let the foreman know that he need not attend himself before the later hour.

It is of interest to know that “Matt’s Office” was presented to Mrs. M., when Castle Forbes was sold by Messrs. Martins’, and is now erected in her new home. She also possesses Matt’s old cap and the “billy can” in which she so often made his cocoa, or rather the nauseous mixture of cocoa and tea which he partook of as his midday meal.

Having finished his visit to the Blessed Sacrament in St. Laurence O’Toole’s Church, he returned home, where his sister, Mrs. Fylan, who lived near him, had his dinner ready. Of this meal we shall speak later. His procedure on entering his room was to remove his coat and hat, go to the dressing-table where the Crucifix stood, fervently kiss the foot of same and then, still on his knees, go to the table where his meal was ready and partake of same kneeling. Mrs. Fylan was present all the time, and when he had finished she tidied up the room, and having left the cocoa ready for the morning, went to her own home. Prior to 1915, while his mother was alive, either Mrs. Andrews or Mrs. Fylan looked after their mother as she was unable to leave the room, but after her mother’s death Mrs. Fylan, who was then in charge, did not, as a rule, return again to Matt’s room until he had gone to work next morning. When he was alone his prayers and spiritual reading began, and continued without interruption until 10.30 or 11 p.m., except on the nights when he had to attend at one of other of the churches where the devotions of some of the confraternities to which he belonged were in progress. Before 11 p.m. he retired to his plank bed and wooden pillow for the few hours sleep which he allowed himself.

On Sunday he had a very full day. If it were the first Sunday of the month he went to St. Francis Xavier’s, because that was the Men’s Sodality Holy Communion day. On the second Sunday of the month he went to the Franciscan Church (O.F.M.), Merchant’s Quay, for the monthly Communion of the Third Order of St. Francis. He also belonged to the Confraternities of the Blessed Sacrament (Franciscan); Living Rosary (Dominican); Bona Mors (Jesuit); and to the Apostleship of Prayer. On other Sundays he went either to St. Francis Xavier’s or the Pro-Cathedral, Marlborough Street. He liked the latter church because of the number of masses said there on

Sunday by priests passing through Dublin. One of his books of devotion contains the following entries:- “On Feast of the Seven Joys B.V.M., 22<sup>nd</sup> August, 1915, I, Matt Talbot, was present at twenty-one Masses.” On the following page is the entry that on the 15<sup>th</sup> August, being the Sunday previous, he had attended twenty-one Masses. When the first life appeared it was questioned if any church in Dublin has so many as twenty-one Masses on Sunday. The writer found the proof in the statement of J.G., who informed him that on one occasion Matt Talbot told him he had heard twenty-one Masses on the Sunday previous at the Pro-Cathedral. J.G. questioned the possibility of being able to attend to twenty-one Masses, but Matt corrected J.G.’s idea that they need be one after the other, and told him that so long as one had the intention of hearing the Masses which were being said, it was only necessary actually to follow one Mass. There was no difficulty whatever in twenty-one Masses being said in the Pro-Cathedral on a Sunday.

Before his illness he remained in the church from the opening on Sunday morning until the very end of Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, which is given in the principal churches after the 12 o’clock Mass. In one case he left the church in order to go to an extra Mass. This was on the second Sunday when he attended the Franciscan Church, Merchants’ Quay. The Third Order Mass was at 8 o’clock, and as there was no 9 o’clock Mass, Matt used to leave the church at 8.30 and go to the Augustinian Church, John’s Lane, which was quite close, attend 9 o’clock Mass there, and return to the Franciscan Church for the 10 o’clock Mass.

He returned to his room about 2 p.m., when he broke his fast for the first time, having been without food from 6.30 p.m. on the previous day. In the last few years of his life he returned home after early Mass and had breakfast. He then returned to the church for the remaining Sunday Masses. It will be said that he was actually on his way to St. Saviour’s, Dominick Street, at 9.30 a.m., when he dropped dead. The remainder of the Sunday was spent as usual, in prayer or reading, or at the Confraternity meeting.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE EVENING PRAYER

We must now return to the hour, when, having partaken of his evening meal at 6.30 p.m., he prepared for prayer. While his mother lived they were together after his sister had withdrawn. On a chair beside the table were placed all the books of devotion required for the evening - the various prayer books containing the litanies recited each day, the manual containing novenas, and whatever spiritual books he was then reading. Kneeling at the table he began to pray, and continued until the various devotions were finished. He then either spoke to his mother on religious matters or read to her. If she were otherwise engaged he read in silence. It was a cheerful and happy room, as his devotion to his mother was very deep and tender. He joked and laughed when occasion demanded it, but their principal joy was to talk of their familiar friends - Jesus, Mary and Joseph and the Saints. Amongst the many saints whose lives he knew so well, he had a very great devotion to the saints who had been sinners. He spoke of St. Mary Magdalene, St. Mary of Egypt, and of their lives of penance, with wonder and admiration, and loved to call attention to their great works of mortification, which for women seemed well-nigh incredible. In his simple way he spoke of them as "great girls," and sometimes, when his sister was present, he would call her over to the table to admire the picture of one of the holy women whose life he might have been reading.

After his mother's death he lived alone, and generally prayed in the dark. As the window was without a blind the people who lived on the opposite side of the street knew when he was praying or reading by seeing the lamp being extinguished before he began to pray or being placed fully lighted on the table while he read. He was, of course, quite unaware of the interest his movements excited in his neighbours.

Amongst his regular prayers were fifteen mysteries of the Rosary of Our Lady; the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin; the Dolour beads; the beads of the Immaculate Conception; the beads of the Holy Ghost; the beads of St. Michael; the beads of the Sacred Heart; the chaplet for the Souls in Purgatory; the principal litanies; the prescribed novenas for each Church feast (these are marked in his notes in some of his

books of devotion). Besides these, he recited in the Franciscan Church, after the meetings of the Third Order of St. Francis, which he joined on the 18<sup>th</sup> October, 1891, taking the names of Joseph Francis, the round of the beads for each deceased member for whom prayers were asked at the meeting.

When reading aloud, he had a very pleasant, clear voice, and, at times, he would vary the reading by singing hymns. In connection with his reading it is important to remember that his education was very elementary, as he left school at the age of twelve years. One friend said to him that it was a pity he was not better educated, but Matt Talbot did not agree to this view and said that "God knew what was best." This same friend writes:- "As regards his spiritual life I think no person knew anything "about it except the late Father James Walsh, S.J., and it is doubtful if he knew very "much. He (Talbot) said to me on one occasion that he had prayed very hard for the "gift of prayer, and that it had been given to him in great abundance. Although he, of "course, said the ordinary prayers usual with Catholics, his prayer was usually mental "prayer, which he seemed a great master of." This view is borne out by the experience of a lady (Miss B.) who formed his acquaintance in his later years, and who owned the collie dog which has been referred to. She states:- "On a Saturday "evening in the early Spring of 1924 I called at his room in 18 Upper Rutland Street, "about 3 p.m., with a few eggs. He received me with great courtesy and set a chair "for me near his fire. When I sat down he sat down and we spoke of his health. "After a very little time he changed his conversation to religious topics. He spoke of "the Gospels, the Scriptures, of Our Lady in particular, as he had a great devotion to "her; of various saints, but especially St. Augustine, St. Ignatius of Loyola, St. Francis "Xavier, St. Francis Borgia and St. Alphonsus Rodriguez. He seemed to have a great "knowledge of and admiration for the Jesuit Saints. I was quite entranced with his "conversation, which was very beautiful, and did not realize how long I was with him "until I saw his clock. I asked if the clock was right, and he said it was. It was then "6 o'clock and I had been listening to him for three hours, though I did not believe I "was more than half an hour with him. As I apologised for my long stay, his face lit up with pleasure, and he thank me warmly for my visit. One thing he mentioned was that he had read in the life of a saint whose name I cannot recall, that he never got up from his knees in the church lest he should be distracted. Matt Talbot said that was why he did not stand up either. His little room was poor but clean and tidy. I

noticed that the bed was very flat and was covered with a dark quilt which covered pillow and all. I often called at his room with a little present of eggs, which I asked him to beat up and eat. He always smile and said he would. I was usually accompanied by an Irish terrier dog, which he insisted on allowing into the room, saying he was very fond of dogs. On such occasions we did not speak on religious subjects, and I did not delay. He was very reticent until I got to know him, when he spoke quite freely.”

