

To say, therefore, that the Gladstone of twenty or even ten years ago and the Gladstone of today are on an exact equality or any condition approaching it, is to mock at the strides of time and stolidly shut our eyes upon the ravages wrought by progress. All great men have their time of prosperity, which continues until the pinnacle is reached, then the downward course is entered upon and pursued much more rapidly than the upward one. There are no exceptions to this; yet, with the myriad of examples before our eyes, we persist in looking upon the human mechanism as impervious to the friction of years, the mind as having abated none of its vigor or brightness, although the fountain from which its sustenance is drawn is at the very point of exhaustion. How often is it the case that the willing animal is harnessed to his load just once more than he could bear it, and he gives up the unequal contest forever at a time when his driver is subjected to serious embarrassment!

Cardinal Richelieu was for a time the pillar of state to the kingdom of France. He was moulded by nature for such a calling. When he could not prevail by main force, his reserve faculty of cunning was exercised with equal success. He became the *sine qua non*; and in the stage picture presented, when it seemed as though in his declining years a foul conspiracy against the puerile and weak-minded monarch was likely to prevail, he rallied at the last moment, dragged himself from the jaws of death and crushed the budding treason beneath his feet. This is how we have it presented to us before the footlights, and a more effective dramatic spectacle it would be difficult to devise. In reality, Richelieu, like many others whose public lives have been prolonged into the domain of inactivity if not senility, was too much enamored of his own prowess to surrender it at a time when he could have done so with credit and have thus maintained his great reputation throughout the ages to come; and being no longer able to engage actively in the field of diplomacy, he sought to sustain himself by means of cunning and craft alone. He became unscrupulous, peevish and cruel, and finally went down with his greatness obscured, his fame sullied and himself despised. It was not for want of judgment, for his was beyond the scope of most men's comprehension; nor because of failing intellect, his being abnormally good to the end; but for the reason that he was vain and inflated with the greatness of his station and the adulation of the courtiers and minions about him—these trophies he would not give up and he prolonged his life's work beyond the time when nature demanded that he cease from trouble or troubling.

There are many similar cases, conspicuous among them being that of Edwin Forrest, the greatest American tragedian and one of the greatest the world ever produced. He mounted to giddy heights and had the world of intellect and culture at his feet. He was lionized everywhere and looked up to by everybody. Croesus seemed to have unlocked his vaults and poured the contents out upon the gifted man. He rose, he reigned, he fell, and fell

ignominiously. Decadence sat in, the gout and other destructive agencies laid their deadly clutch upon him, but so vain, so imperious, so unwilling to give up his sway had he become that in the face of nature, contrary to reason and against the remonstrance of friends he persisted in dragging his swollen feet upon the stage and making of the heroes which once breathed and moved and spake through him the most hideous of caricatures. A few friends clung to him, but only a few; it was because of what he had been, not what he had become. Thus broken-hearted and broken-spirited, he ended his career in disgraceful failure.

When men have achieved a full measure of life's usefulness in a particular calling and are thus entitled to honorable retirement, or at least to such abatement of actual toil as will not be utterly inconsistent with their enfeebled condition, to persist in going ahead as actively as when the heyday of full manhood was upon them, is unjust to those who depend upon them as well as themselves. Who can measure the depth of the misfortune that a great cause will be plunged into if, through lack of aggressiveness, determination and vigor the present government of Great Britain shall fail? It will be such a fall as will bury not only the principle for which the Grand Old Man has been so long contending, but himself, his immediate friends and those struggling people across the channel whose hopes and prayers for deliverance from the curse of absolute landlordism seemed so nearly answered. It is impossible for the impartial and cultivated mind to contemplate without admiration the spectacle of Gladstone with his armor on still fighting the good fight, or to cease wondering at the great mental and physical endurance which he is still in possession of. But it must be remembered that he is at the threshold of his eighty-third year, and that he has been active without ceasing for the full period of time allotted to man in this life. The premiership of the oldest civilized and in some respects foremost nation of all the world is one involving the gravest responsibilities and most ceaseless cares. We greatly fear that he is unequal to the task of injecting into a ministry timid through apprehension and distrustful through fear the vigor and energy which alone can rescue the government from impending misfortune if not dissolution. Its failure within a few months was predicted by the knowing ones so soon as the result of the late elections was made known; and it may be taken for granted that those same wisacres, together with all the disappointed and jaundiced politicians, are using no effort to prevent it from going down. It begins to look as if the great premier had undertaken one contest too many.

#### AGILE KANSAS.

An exchange notes that "One of the new congressmen from Kansas is Charles Curtis, who is one-fourth Indian. He traces his ancestry back to Louis Gouville, a French trader, and the daughter of a Kaw chief, who were married in 1825. With Pester, Simp-

son and one or two others the Kansas delegation promises to maintain its high rank for picturesque and uniqueness." To this promising list should be added the congressman-at-large, who is an ex-Confederate; this would not be a matter worthy of special mention almost anywhere else, but the idea of a state which enjoys the distinction of being the birth-place of practical abolitionism, the home of John Brown and whose Republican majorities in the days when it had much fewer people occasionally went up to 80,000, sending to Congress by its action as a whole a man who fought to perpetuate slavery! But the incongruous exhibit does not end yet; a woman—Mrs. Lease—is a candidate for the position of United States senator, with anything but a bad chance of success! Then there is John James Ingalls, the wasp-tongued "statesman out of a job," and an ex-senator—Rose—setting type on a country paper in New Mexico, and—but why amplify? Surely Kansas is entitled to the palm as the commonwealth where the unexpected happens oftener than anywhere else under the sun.

#### SUNDAY TELEGRAPH MESSAGES.

Bradstreet's notes a recent decision by the supreme court of the state of Georgia which amounts to a virtual exemption of telegraph companies from penalties for failure to deliver messages on Sunday. The laws of the state—and it may be mentioned that the code of many others of the states—make it unlawful for any person to pursue his business or the work of his ordinary calling on the first day of the week, commonly called Sunday; and the court holds that this applies to telegraph companies as well as to anybody else. Under the decision, therefore, a telegraph company is not put by law, and cannot put itself by contract, under any duty to transmit and deliver messages on that day unless by reason of the subject matter of the messages in question that transmission and delivery can be fairly considered as a work of necessity or charity; and a failure to perform the work on the Lord's day with reasonable dispatch will not subject the company to the statutory penalty, and an action therefor is not maintainable. The decision is interesting by reason of the large number of damage suits the companies have had to defend for failure to fulfill the contract supposed to be existing when the message was accepted; and it will be more interesting still if the courts in the other states having similar laws shall put a similar construction upon them.

#### CHICAGO AND ST. LOUIS ENTERPRISE

The workmen and professors are engaged on a monster telescope for Chicago. That city is not happy so long as any other place has anything bigger than it has, and this refers to population, exhibitions, fires, Democratic majorities and telescopes as well as to other unmentioned item; and thus the instrument at Lick observatory is to be made second on the world's list instead of first as at present. The contract for