

Though, indeed, in all clubs, but specially in the older institutions, *memento mori* might be inscribed over the doors—you may gauge the death-roll by the frequency of the ballots. Thackeray moralises over the vacant chair left by Tom or Dick, who is dismissed with a casual remark if his absence chances to be noted. And undistinguished members vanish unobserved, as they had lived in obscurity. But nothing is more impressive to the thoughtful man than marking the decadence of familiar personalities. As the wrinkles of care gather on the brow, the complexion fades to a corpse-like pallor, the strong back is bowed, and the legs begin to totter. The obsequious commissionaire is eager to help the infirm member up the steps, and to offer the arm that is sometimes accepted with a smile of resignation, sometimes rejected with a touch of natural irritation. The silver chord is being loosed, and the bowl must soon be broken at the cistern. Men accustomed to domineer learn in good time a strange humility. I know an eminent philosopher—a man, as Mrs. Badger remarked of a former husband, of European reputation—whose vigour shines in his decay, and who shows extraordinary tenacity of life. Lost to sight for weeks and months, he turns up at long intervals. He lies on a sofa where he used to lay down the law, and contents himself with mutton broth at the table where he was wont to indulge. He used to hold his intellectual inferiors at arm's-length; now he is grateful for the inquiries and attentions of the humblest. I have seldom been more touched than when, not many years ago, I came across one of the most masterful of editors; he had been shelved, he had left bustling night-watches for seclusion, and was stricken with a mortal disease. Though always gracious with the courtesy of an autocrat, he had never been more than condescending. Even over the Lafitte and unlimited Heidseick at his hospitable table, it would have been dangerous to play with the lion. Now his face lighted up gratefully at a simple inquiry after his health, and when one dropped into a seat at his side, he clung like the club bore.