We cannot pierce the veil which shadows the hours spent in the silence of his room alone with God, but from his books we may be able to reconstruct the scene and follow his thoughts. Scattered through his books were scraps of paper which he had carried home from the timber yard. As has been stated, his duty in his later years was to select certain classes of timber required for the furniture department, or for customers. The orders came on half sheets of notepaper, and these Talbot appears to have put into his pocket for his own use afterwards. Others of the notes are on bits of paper torn from a passbook, in fact the nearest scrap of paper was used to write down the extracts from his spiritual books or from sermons heard in church. Some are written in ink, some with an ordinary black-lead pencil, some with indelible or coloured pencil. All do not refer to religious subjects but to some fact which he had heard or read, and which struck him at the time as worthy of note. Thus we find the distances from the Earth to the Sun and to the fixed stars evidently taken from a book on the various heavens given in the old astronomies, the one now quoted being from Christopher Clavius. In connection with his reading he once told D.M., a clerk in Messrs. Martins’, that he was reading Cardinal Newman’s “Apologia.” D.M. remarked that a book like that was too high-class for a man like him; that he (D.M.) had tried to read it and had to give it up as it was altogether above him. Matt Talbot replied that whenever he read a book he always prayed to God to give him light to understand it, or, at least, to understand the main points of the book; that he thought he got enough of light to understand most of what he read. Readers of the lives of the saints will remember that it is not an uncommon experience to find very holy souls who were without education able to read and understand books of the most profound mystical theology, and possessing an accuracy of thought and a precision of expression which could only be the result of knowledge directly infused by the Holy Ghost. We need not, therefore, be surprised to find a man so gifted with the spirit of

prayer as Matt Talbot was, reading with full understanding the books found in his little library.

These little scraps of paper reveal the very soul of the man and show his own beautiful character much better than the words of a biographer can do. They shall be allowed to tell their own tale:-

From the note-book:-

“Speak not evil of the rich man in the private chamber because even the birds of the air will carry thy voice and he that hath wings will tell what thou has said. Book Cle. & C. 19V.”

“Cursed be the deceitful man says God, who has a male in his flock yet sacrifices an infirm creature to me, because I am a great King says the Lord of Hosts and my name is terrible amongst the Nations. The Prophet Malachy the 1.C. & 14 V.”

“1. Draw me after Thee of Heart of Jesus and I shall run in the odour of the ointments. 2. Grant me oh Jesus Thy Grace and Love and I shall be rich enough. 3. The Sparrow has found herself a house and the turtle dove a nest to deposit her young. Thy heart oh Jesus shall be my rest and repose. 4. May my eyes and my heart be always on the wound of The Blessed Heart of Jesus. 5. Who shall separate us from the Heart of Jesus. 6. Heart of Jesus be Thou the object of all the affections of my heart. 7. Lord give me of that water flowing from Thy Heart and I shall never thirst. 8. Heart of Jesus support the weak, clothe me with Thy strength. 9.” (An abrupt stop).

Next follows the prayer for the beatification of the Little Flower, copied out in Matt Talbot's writing. As it is well known it is not given.

“St. Veronica

“The Blessed (sic) told her banish all anxiety for her to 3 letters:-

“The 1<sup>st</sup> - Purity of the affections by placing her whole heart in God alone, loving no creature but in Him; and for her 2<sup>nd</sup> - Never to murmur or be impatient at the sins or

any behaviour of others but to bear them with interior peace and patience and humbly to pray for them and 3<sup>rd</sup> to set apart some time every day to meditate on the Passion of Christ.”

“Liberty of Spirit means that freedom from self-love that makes the soul prompt in doing God’s will in the least thing.”

“Oh Most Sweet Jesus mortify within me all that is bad - make it die. Put to death in me all that is vicious and unruly. Kill whatever displeases Thee, mortify within me all that is my own. Give me true humility, true patience and true charity. Grant me the perfect control of my tongue my” (ends here).

“What is Mystical Theology. (It) is the science that deals with God and divine things; the truths revealed by God and all that results from revelations. The word mystical means secret, hidden, obscure. Mystical Theology, therefore, is that part of the General Science of Theology which treats about the secret and hidden things. Union of the Soul with God, it is also used as in the present treatise C. the 12 to denote .....

“When Our Lord showed Sister Francesca of the Bleeding Sacrament, a Spanish Carmelites, the loss of a soul and several times in a vision compelled her positively to study separate tortures of that place, upbraided her for weeping. Francesca why weepst thou ? She fell prostrate at the Sacred Feet and said Lord for the damnation of that soul and the manner in which it has been damned. He vouchsafed to reply, Daughter it hath chosen to damn itself I have given it many helps of Grace that it might be saved.”

These end the notebook, except for a note which was only started and conveys nothing to the reader.

The scraps of paper found by the writer amounted to thirty-six, and for convenience are numbered 1 to 36:-

1. As to nobility of blood, true nobility is to be derived only from the blood of the Son of God.
2. Love is a Sweet Tyrant, sweet to the person beloved but a tyrant to the lover that is Jesus Christ that is God.
3. The heathen philosophers when (they) knew God have not glorified him as God or given thanks but became vain in their thoughts and their foolish hearts were darkened wherefore God gave them up to the shameful affections and to the desires of their heart in uncleanness.

(N.B. - This note has been altered, as in the original it is slightly mixed up through misplacing some of the words).

4. He that oppreseth the poor upbraideth his Maker, but he that hath pity on the poor honoureth him. Prov. 14 C. 31 V.
5. God says St. Augustine can only be honoured by love.
6. How I long that Thou mayest be master of my heart my Lord Jesus.
7. Oh King of Penitents who pass for fools in the opinion of the world but very dear to you oh, Jesus Christ.
8. This is not in Talbot's handwriting but is in a woman's hand. It is the prayer of the Angel of the Agony from the Dream of Gerontius by Cardinal Newman, beginning:-

“Jesus ! by the shuddering dread which fell on Thee”

On the back of this prayer, in the handwriting of Matt Talbot, is a note about “St. Ignatius 846 and Photius, the Council of Constance 809, the death of St. Ignatius 878, 4 score years old. 608 St. Ulric the first Saint solemnly canonized by the Church 4<sup>th</sup> July 973.”

9. The exterior acts of religion are 3 - Adoration, Sacrifice and Vows.
10. Three Substances were united in Christ - His Divinity, His Soul and Body.
11. Absolute miracle is from God alone, a miracle from an angel is an efficient miracle done by His own strength. Hume tells us that a miracle may be accurately defined a transgression of a law of nature by a particular volition of the Deity.
12. Should (you) ask me what is Grace, I answer you Grace as Divines (?) define it is a participation of the Divine nature that is God, Sanctity, Purity and Greatness by virtue of which a man rises from the baseness and filth he received from Adam.

13. The prophet Amos C. 8 v. 9 & 10. The sun shall do down at midday and I will make the earth dark in the day of Light and I will turn your feasts into mourning and all songs into lamentations.
14. All flesh have sinned and all flesh must suffer. St. Ambrose says without combat there is no victory and without victory there is no Crown.
15. Our Lord appeared to St. Gertrude pale, weary and bleeding and dirt stained and said open your heart my daughter for I want to go in and lie down. I am weary of these days of sin.
16. Sin is an excessive evil because it is an infinite evil.
17. Perfect happiness consists in the full activity of a perfect nature. The angels have it.
18. At present the human body is an animal body inasmuch as to preserve its life on this earth so it is (necessary) to nourish it with earthly food.
19. What do the letters I.H.S. mean. It means they are the first three letters of the name Jesus in the Greek language.
20. The word Canon signifies a rule or ordinance of prayer, human testimony to prove miracles (ends).
21. Jesus, says Origen, is the Sun of Justice arising with the Spring of Grace upon our hearts.
22. The Holy House 13 F. 3” hi (sic) 29 F. 4” length, 12 F. 8” width.
23. The Heart of Jesus is with me. Stop cease. The inhabitants of Antioch it is related once arrested a violent earthquake by writing on doors of their houses Jesus Christ is with us, Cease.
24. Sir Henry Wotton a great authority on the point, Ambassador at Venice, tells us that an Ambassador is one sent to foreign Courts to invent lies for his country’s good.
25. O Blessed Mother obtain from Jesus a share of His Folly.
26. It is the will of God that man should have two lives, the one natural the other supernatural.
27. The sons of Man neither know what is the greatness of what is eternal nor the baseness of what is temporal. The time of life is but a career of death in which no man is permitted to make stay.
28. The Pope is subject to no human authority. This is his temporal power. Christ is not divided so neither is his Church divided .....after all the world

can do God is still upon his Throne. The obedience of Jesus Christ to the will of God was the recognition of the Sovereignty of God over all the will of man.

