

every day to him is the beginning of a year. To such a one the lines of the Bard of Avon are sensible enough :

"That we would do
We should do when we would ; for this 'would' changes
And hath abatements and delays as many
As there are tongues, are hands, are accidents ;
And then this 'should' is like a spendthrift's sigh."

But for poor ordinary humanity, who not only have many little vices, but who also have an affection for them and part with them but reluctantly, it seems almost necessary there should be a fixed time when resolves, long pondered over and stern and unchangeable as fate, should be put into execution. When the flesh is weak, and the will wavers about shaking off the slavish fetters of habit, there is great comfort, there is a soothing sense of meritorious conduct,—perhaps there is even a suggestion of heroism,—consequent upon the recording of adamant resolves which are to go into effect at a momentous future day. In the meantime one may indulge himself a little—even perhaps a little more than usual—as a reward for his virtue. One may rest upon his oars, as it were, for a little while after such meritorious action, and enjoy the contemplation of his own worthiness.

And if, after the great "swearing off" day has come and passed, our ordinary mortal finds himself unable to maintain the bold front he has assumed, against the ever-increasing army of pleasant enticements ; if he finds himself giving way a little, or perhaps yielding altogether in some particular instance, he may soothe his troubled spirit, if it be troubled, by forming resolves—final resolves—that all these things shall be assuredly discontinued on the *next* "swearing off" day.

We are afraid we must explain, as Artemus Ward used to do, that this latter idea is a "*goak*," and although we have infinite sympathy with the struggles of humanity around us, still we cannot find it in our heart to recommend or encourage any other plan of action than that suggested in the verses we have quoted.

But whether or not our readers have thought it needful to make many resolves, or to do much "swearing off," this year, we are sure we hope it will be a very happy year to them all.

A RING O' BELLS.

In 1536 died the Empress Isabel, wife of Charles V., and, in accordance with Spanish custom, Francisco Borja watched the coffin and had to certify that the body was that of Isabel. The effect of what he saw when the coffin was opened was such that he determined to devote the rest of his life to religion, and in time winning the emperor's consent, he joined the new order of Jesus, and became one of its most devoted members ; a change of life, of hopes, of duties, wrought by the sound of an alarm bell.

In 1555, worn out by the bad faith of the Princes of that Church for which he had fought through evil report

and good report, through illness and sorrow, amid false friends and treacherous enemies, Charles V. resigned his empire and sought the quiet life, a change at least outwardly from passion to peace, and the bell of the convent at Yuste rang him home.

When Peter the Great, in 1697, worked as a shipwright, exchanging barbaric greatness for the dress and habits of a workman, the change was wrought by patriotism, the bell that rang through his life, though, heard through the fog of his atmosphere, it often led him wrong.

The gradual growth of Copernicus's system in his mind till the publication of his great work in 1543 ; the flashing of the idea of planetary motion into Galileo's brain as he gazed through his telescope at the satellites of Jupiter in 1618 ; the slow calculations in Sir Isaac Newton's study leading up to the *Principia* : all these were rung in by the bell for Prime announcing daylight to the workers.

When Saladin broke his oath of vengeance, spared the inhabitants of Jerusalem, gave alms to Christian widows and orphans, and allowed the brethren of S. John to continue their care of the sick, the Church bells of Jerusalem hushed themselves for the last time over a change for mercy.

When the Seven Bishops refused obedience to the king whom they regarded as their lawful sovereign, and again refused to transfer their allegiance to another master and lost their sees, the Cathedral bells rang loyalty, first to Church and then to king.

The bells of Milan rejoice to-day over the time when S. Augustine attended the ministry of S. Ambrose, and conversed with Pontitian, the Epistles of S. Paul open between them, left his Manichæan errors and his former life, and was baptized, won by the power and beauty of the truth.

When S. Thomas of Canterbury from the gay Chancellor became the ascetic Archbishop, the stern champion of the Church against the king, the change came from a sense of duty.

When S. Gregory, actually on his way to deliver the *Angli de irâ*, was recalled, and reluctantly returned to Rome at the bidding of his master, he changed his course in holy obedience, and long years after met his reward in the increased evangelizing powers given him by his election as Pope ; and still the Canterbury bells ring of duty and obedience.

When S. Ignatius lay all those long months of pain at Loyola, and heard the Legends of the Saints, then, rising, left his knightly hopes, his whole former world, and dedicated himself to God, Holy Church, and S. Mary, love rang in the change, and the spirit of his choice has been shown us in that hymn of his follower, "*O Deus, ego amo Te*," of which we have so wretched a translation.

On these ten bells—Fear, Peace, Patriotism, Light, Mercy, Loyalty, Truth, Duty, Obedience, Love, how many changes might be rung ? One or other of them has rung and will ring to herald a change in each of our lives. It may ring to ourselves alone, and neither we nor others