

march and fallen into line with the "great majority."

The sun was setting at least for us but for those in the valley below it had passed from view five and twenty minutes since. To-day that luminous orb had shone for the last time on many an earthly pilgrim whose dawn would be in eternity! A small cloud for a moment veiled the dying sun. It was darkened on one Friday dear to Christians—perhaps to-day too was freighted with hours of agony for some poor dying soul. The wind which whistles o'er the hill-tops suggests such things.

The leaves were rapidly falling. Ah! awful thought, too well do we recall the words of Carmel's daughter, St. Teresa, who tells us that "souls who are falling daily into hell are like unto the leaves which fall in autumn."

Our meditation was suddenly broken by the tolling of a bell in the valley. It was not the Angelus bell; no, it was what is vulgarly called the "death bell."

It is, indeed, a beautiful custom, that of tolling the church bell whenever some poor mortal is summoned before its Judge. It reminds us how much that poor soul stands in urgent need of our immediate prayers. That is what is meant by St. Mungo's bell, (sometimes known as the *De profundis* bell) of which the poetess so pathetically sings.

This evening the bell, which we heard, resounded far and near. Down in the village the blacksmith laid his hammer aside and stood still in order to count the strokes, and over at the postoffice a sudden silence came over the chattering crowd, which daily came together at mail time.

"Seventy strokes!" shouted in the small boy who, at school, was usually at the head of the arithmetic class.

"It's poor old Mr. —," said everyone in chorus.

"Well, God rest his soul, a great privilege to die on the eve of Saturday," said good old Mr. K., who had great faith in the Sabbatine Privilege.

Seventy strokes! They had fallen on other ears beyond the little hamlet. The sound was heard by the pious Benedictine Sister, who whispered a devout *De Profundis* as she noiselessly paced the convent cloister. It was heard too by the brown-cowled monks in the monastery perched high on yonder hill. It was the hour of prayer in that same monastic home. The friars were chanting the divine office. Yes, they were indeed singing the psalms of that royal singer, who tells us that the span of human life shall be of years "four score and ten," signified to-day by seventy strokes!

That evening (and every evening) the monks chanted a *Requiem aeternam* for their dead benefactors and the "deceased members of our confraternity." Thus the septuagenarian who died that day was well remembered. More than that. Like himself the monks will die too. But communities as a rule do not die, so the consoling

thought remains, that as long as such a religious body exists, so too shall we be remembered at God's altar. If this fact were better appreciated I am sure people would not be so slow in attaching themselves to one of the many pious confraternities in the Church, especially to the Scapular Confraternity, which is so jealous of the memory of its deceased members.

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Seventy strokes! Often since have I thought of that quiet autumnal evening. But I have recalled that solemn tolling under different circumstances.

During the summer just passed an engineer was approaching a crossing. No danger seemed to be ahead, and the throttle was pulled wide open. At the same time two fiery horses pulling a fire truck were dashing towards the same crossing. There was a wild clanging of bells, and waving of signals. 'Twas too late. Several young healthy firemen were hurled in every direction and frightfully mangled. They gave promise of having seventy strokes or more sounded at their death. But, alas, for human calculation, half that number would suffice to toll their requiem.

Another reflection presents itself. Far away from the quiet of the mountain in one of our large cities, above the din of the divers noises, is heard the fire gong. Everyone instinctively knows that sound. People stop and listen. They know the number of the box. And here comes in a practical query. Why is it that people are so deaf to other sounds, sounds that do not appeal to their curiosity, but sounds which remind them of more solemn things—say of death—or which call upon them to pray for the poor suffering souls?

We are not only deaf, but we are at times likewise blind. How many, on beholding a funeral procession, think of the reality? During this month of suffering souls, Holy Church will often try to attract our attention by arraying her ministers in vestments of sombre hue. Perhaps we will fall victims to a sort of spiritual color-blindness, and not see—and consequently not think of the poor souls who cry out to us for help. Don't close your eyes. If you do, God will allow others to treat you in the same manner.

Seventy strokes! Humanly speaking, that represents a large number. Most of us would like to live to the ripe old age of seventy years. It means 840 months, 25,550 days, 6,132,000 hours, 367,920,000 minutes, 22,075,200,000 seconds, and nearly that many pulsations of your heart. That is a long time. But, seriously, what is it after all? In the eyes of God the life of man is no more than that of a sand-fly, which lives but twenty-four hours.

Seventy strokes! How many of the suffering souls were deceived in their hopes for a long life? Will seventy strokes toll your requiem? Perhaps a smaller number. How many?