29. The teaching of theologians that all venial sins with which a just man dies are remitted as to the guilt at the moment when the soul is separated from the body, by virtue of an Act of Love of God and the perfect contrition which it then excites over all its faults. In fact the soul at this moment knows its condition perfectly, and the sins of which it has been guilty before God, and all the stain of guilt has then disappeared but the pain remains to be endured in all its rigour and long duration.
30. To constitute a mortal sin three circumstances must be united - (1) The matter must be grave and (2) the mind must have a full knowledge of the culpability of the act which it commits or of the omission which it permits or of the danger of the occasion of sin to which it exposes itself, (3) the will must decide with an entire consent and a criminal preference for the forbidden act, the culpable omission, or the dangerous occasion.
31. The Body and the Soul of Jesus Christ were united by the hypostatic Union, that is by the personal assumption of our manhood into God to the Person of the Eternal Son two natures in one person Jesus Christ.  
The use of the will is to do good but the abuse of the will is to do evil.
32. One Our Father, one Hail Mary in honour of life ignominy of Jesus offer yourself to God with Joy and Peace. Man enjoys by the Union of a God to his nature an advantage which the Angels never possessed.
33. The Kingdom of Heaven was promised not to the sensible and the educated but to such as have the spirit of little children.
34. Oh Virgin I only ask three things - the Grace of God, the Presence of God, the Benediction of God.
35. In meditation, we labour to seek God, by reasoning and by good acts, but in Contemplation we behold Him without labour already found. In Meditation, the mind labours, operating with its power, but in Contemplation it is God Himself who operates, and the soul merely receives the infused gifts.
36. What do I want to speak to you when I have Jesus to speak to me.

Amongst these little extracts and prayers was a very beautiful prayer, not in his own handwriting, for his spiritual director. It begins, "Oh my God bless, guide and enlighten him amongst Thy Ministers to whom Thou has entrusted the guidance of my Soul .....,," which would go to show that there must have been some priest to whom he confided his mode of life, but who pre-deceased him - this shall be referred to later on.

The high spirituality revealed by the extracts given above is further emphasized by the nature of the books which formed his usual reading. He had a large box filled with books ranging from the booklets issued by the Catholic Truth Society of Ireland and the *Irish Messenger* Office to large and expensive books which he bought or which were presented to him. His memory was so good that he could give the dates of the births, deaths and canonizations of almost all the great saints in the calendar. At the end of this chapter is given a fairly comprehensive list of his principal books. He had a very tender devotion to Our Lady, and his love for her followed close, as does the love of all spiritual souls, on his devotion to Our Blessed Lord. That he could read with full understanding a work such as the *Mystical City of God*, compiled from the writings of Mary Agreda, the Spanish Mystic, shows that he was himself deeply versed in the highest form of mystical prayer. This book he obtained with difficulty, having apparently to procure it outside Ireland, possibly owing to difficulty of importing books during the Great War, and he never parted with it. Another book on Our Lady which he highly prized was "True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin," by the Blessed de Montfort, from which he first got the idea of wearing chains.

During the ten years which elapsed between the death of his mother and his own death these evening hours are clothed in silence. To be alone with Jesus he had gone aside from the crowd, and what passed between him and the Great Lover of his Soul was known only to themselves. We have got a glimpse of his prayer in the early morning when his mother watched him in an ecstasy pouring out his soul to God and God's Mother. Once or twice he broke the silence: speaking to his sister, Mrs. Fylan, he complained of the lack of the love of God amongst men, and said, "Susan, if I could only tell you of the great joy I had last night talking to God and the Blessed Virgin." But such confidences were very rare, and should he think he had spoken too

much of himself he would at once say that there was no credit due to him but to God, Who gave him such grace.

We shall conclude this chapter with a list of some of his books, though they do not, by any means, represent all that he read. He borrowed books from friends, and from the libraries of religious houses. These were returned and therefore their names are unknown. The attached list is given merely to show the class of books he had trained himself to read with appreciation and understanding:-

The Holy Bible and the New Testament.

“The Sufferings of Our Lord Jesus Christ .. .. .	By Fr.. Thomas of Jesus.
“Imitation of the Scared Heart.”	
“Our Divine Saviour.” .. .. .	By the Bishop of Newport
“The School of Christ.” .. .. .	By Père Grou, S.J.
“Christ among Men.” .. .. .	By L’Abbé Sertillange
“All for Jesus.” .. .. .	By Father Faber
“The Real Presence.” .. .. .	By Père Eymard
“Eucharistic Retreats.” .. .. .	By Père Eymard
“Manual for Interior Souls.” .. .. .	By Père Grou
“Spiritual Conference.” .. .. .	By Father Faber
“Spiritual Instructions.” .. .. .	By Ven. Blosius
“Introduction to the Devout Life.” .. .. .	By St. Francis de Sales
“The Science of the Soul.”	
“Meditations on the Hidden Life.”	
“The Precious Blood.” .. .. .	By Father Faber
“Loss and Gain.” .. .. .	By Newman
“Arians of the 4 <sup>th</sup> Century.” .. .. .	By Newman
“Essay on Miracles.” .. .. .	By Newman
“Leaves from St. Augustine.” .. .. .	By Allies
“Life of St. Augustine.” .. .. .	By Bishop Moriarty
“Life of St. Elizabeth of Hungary.” .. .. .	By Jones
“Life of St. Elizabeth of Hungary.” .. .. .	By Montalembert
“Lives of F.A. Talpa etc.”	
“Lives of Fabrizzio del’Aste.”	
“The Mystical City of God.” .. .. .	By Mary of Agreda
“True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin.” .. .. .	By de Montfort
“Social Value of the Gospel.” .. .. .	By Carriquet
“Democratic Industry.” .. .. .	By Husslein

“Butler’s Lives of the Saints.” - 2 Vols.  
 “Behold Thy Mother.” .. .. . By Fr. Russell, S.J.  
 “Present Position of Catholics in England.” .. .. . By Newman  
 “Course of Religious Instruction.” .. .. . By Fr. Schouppe, S.J.  
 “Preparation for Death.”  
 “Old and New.” .. .. . By Rev. N.J. Walsh, S.J.  
 “History of Devotion to the Blessed Virgin.”  
 “The Devout Pilgrims of the Ever Blessed Virgin Mary.”  
 “Purgatory according to St. Catherine of Genoa.”  
 “Life of St. John of the Cross.”

## CHAPTER VII.

### HIS FASTS AND MORTIFICATIONS

The extraordinary severity of Matt Talbot's austerities has caused many inquiries as to the possibility of there being any error in the account given of them in the original little Life. So far from there being any error, the writer is convinced from all investigations since made by him that the Life contains an exact account of Matt Talbot's fasts. These began almost with his conversion, and continued, with increasing severity, until illness compelled him to make some small concession to his bodily health. His sister, Mrs. Andrews, as already stated, says that his fasts began while he lived in lodgings in Gloucester Street, some years prior to his father's death. He concealed his fasts very successfully from his fellow-workers and from friends outside his immediate family by a rule of not persisting in refusing food if pressed to partake of same.

M.D., a sawyer in Messrs. Martins', who was a very old friend of Matt Talbot, states that he prepared Matt's midday meal for many years, and that it consisted of a cup of tea and a slice of dry bread. If it were a fast-day Matt took no milk in the tea. The lunch, however, was a very hurried meal. Matt arrived about 11.15 a.m., when M.D. had the water boiling and the tea made. Matt then hurriedly ate the piece of bread which he had brought in his pocket, drank the tea and rushed back to his work. If M.D. had not the tea ready, Matt did not wait for it but left the shed. In the many years that M.D. prepared the midday meal he only saw Matt bring a little meat on three occasions. In 1920, M.D. met with an accident and was retired on pension, after 50 years' service. It was then that Matt asked Mrs. M. to prepare his tea for him. M.D. says that it was always tea he took prior to 1920 and the cocoa would appear to be a later addition. Matt's lunch hour being an unusual one M.D. has to accommodate himself to Matt's ideas and take his own lunch at the same time as Matt did. M.D. states that Matt Talbot during nine months of the year never ate meat.

When stocktaking was on, Matt was sometimes kept in the office on a Saturday with one of the foremen, W.G., to whom the housekeeper sent some tea and bread and butter. W.G. divided the bread and butter with Matt, who, having carefully scraped the butter off the bread, ate the dry bread without comment. In consequence of Matt

Talbot's rule of not refusing food, a friend of nearly 30 years' standing did not realize the full nature of his fasts because when his friend invited Matt to his house to lend him books and persuaded him to wait for tea, Matt invariably made an excellent meal. Mrs. H., who knew of his secret, made use of her knowledge to make him take a meal in her house whenever he called to see her. To his friend he stated that a hearty meal did not agree with him owing to his abstemious habits. One old friend (J.G.), who had many interesting stories of Matt Talbot, said that Matt spoke to him about fasting and tried to get him to do severe fasts. J.G. replied that he could not do more than he was doing. Matt then mentioned some of his own fasts and told J.G. that he should punish his body and "not be studying the gut," that being his homely way of describing too much attention to matters of food.

The fasts which he performed when in his usual good health, that is until about two years before his death were as follows:-

During Lent complete black-fast every day on two slight meals without meat, butter or milk. During June, in honour of the Sacred Heart, a similar black-fast. Every Wednesday no meat, but, occasionally, a little butter. Probably the full Franciscan fasts after their abrogation by Pope Leo XIII. At other times of the year his routine was - Sunday his ordinary dinner at 2 o'clock, that being his first meal of the day; if this were fairly substantial, he did not eat again, but if it were a light meal, he partook of cocoa or tea and bread about 6 p.m. Monday, dry bread and black tea. Tuesday, if not a vigil of a Feast or in Lent, breakfast consisted of cocoa and bread and butter; dinner of a little meat. Thursday was as Tuesday, and Friday a full fast. When he was getting old he found a difficulty in swallowing dry bread and to enable him to eat it without butter he got his sister, Mrs. Fylan, to boil a whiting and to steep the bread in the water in which the whiting had been cooked. He did not eat the whiting itself, which Mrs. Fylan took home. Later on, to avoid the expense, he got Mrs. Fylan to bring with her some of the water in which she had boiled the fish for her own dinner and this he used with his bread. When his health broke down completely and he had to abstain from work, he ate whatever was recommended and would take meat, an egg, or bread and butter.

We have seen that every night he slept on a plank bed with a wooden pillow, covered with a half blanket, summer and winter, or with a few sacks in very cold weather.

This he had done for many years, as his sister, Mrs. Andrews, states that he first used the plank bed when he lived in Gloucester Street. The effect of the wooden pillow was that in later years his face became numbed and his hearing impaired. On his bed he slept in chains. These he appears to have worn for about fourteen years prior to his death, though some of his most familiar friends were unaware of the fact that he wore them, as he confided this information to very few and then only with the object of encouraging them to do likewise. One lady who greatly desired a spiritual favour for a near relative was advised to wear a chain and did so. J.G. tells the story of the chain with not a little humour. Matt and J.G. were good friends as they lived near each other in Middle Gardiner Street, and Matt often visited J.G. in the latter's room, J.G. being a bachelor. One Sunday, Matt informed J.G. that he had read of a devotion which lifted him from earth to Heaven, and, in reply to J.G.'s inquiry as to what it was, said it was wearing of a chain. J.G. asked if he had it on him and Matt said "Yes" and showed a small chain wound round his leg. It was the same class of chain as was used to hand the weights of a clock. Matt lent J.G. the life of St. Catherine of Sienna, and J.G. asked Matt if he had read in that life that St. Catherine wore a chain. He looked confused and said he supposed she did. J.G. then said that she wore it round her waist and that after her death it was found embedded in her flesh, an exact parallel of what happened in the case of Matt Talbot himself. It was, however, the book of Blessed Grignon de Montfort which caused Matt to wear chains. He induced J.G. to wear a chain and brought the latter to Clonliffe College, where he had him enrolled in the chain by one of the priests. At first, Matt wore the principal chain around his shoulders, but as this prevented him from carrying the timber he changed it to his waist. He told this to Mrs. X. when speaking to her about wearing a chain. The following is the statement made by those who undressed Matt Talbot's body in the mortuary at Jervis Street Hospital when he was brought in dead from the Street: "On Sunday, June 7<sup>th</sup>, 1925, a dead body was brought in the Corporation ambulance to Jervis Street Hospital. On the body being identified, it proved to be "Mr. Matt Talbot and when we the undersigned undressed the remains we found "chains, ropes and beads on the said body. Around the middle of his waist were two "chains and a knotted rope. One chain we took to be an ordinary chain used as a "horse trace, and the other a little thinner. Both were entwined by a knotted rope and "medals were attached to the chain by cords. Both were deeply embedded in the "flesh and rusted. Also on the left arm was found a light chain tightly wound above

“the elbow, and on the right arm above the elbow a knotted cord. On his left leg a  
“chain was bound round with a cord below the knee, and on the right leg, in the same  
“position, was some heavy knotted cord. Around his neck was a very big beads and  
“attached to same were a great many religious medals. Some of the medals were as  
“big as a half-crown and others ordinary sodality medals.

(Signed) - “Charles Manners, Laurence Thornton,  
“Jervis Street Hospital.”

All his devotions whether in church, or at home, or even in the timber yard were, as we have seen, performed on his knees. Even for his spiritual reading he did not sit down. As he had, by the ingenious device of splitting the front of his trousers, bared his knees, it follows that he always knelt on his bare knees. Nor, as we have seen, did he rest his arms or hands on anything when praying, but knelt perfectly erect often for seven hours at a time in church on Sundays.

His eyes he mortified by keeping them fixed on the ground when passing through the streets, and by not reading either newspapers or placards. The ordinary news of the day he ignored, so much so, that the anti-conscription campaign of 1916-17 had gone on for six months before he heard of it from a friend.

How far all these fasts and mortifications were performed under spiritual direction we do not know as those priests who could tell are dead. Father James Walsh, S.J., knew Talbot very well and, possibly, knew of his mode of life. The Right Rev. Monsignor Hickey, D.D., V.G., when President of Clonliffe College, also was very well acquainted with him. Matt Talbot went frequently to Confession to Clonliffe College, and Monsignor Hickey was in the habit of visiting him in his room in 18 Upper Rutland Street. This was verified in an unexpected manner after the first life appeared. Monsignor Hickey had been appointed parish priest of Haddington Road parish and one of the Vicars General of the Dublin diocese, a few years before Talbot’s death. He did not live long to enjoy his new position and died suddenly in 1924. Some three weeks before his death he was dining with a parishioner when the conversation turned on answers to prayer. Monsignor Hickey stated that when he wanted a very particular favour he always got a poor old man named Matt Talbot to pray for it and that his prayers had never been refused. When the person in question

had read the life of Matt Talbot the conversation with Monsignor Hickey came back to her memory and she communicated the incident to the present writer.

Talbot was very shy of speaking to priests, and Brother F., of St. Francis Xavier's Church, states that he never disclosed his identity to the priests there but went in and out unobtrusively. Even with Brother F. he would only speak when addressed. The same statement holds good for the Franciscan Church, Merchants' Quay, as the spiritual director of the Third Order did not know him by name. This is not remarkable when it is remembered that in both churches the men at their meetings filled the churches to their utmost capacity. Although Father M., the spiritual director of the sodality of the Immaculate Conception at St. Francis Xavier's Church, could not recall him by name, when asked by the present writer, yet Matt Talbot was recalled to his memory by a very characteristic action of Talbot's which was related to Father M. by Mrs Fylan, after the appearance of the first life. She asked Father M. if he remembered a man who had handed him a substantial sum of money in the confessional on a certain date. She knew the amount as she was in the habit of keeping Matt's money for him, and he had asked for £5 which he said he intended to give to Father M. for charity. Father M. then remembered a poor man asking him to take some money for charity. Father M. took it casually and the seeing that it amounted to some pounds asked his penitent what he wished done with it. The latter told him to do what he wished with it, and Father M. said he would give it to the poor. As he turned to inquire as to the identity of the donor the latter got up and left the confessional at once. This occurred only a few weeks before Talbot's death. Although he never revealed himself to Father M., he had a very great love for him and spoke to the head of his section in the sodality of Father M. with sincere affection and respect.

His action in this and in other matters was typical of his very great humility. People who thought they knew Matt Talbot intimately were astonished to learn after his death of his chains, his fasts and the various other mortifications which he had successfully concealed from them. In fact, when he did reveal any of them it was for a definite purpose affecting the person in whom he confided. He certainly spoke openly of God amongst his friends and this, on one or two occasions, led them to feel uneasy lest there was anything of self-complacency in his action. One very great personal friend

stated that he once spoke to Matt Talbot on the danger of feeling any pride in his great spiritual gifts. Talbot listened very respectfully and then simply said that he could not feel pride in anything he had done when he thought of the actions of the great saints. He was not hurt by the remark of his friend, and, indeed, afterwards referred to this conversation. This same friend gave an interesting note on Talbot's mode of life which is worth quoting:- "Those who read the smaller Life were puzzled as well as amazed, that a poor fellow like Matt could have set his mark so high and then consistently worked up to it. The explanation seemed to me to lie in his clear logical mind. He was convinced that if the truths of Revelation, as regards the Incarnation and Redemption were accepted as true, there should be no limit to our service save the impossible. It was this view, in my opinion, that urged him on to his life of extreme penance and enabled him to persevere to the end."

This statement seems to the present writer to contain the true explanation of Matt Talbot's whole life from the day of his conversion to his death. Neither the present writer, nor his correspondent, mean to convey that such austerities as were practised by Matt Talbot are essential to true sanctity, nor, indeed, that they are the things which in Matt Talbot's life are most worthy of praise and exact imitation. A saint has been well described as one, who, in order to please God, does his ordinary duties well. This definition was fulfilled in every respect by Matt Talbot. His life shows, apart from his extraordinary penances and long hours of prayer, the resistance to temptations, which is the duty of everyone, and the perfect fulfilment of the simple duties of his daily life which should also be our aim. The motive with which he performed these duties made them perfect, and in the end led him to the heights of sanctity to which it is given to few to attain. If we cannot imitate him in his austerities we can, at least, look up to him with the admiration which lives such as his compel in all men of good will.

## CHAPTER VIII

### HIS CIRCLE OF FRIENDS: HIS CHARITY

We may begin this Chapter with a description of his personal appearance. He was below the middle height, of slight but wiry build. His face was long with slightly prominent cheekbones, which had some colour in them; nose straight; eyes large and lustrous, with drooping lids; forehead high and temples rounded; head in later life, bald except for a fringe of hair below his hat. His expression was serious and thoughtful and became very animated when he spoke on a subject which moved him to emotion, at which times he could show very great indignation. He walked along the streets rapidly with long strides and a loose swinging gait but quite simply and naturally with his eyes fixed on the ground, and an air of deep recollection. To those with whom he spoke he appeared a shrewd and practical man, full of commonsense. In his conversation he was plain and blunt, but the description "Rough-spoken" quoted in the original life brought several protests to the writer. These letters described him as very gentle and sweet-mannered with a very sweet smile. The fact is that the word "blunt" would have better described him. He was blunt in his speech when occasion called for bluntness and at times hot-tempered and a little impatient if there was what he considered unreasonable delay; but his habitual manner was one of good humour and kindness towards all who met him.

No one knew him intimately though many knew him either at work or in the Church. His penitential mode of life forbade close intimacies and his constant state of recollection and prayer made him avoid human companionship except when the claims of family or of charity called for it. Thus he would spend a quiet hour, now and again, in his brother-in-law's house chatting on their personal affairs, or he would visit the home of a friend who had a little library in order to borrow books. Many came to him for advice and all were received with kindness and advice was given or prayers promised according to the request of the visitor. Persons who had heard of his holiness used to write for prayers without disclosing their identity, and when the prayers were answered a letter of thanks was sent, often accompanied by a money offering which, as it could not be returned because the donor was unknown, was given in charity. One of the foremen in Messrs. Martins' (E.C.) relates two incidents which struck him at the time as somewhat remarkable because of the nature of the replies

given by Matt Talbot to E.C.'s request for prayers for persons who were ill. In 1922, E.C.'s wife was very ill and he was very worried, on her account. He spoke to Talbot and asked him to pray for her recovery. Talbot promised to do so and also got a novena of Masses offered up for her in Mount St. Joseph's Abbey (Trappis), Roscrea. He told E.C. not to worry as she would recover, and in fact she was quite well in three weeks. What struck E.C. was Matt Talbot's firm statement that E.C.'s wife would recover and the contrast it made to the reply to a similar request for prayers for the recovery of E.C.'s brother-in-law, who had met with an accident on his farm, and who, after a long illness, was removed to a Dublin Hospital for an operation. This man had several children and his friends were very anxious that he should recover. When Matt Talbot was asked to pray for his recovery he promised to do so but always told E.C. that he should be reconciled to God's Will and never held out any hope that his prayers would be answered. Although E.C. and Talbot spoke of the patient on many occasions the burden of Talbot's conversion was always the same - resignation. The patient died after a few weeks.

Another foreman (G.) had a daughter who at the age of 15 years was dying of tuberculosis. As her name was Teresa, Matt constantly enquired about her because of his own devotion to St. Teresa. He, eventually, called to see her, and during the visit spoke to her about the Saints. She was very anxious to find out whether she was dying and, as her father gave evasive answers to her questions, she asked Talbot if she would recover. Talbot hated an untruth but as he felt that he could not tell the girl that she was dying, preferring to allow her father to choose his own time for doing so, he got out of the dilemma by saying - "He had heard it laid down that the patient was the best judge of that." In one of his books of devotion is a note of her death and age.

Another friend (J.T.) attributed his restoration to health to Matt Talbot's prayers. J.T. was suffering from a gastric ulcer and was advised to undergo an operation which he declined. He decided to consult Talbot and went to 18 Upper Rutland Street about 1.30 p.m. on a Sunday so as to meet Talbot coming from Mass. He told Talbot that he was very ill and asked his advice. Talbot replied, "Go to the same Doctor that I do. I never went to any except One. Go to Him." J.T. said he would, as he knew Talbot meant God. Talbot promised to pray for him and told him to pray with confidence and to tell him how he was getting on. J.T. went every Sunday to the Passionist

Church at Mount Argus to be touched with a relic and whenever he met Talbot, the latter always told him to continue praying. After some time J.T. completely recovered from his illness and never had any further gastric trouble. J.T. was in the habit of consulting Talbot on many matters and had the utmost confidence in his advice and prayers.

J.G., who used to meet Talbot at early Mass and whose account of the chains has been already told, used occasionally to miss the 6.15 a.m. Mass if the weather was very bad and would, in such cases, go to a later Mass. Talbot did not approve of this at all and replied to J.G.'s excuses, "It is constancy God wants." During the strike of 1913, J.G., with very considerable difficulty, persuaded Talbot to accept loans of money, amounting in all to about £5. These sums were repaid at the rate of five shillings a week when work was resumed. Some years afterwards J.G. lost his regular work because of the decline in his trade owing to the Great War, and Talbot gladly lent him money which was repaid when J.G. got temporary employment.

As Talbot lent quite a considerable amount of money at various times to fellow-workers who had families, it is interesting to learn his reason for lending rather than giving money in such cases. One very old friend, the M.D. already spoken of, who had been at school with Talbot and who worked in Martins' from 1870 to 1920, constantly got the loan of money for clothes for his children. He knew that Matt Talbot never refused a loan where there was genuine need and where the money was not wanted for drink, but Matt told his old friend that it was better to make the men pay it back by instalments and thus prevent them spending the amount in the public-house. Those who tried to tell a piteous tale on a Monday morning, after having spent their wages in drink during the week-end, got a very vigorous refusal of their requests.

Although he was shy of women's society, he had several women acquaintances whom he had met at the Church or in connection with the various sodalities of which he was a member. One of these had a brother home from the United States on a visit, and when he returned to America, she told Talbot that she was very lonely. His answer was "Lonely! How could you be lonely? That's nonsense, and Our Lord in his

Tabernacle.” The reproof brought her more consolation than any form of sympathy could have done.

Some of Matt Talbot’s women friends observed that he was always poorly dressed, and went to Father James Walsh, S.J., about it. They offered to buy clothes for Talbot and asked Father Walsh to undertake the delicate task of speaking to Matt about the matter. Father Walsh sent for Matt after the meeting of the Sodality in St. Francis Xavier’s and the following conversation took place:- “Talbot, you have very bad clothes.” “Yes, Father, Matt replied, “I promised God I would never wear good ones.” “Go down to -----,” said Father Walsh, “and get a suit.” “I’ll do no such thing,” was the reply, “I promised God I would never wear good clothes.” “Well,” said Father Walsh, “God has sent them to you. Get them.” “If God sent them I’ll take them,” replied Matt, and without further ado he got the clothes. Another person who gave him a good suit was not so lucky, as Matt gave it away. He usually got his clothes from a gentleman who was a very great personal friend, and who gave him his own old clothes. In fact Matt had only one suit for Sunday or weekday or as he said he had no “Sunday clothes.”

The lady who told the story of her conversation with Matt Talbot in his room on a Sunday evening relates that when Talbot was in bad health and very poor she got five shillings for charity from a man who asked for prayers for a special intention in return. This lady asked Talbot to take the money, as he wanted it. He took it, thanked the lady and promised to pray for the intention, which was granted in a most unequivocal manner. Amongst his friends was one who, though a life long total abstainer, had for 30 years been absent from the Sacraments. During a conversation with Matt Talbot on the question of temperance, the latter suddenly asked him about his soul. Matt spoke seriously of the danger his friend ran of dying without the Sacraments and, eventually, made an appointment with him for the following Saturday afternoon, when Matt brought him to Holy Cross College, Clonliffe, and after he had made his Confession introduced him to the Sodality of the Immaculate Conception of which he subsequently became a very prominent member. He was, several years later, killed by a fall into the hold of a ship on which he was working. He often spoke to Matt Talbot with gratitude for having brought him back to the Sacraments.

These little stores could be multiplied indefinitely but the few given will show that in all his dealings with his fellowmen, Matt Talbot was actuated by Christian Charity. His actual money gifts to various charities and to the poor sound incredible; yet the writer has taken every possible pains to verify the statements made. When Talbot earned less than a pound a week he lived on six shillings including rent. He was scrupulous in fulfilling his duty and for that reason he always allowed whichever of his sisters looked after his mother and himself a few shillings a week for their trouble; but everything else was given away. He had a habit in his later years of placing on the chair under one of his books, the housekeeping money for the week. On Friday he told his sister to take it. At times he gave her his wages to keep for him, especially if he was gathering up a sum for a special purpose. When it had reached the requisite amount he got it from her and disposed of it. We have seen that he gave a sum of five pounds to Father M. in the confessional. This was no isolated donation, as Brother F. relates that he often saw Matt Talbot hand sums of money in the corridor of the church to Father M. merely stating that they were for charity. One woman who was collecting for the Shrine of the Little Flower, in the Carmelite Church, Clarendon Street, told him about it and got a pound. She asked him to give it himself but he excused himself on the ground that he did not understand these things and asked her to hand in the contribution. Several collectors from religious houses knew him well and got regular subscriptions from him.

In the original life a statement was made that Matt Talbot had contributed £30 a year towards the Maynooth Mission to China. It was also stated that it was not possible to verify this statement in full because the Card Index of the Mission only started in September 1921. The foundations for the original statement were two-fold: Firstly, Mrs Fylan, Talbot's sister, was told by him that "he had finished three priests and was at the fourth." Secondly: he told his foreman (G.) that he had given £30 a year towards the Chinese Mission. The foreman remembers the conversation well because it was caused by Matt Talbot stating that the foreman, who had a good salary, should give more to the Mission than he had done, when he, Talbot, a poor labouring man, gave £30 a year. Inquiry from the authorities of the Maynooth Mission to China brought the following letter:- "I had gone thoroughly into the question of the "amount of money he sent here, but I am afraid you will not find the results quite "satisfactory from the point of view you have mentioned - namely of verifying the

“statement about his having educated three students. We have gone through all the letters in the Dublin file and have picked out those written here by Mr. K. This man it was who sent on all Talbot’s donations with the exception of £1.10s.0d. sent by Talbot himself in December, 1924 - £1 being his own gift and 10/- from his sister. This is the only letter we ever received from him:-

“ ‘Matt Talbot has done no work for the past 18 months.

“ ‘I don’t think I will work any more. Here is one pound from me and ten shillings from my sister.’

“The total sum we received from Talbot through K. is £40, to which you should add the £1.10s.0d. mentioned above, or £1 leaving out his sister’s share. I have no hesitation in saying that these figures are as accurate as we can possibly arrive at. He began to contribute towards this Mission in December 1920, and I have no doubt we have here the first letters in which K. mentions Talbot. The tone of them implies this for he introduces him to us as ‘an extremely pious holy man who, when not engaged in work, spends his time in prayer.’ The next letter, February 1921, speaks of Talbot in the same manner, but afterwards K. takes it for granted that we know all about our benefactor.” With this letter was enclosed a sheet of paper giving the various sums which were identified by them as coming from Talbot: December 1920, £2. During the year 1921, £23 in 8 different sums. During 1922, £11 in 7 different sums. In 1923 to the date of his illness in June, £4 in four sums and then December 1924, £1 and 10/- sent directly by himself. In January 1923, a sum of £5 was sent on Matt Talbot’s behalf by his brother-in-law, W. Fylan, but as the letter did not state that it was sent on behalf of Matt Talbot, £5 was credited to W. Fylan. Mrs Fylan, Matt Talbot’s sister, still maintains that Matt had told her he has finished three priests and was at the fourth but as we cannot get any further evidence we must assume either that Talbot had been mistaken in the sums he sent or had sent money anonymously. The pound sent in December 1924 was almost the last of his little savings as he always kept a little money with Mrs. Fylan for any sudden emergency. A few of his friends insisted on his accepting gifts of money from them during his long illness and the £1:10s. was taken from these sums. Mrs. Fylan says that he paid the 10s. for her as compensation for her attention to him. His reason for sending it to the Maynooth Mission was because he had got a letter from the Bursar stating that they had missed his generous gifts for some time. Hence his letter in reply informing them of his illness and unemployment.

One of the foremen (E.C.) relates an incident which occurred in 1921 or 1922. A South of Ireland priest came to the Castle Forbes' Yard and asked permission to make a collection amongst the men. E.C. told him to put up a notice stating the day he would collect, namely pay-day, so that the men might be prepared for his visit. The men were always generous in such cases, and gave a shilling each, or more, quite willingly. When the priest had finished the collection E.C. told him that there was another man at the end of the yard and directed him to go there and ask for Matt Talbot. The priest did so and on his return remarked to E.C. that he had never met so generous a man and that he had scrupled taking what Talbot gave him. E.C. asked how much that was and the priest replied, "All he had about him." As Talbot had just drawn his week's wages, which in those years were £3: 1 : 6 a week, it would appear that the greater portion of this sum was given for the church for which the collection was being made. The same priest called again in 1923 and asked about Talbot who was then ill in the Mater Misericordiae Hospital. Having got his address the priest promised to call on him.

The only change which the increase of wages made in Matt Talbot's circumstances was to increase his gifts to charity. Ten shillings a week, during the Great War and afterwards, supplied all his wants, for food, rent and subscriptions to his trade union, including the premium for his burial expenses. It was no wonder that one of his old-fellow-workers said, "The men love him"; adding, "Matt had no use for money."

*CHAPTER IX*  
ILLNESS AND CLOSING YEARS

Hitherto Matt Talbot's sufferings had been self-imposed. We have seen how severe were the mortifications to which he submitted his body; but that body was strong, though small, and his iron will bent it to his bidding. The gathering years were telling their tale, yet the daily round went on unceasingly; the heart beat a little faster when the shoulders bent to the load of timber, and the breath came a little quicker. At length Nature rebelled, and he who during a long life had really never known illness now found himself suddenly unable to carry on his work. For two years more he was to live and suffer. He who was so active was to be idle all the day long; he who had imposed so many sufferings on himself was to accept sufferings from the hands of the Lord he had so faithfully served. The great trial which came to many saints came to him in the destruction of his own activities and the patient acceptance of the Will of God in his regard. Feeling very ill, he spoke to a friend who procured him a letter of introduction to an eminent surgeon attached to the Mater Misericordiae Hospital, Dublin, and armed with this letter, having humbly removed his chains lest they should reveal his life of penance, he presented himself at the hospital. The examining doctor diagnosed heart trouble and admitted him at once to the medical ward of the hospital on June 18<sup>th</sup>, 1923. This beautiful hospital, which was founded in the year 1861, stands in a commanding position on the north side of the City of Dublin. It contains over 350 beds and is in charge of the Irish Sisters of Mercy. The physician, in whose care he was, writes, "When Talbot first came to the hospital we "had no electrocardiograph and therefore it would be impossible to give an exact "diagnosis of his condition. He was suffering from a cardiac arrhythmia which I "believe to be auricular flutter. We have cured several cases of this condition within "the past few years, but when Matt Talbot was coming to the hospital the condition "was neither well understood nor had we the means of treatment that we have now at "our disposal."

This letter refers to Matt Talbot's first stay in the Mater Hospital. The electrocardiograph was in the hospital the second time he was there, as will be seen by the statement of Sister Dolores, quoted later on. During this first stay he was changed from one ward to another as it is customary during the summer to have the

hospital thoroughly cleaned ward by ward. This fact has made it difficult to obtain particulars of his first stay, but one fact is recorded by the Sister of Mercy in charge of the ward which he occupied when he was removed from the upper to the lower floor, namely, that he spent all his spare time before the Blessed Sacrament in the chapel of the hospital. The records show that he had received the last Sacraments on June 21<sup>st</sup> and was discharged from hospital on July 17<sup>th</sup>. He continued to attend the hospital as an outpatient until August 17<sup>th</sup>, when he resumed work at Messrs. Martins. He was unable to continue his employment and left again on the 3<sup>rd</sup> September. He was re-admitted to the Mater Hospital on October 1<sup>st</sup>, when he was placed under the care of Sister Dolores. Her statement is of great interest and is given in full:-

“I was Sister in charge of St. Laurence’s Ward of the Mater Misericordiae Hospital  
“when Matt Talbot returned there on October 1<sup>st</sup>, 1923. He was suffering from heart  
“disease and was put to bed at once. He remained in bed nearly all the time he was in  
“Hospital, viz., from 1<sup>st</sup> October 1923 to the middle of November. He did not then  
“wear chains. He was very quiet and retiring, and had little to say to anyone. He  
“had a very sweet smile, and was always very gracious in his manner. He took  
“whatever food was given to him, and made no comment nor complaint. It was  
“noticed that he did not use butter. His sisters and a friend, Miss B., brought him  
“eggs and fruit. These he handed to me without a remark. I was at liberty to use  
“them as I liked, but I gave them to him with his meals. He got very ill and I had him  
“anointed. I sent for his sisters, and told them he was dying, and that it was as well  
“he should die then, he was so well prepared. He seemed to be dying, as he was  
“scarcely breathing after having received the last Sacraments. I now think he may  
“have been in a state of profound recollection. His extraordinary calmness at the  
“time struck me as remarkable. I said all the prayers for the dying. He got over this  
“attack, and two days later was able to go downstairs to have a cardiograph taken.  
“He then returned to bed and after a few days more was allowed up. The first day he  
“was allowed up he disappeared and could not be found in the hospital or in the  
“grounds. I thought he had gone out and had got an attack in the street. He was  
“eventually discovered in a corner of the chapel praying. When I complained to him  
“that he had given all of us a great fright, he replied with his usual quiet smile, ‘I have  
“ ‘thanked the nurses and the doctors, and I thought it only right to thank the great  
“ ‘Healer.’ These words made such an impression on me that I have since told the

“patients to go to the chapel to thank God for their recovery. At the various times he  
“was in hospital, the Sisters noticed his great look of recollection in the chapel and  
“observed that he never used a prayer-book. He was in the chapel every evening  
“when the Sisters recited the Office. He always was to be seen in a remote corner  
“kneeling quite erect. He never asked for any privileges. He received Holy  
“Communion every Monday. On other mornings, if any patient was to receive Holy  
“Communion, I asked him if he would like to receive also. He always said ‘Yes’ but  
“he never asked for It himself. He did not speak of religious matters with the Nuns.  
“Some patients like to discuss religion, but Matt Talbot never showed by his conduct  
“that he was anything more than a sweet-natured, holy, old man. Knowing now the  
“life of austerity which he led, it is obvious to me that he sought to conceal his  
“holiness from all around him.”

On his discharge, he was unable to resume work and attended the hospital dispensary at regular intervals. It is possible to trace the course of his illness by the payments he received under the National Health Insurance Acts from his approved society, the builders’ labourers’ section of the Irish Transport and General Workers’ Union. On 26<sup>th</sup> November, 1923, he had drawn 26 weeks sickness benefit at the rate of 15/- a week. From the 26<sup>th</sup> November he became entitled to disablement benefit at a lower rate, namely, 7s.6d. a week for the entire period of the disability. In November, therefore, he found himself ill and unable to work, and with his only income a sum of 7s. 6d. a week to pay for his food, lodging, fire and light. His condition was known to his well-to-do friends and some, with very great difficulty, persuaded him to accept gifts of money.

He found it difficult at times to attend the 6.15 a.m. Mass, but whenever possible he was at his place in the church, and on his return, having partaken of his meagre breakfast, he returned to the church for 11 a.m. Mass, remaining in prayer if he felt able, until 1 p.m. He suffered very severely during this period. His sister, Mrs. Fylan, who came in the morning to see him, relates that she often found him lying exhausted on his plank bed unable to speak owing to the exertion of walking from the church to his home. Though he could not speak she observed that he continued to pray. When he had taken some food and felt somewhat relieved, he went out again to the later Mass. Knowing that he might die suddenly, Mrs. Fylan on one occasion asked him if

she would come back later and remain with him. His answer was, "What good could you do? If I die here I shall have Jesus and Mary with me." He resumed his chains, as Mrs. Fylan testifies, and continued, so far as his broken health allowed, his regular fasts and vigils, but there were intervals when he could only move about. Through it all he made no complaint beyond regretting his enforced illness. In April, 1925, he felt that he could resume work and went back to his old post at Castle Forbes. He looked broken and ill but he continued to do his day's work in the yard as usual. As time went on he seemed to recover and on the very day before his death he told the foreman that he felt as well as ever. He was able to go out to an early Mass on Trinity Sunday, June 7<sup>th</sup>, 1925, and returned to breakfast as was then his habit, leaving his home for the last time after 9 a.m. to go to St. Saviour's Dominican Church, a walk of from 15 to 20 minutes, via Mountjoy Square, Gardiner's Row, Parnell Square, Granby Row, into Granby Lane, which leads to Dominick Street, where the church stands. There is a footpath on the left-hand side of Granby Lane going towards the church, and on the right, about half way down, is a general store kept by Mrs. Anne Keogh. Matt Talbot was passing along the footpath, when Mrs. Keogh, coming out of the doorway adjoining her store, saw him fall. She called her son and both ran over to where he lay, lifted him and carried him to the hall door beside the store from which she had come, intending to bring him into the store. Seeing that he was very pale and unable to speak she entered the shop to get some water which she brought out. Then lifting his head to give him a drink, she realised that it was not a faintness but that he was dying. As she put the cup of water to his lips she said, "My poor fellow, you are going to Heaven." Matt Talbot opened his eyes and stared at her very earnestly, but did not speak. He then laid his head down, and as she withdrew her hand from under it, he died.

A man who was returning from the church came over to where Matt Talbot lay and blessed him with the crucifix. Father Walsh, O.P., came from the church, and seeing that he was dead, knelt in the lane and recited prayers. Later on the Corporation ambulance arrived and the body was removed to the mortuary attached to Jervis Street Hospital (Sisters of Mercy), which was close by. Here later on in the morning, Sister Ignatius, Sister of Mercy, came with a nurse and the hospital porters to prepare the body for burial. As Sister Ignatius was cutting away the clothes the scissors struck something hard, which, on further investigation, proved to be the chains which bound

the body around the waist. With reverence, not unmixed with awe, they removed the chains and ropes and the big beads with its crucifix which always rested against his heart. The chains were rusty but the body was scrupulously clean. Then dressing the body in the brown habit of St. Francis, they placed it in the coffin with the chains, ropes and medals.

Lest there should be any question hereafter as to the class of chain found on the body, it is well to mention that Mrs. Fylan possesses a new chain which she had bought for Matt Talbot to replace the one found on him, as he was in the habit of changing the chains when they became very rusty. This chain is not a cart chain but resembles a strong dog chain with a hook at one end and a ring at the other. Those who removed the chains from the body thought that the larger chain was a trace for a cart. The point is a very small one, but it is mentioned for the sake of accuracy.

It was not considered necessary to hold an inquest, and on Wednesday, June 10<sup>th</sup>, the body was removed to the Church of St. Francis Xavier, Upper Gardiner Street, so often mentioned in this book, and from there the funeral took place on Corpus Christi, June 11<sup>th</sup>, 1925, to the Glasnevin Cemetery, where in a humble grave in which no one had ever been buried, the body of Matt Talbot awaits the Resurrection.

*CHAPTER X*  
THE GROWING CULTUS

As stated in the Introduction the first life of Matt Talbot appeared in the second week in the Lent of 1926. At once devotion to him spread and favours were sought through his intercession. The Guardian of the Franciscan Church which Matt Talbot attended as a Tertiary relates that after the life appeared Mass offerings were handed in for the repose of Matt Talbot's soul. In a short time this ceased, and the offerings were in thanksgiving for favours received through the intercession of Matt Talbot. In a letter to the present writer the Father Guardian says, "A member of the congregation "spoke to me of a hardened sinner - a man who had been away from the Sacraments "since his marriage over a dozen years ago, a man who strange to say for an Irishman, "was a blasphemer, having blasphemed even the Mother of God. It was agreed to "start a Novena to Matt Talbot for his conversion and on the third day of the Novena "he came to Confession with every manifestation of repentance, and the utmost "gratitude to God and Matt Talbot. I may say that the lady who was interested in him "had only just met him casually, and accidentally found out his state. After his "Confession she found out that his two sisters, who are nuns, and his wife, had been "praying for years for him without success."

A signed statement by the lady who was so active in bringing about this conversion has been obtained, but is too long to be given in full. It may be summarised as follows:-

Mrs. K. had heard a sermon on Matt Talbot in the Franciscan Church by the Director, at the monthly meeting of the Third Order of St. Francis. After the devotions she called at the house of a friend, and while there, A.B., the man in question, came in. She had heard of him and that he had not been to the Sacraments from his 17<sup>th</sup> year except when he got married 12 years before. Mrs. K. sat beside A.B. and silently prayed to Matt Talbot to help her to convert him. She discussed the Jubilee and explained what it meant. She then spoke of her friend the Guardian of the Franciscan Church and finally suggested to A.B. that he should perform the Jubilee. He said he was going to the United States in a few days. To please her he made an appointment for

the next day at the Franciscan Church which he did not keep. Mrs. K. then went to one of the Dublin suburbs at 10.30.p.m. on the night following the conversation and met him bidding good-bye to his friends there. She again opened the question of Confession and got a promise to meet her next morning at 10.30.a.m. Instead of going to the Church, Mrs. K. went to A.B.'s home where she was told by his wife that he was still in bed. His wife called him and though protesting that it was absurd to go with Mrs. K., he went to the Church which was a long way off. He insisted on Mrs. K. coming into the Convent parlour with him where she introduced him to the Father Guardian who then took him away. After Confession he returned to the parlour and poured out his gratitude to Mrs. K. and to Matt Talbot for his conversion. He also asked Mrs. K. to visit his sister and tell her the good news. Before Mrs. K. could go, A.B. had already gone and his sister in describing the scene, told Mrs. K. that she knew something had happened when she heard her brother's footstep on the stairs, it sounded so light and happy. His sister also stated that when A.B. was 16 he had a French tutor who was a Freethinker and who had caused him to give up his practice of the Catholic Religion. He had been 26 years away from the Sacraments except once on the occasion of his marriage. On leaving Ireland he took the total abstinence pledge and has since written from his new home stating that he is now a practical Catholic.

Mrs. K. herself obtained a small favour. She sprained her ankle very badly leaving a tramcar. The ankle swelled and was most painful so that she could not stand on her foot. Her husband was ill in hospital and she had no one to mind her little fruit shop. She had a portion of Matt Talbot's wood pillow which she applied to the ankle several times and asked that she might be cured so that she might attend to her business. The pain continued all night and in the morning having again applied the portion of wood to the ankle, the pain ceased and she was able to attend to her business all day. The swelling continued until the following day when it also subsided. She was then quite well and had no further inconvenience.

Ms. Q. in March 1926 was very anxious to obtain a certain temporal favour. She had read the Life of Matt Talbot and decided to make a Novena to him to obtain her

request. On the second night of the Novena she got a reply to her request and the favour then granted her has since continued.

Miss K.H. (Dublin), on 26<sup>th</sup> March 1926, sent a note acknowledging a favour received through Matt Talbot's intercession.

Miss H. (Co. Galway) wrote asking for a small relic of Matt Talbot. Writing some days later she states - "On the evening of the First Friday I cycled to Confession. It "was cold with heavy showers of sleet and rain and I got very wet. Next morning at "Mass I got a pain in my neck which I could not straighten or move. In the evening I "went to bed and found that the pain had gone up to my head. The letter enclosing the "little relic had just arrived and fearing a long night of pain I got up, knelt down, said "the Creed and asked Matt Talbot to cure me. The pain suddenly left me and I was "able to move my head in all directions. I then came downstairs to tea and read aloud "to my mother and brothers all the evening."

Mrs. M.B.K. writes - "After reading the life of the late Matt Talbot and being so "touched by his great devotion to God and His Holy Mother I resolved to pray to him "to help me in my troubles which were many. After saying 10 Hail Marys and "offering them to Matt Talbot to ask the Holy Ghost to help me, thanks to God and "Matt Talbot my request was granted. Then once more I was in great trouble and I "once more prayed to Matt Talbot and in a short time my request was granted. My "children also got employment through prayers to Matt."

Mrs. A.C., writes - "Not long ago I was in very great domestic difficulties. I got "from Matt Talbot's sister, Mrs. Andrews, a decade of Matt's Dolour beads. I then "started a novena asking Matt Talbot to intercede for me to the Mother of God. On "the fourth day of the novena my delight knew no bounds when I found my request "granted. From that good day to this, there is no request I have asked of him, and "they are numerous, but have been granted to me. I can say this with the greater "confidence, for not alone I, but all my friends whom I have asked to pray to Matt "Talbot say the same."

Mrs. B. states that her daughter got permanent employment quite unexpectedly after a novena to Matt Talbot. The post she obtained was specially created for her in a school.

Mrs. X. through a Novena to Matt Talbot got reconciled to her husband.

G.W., who was two years idle, got a post after making a Novena to Matt Talbot.

Miss J. McE. was suffering from rheumatism which developed into arthritis. It became necessary for her to enter hospital for special treatment. She prayed to Matt Talbot to get her into hospital and to get her the means of being cured. The novena ended on the 1<sup>st</sup> Friday in May, 1926 and she was admitted to the Mater Misericordiae Hospital, Dublin, on May 27<sup>th</sup>, being brought in the ambulance. She remained in hospital until July 15<sup>th</sup> when she was discharged and able to walk home. Her knee had been particularly bad but she has been able to go about as usual since she left hospital.

The Prioress of a Dominican Convent writes: -

“We attribute the obtaining of a certain request to his intercession. We are badly in need of funds to carry on the building of a much needed Convent and Chapel. Last Autumn (1926) we decided to make a novena to Matt Talbot asking for a specified sum of money from some unexpected source. Shortly before Christmas I received a cheque for the exact amount asked for. There was no reason for expecting such from our kind benefactress just then. I conclude that our own holy man used his influence on our behalf. My object in invoking him was to excite interest in his case. A Saint of our own in these our own days would mean so much for us all.”

Another Dominican Nun writes:-

“Sometime ago I promised publication if I got an important favour of a spiritual nature for a near relative through the intercession of Matt Talbot. When I decided to put the case in his hands I asked him for a sign that he was going to interest himself on my behalf. To my joy, it came the following day and I had the utmost

“confidence in my mediator and he has actually done more than I asked of him. I am  
“most grateful and I keep repeating ‘Benedictus Deus in Sanctis Suis’. I pray daily  
“for the promotion of his cause.”

The Prioress of a Carmelite convent writes:- “A young man who visits her had been  
“indulging very much in drink on and off, and spending most of his money on it. He  
“happened to call to the Convent on the 7<sup>th</sup> June last year (1926) and we advised him  
“to pray to Matt Talbot. Later on his mother-in-law came to ask our prayers as he  
“was going from bad to worse, and we prayed to Matt Talbot for him. The lady came  
“again a few weeks ago to say that the evening she was here previously he took the  
“Pioneer pledge and had not broken it since, which was a period of over five months.”

The Sub-Prioress of another Carmelite Convent wrote to the present writer stating that  
she had asked a very great favour through Matt Talbot’s intercession and promising to  
let the writer know the result. The holy nun died some time later in the year without  
writing further. The writer having communicated with the Prioress of the Carmelite  
Convent got the following reply:- “I have never heard what the intention was for  
“which Mother M.M. was praying, but I think she obtained a special spiritual favour  
“and possibly through the intercession of Matt Talbot to whom she prayed much and  
“was devoted.”

Rev T. Murphy, S.J., Spiritual Director of the Sodality of the Immaculate Conception,  
St. Francis Xavier’s Church, Dublin writes - “Many people here pray to Matt Talbot  
“daily. Those - and they are many - who have received spiritual and temporal  
“favours do not wish to give particulars or their names.”

The writer is personally aware of the conversion before death of a person for whom a  
novena to Matt Talbot was being offered. The person was not known to be ill.  
Before the novena ended he had died having received the last Sacraments.

The little grave in Glasnevin has been a place of Pilgrimage for many and the writer  
has seen in a little box at the foot of the tombstone written petitions to Matt Talbot for  
favours.

The humble confidence of simple piety in the goodness of God through His saints, has ever raised a smile on the face of the sceptic, yet, those who believe have only to recall the gracious condescension of the Master who at the bidding of His Mother, turned water into wine so that His host and Her's should not be shamed before the wedding guests, to feel assured that the prayers of His little ones find an answer in His Sacred Heart to-day as they did in Galilee and as they have done in every age of the Church. The foregoing are given in humble submission to the decision of the Church which alone can pronounce on the heroic virtues of Her children, they are given in good faith by all who claim to have received favours in response to prayers to Matt Talbot. If the writer may venture an opinion it is that the greatest miracle of all has been the spread, in the course of one year, of the name and fame of this holy labourer in every country of the World. When we recall the number of languages into which a small 20-page booklet has been translated are we not forced to say in the words of the New Christians at Pentecost, "We have heard in our own tongues the wonderful works of God."?