



THE CRICKETER.

## THE GAME OF LIFE;

**Or, Death among the Cricketers.**

WHEN men are in a moralizing strain,  
 And gravely talk about the brittle stuff  
 Of which *poor human life* is made,  
 'Tis ten to one,  
 That, ere they've done,  
 They shake their heads, and make this *sage* reflection:  
 That Life is transitory, fleeting, vain—  
 A very bubble!  
 With pleasures few and brief—but as for pain,  
 And care, and trouble,  
 There's more than *quantum suff.*—  
 Nay, quite enough  
 To make the stoutest heart afraid,  
 And cloud the merriest visage with dejection!  
 And then, what dismal stories are invented  
 About this "vale of woe"—  
 Zounds! 'twere enough to make one discontented,  
 Whether one *would*, or *no*!

Now LIFE, to *me*, has always seem'd a GAME—  
 Not a mere game of *chance*, but one where skill  
 Will often throw the chances in our way—  
 Just like (my favourite sport) the Game of Cricket;  
 Where, tho' the match be well contested, still  
 A steady Player, careful of his fame,  
 May have a *good long Innings*, with fair play,  
 Whoever bowls, or stops, or keeps the wicket.

Softly, my friend! (methinks I hear DEATH cry)  
 Whoever bowls, you say! sure you forget  
 That in LIFE'S feverish fitful game  
 I am the Bowler, and friend TIME "keeps wicket:"—  
 Well! be it so, old boy,—is my reply;  
 I *know* you do—but, Master Drybones, yet  
 My argument remains the same,  
 And I can prove *Life's like the Game of Cricket!*

Sometimes a Batsman's lull'd by Bowler DEATH,  
 Who throws him off his guard with *easy balls*;  
 Till presently a *rattler* stops his breath—  
 He's *out!* Life's candle's snuff'd—his wicket falls!

In goes another *mate*—DEATH bowls away—  
 And with such art each practis'd method tries,



That now the ball winds tortively along,

Now slowly rolls, and now like lightning flies,  
(Sad proof that DEATH'S as subtle as he's strong!)

But *this* rare Batsman keeps a watchful eye

On every motion of the Bowler's hand,  
And stops, or hits, as suits the varying play;—  
Though DEATH the ball may *ground*, or toss it high,

The steady Striker keeps his self-command,  
And *blocks* with care, or makes it swiftly fly:—

Still bent on victory, Old Drybones plies  
With patient skill—but every effort fails,  
Till TIME—that *precious* Enemy—prevails.

O envious TIME! to spoil so good a game!  
Fear'dst thou that Death at last had met his match,  
And *ne'er* could bowl him out, or get a *catch*?  
Yea, verily, Old TIME, thou *seem'dst* to doubt

The Bowler's skill—and so, to save *his* fame,  
Didst watch the *popping-crease* with anxious eye,  
Until the wish'd-for opportunity  
Arriv'd, when thou couldst *stump* the Batsman out!  
Oh, what a Player! how active, cheerful, gay!  
*His* "Game of Life" how like a summer's day!  
But yet, in vain 'gainst DEATH and TIME he tries  
To stand his ground—they bear away the prize—  
And, foil'd at last, he yields his bat, and—*dies*!

Some are bowl'd out before they've got a *notch*,  
 But mates like these can *helpmates* scarce be  
 reckon'd;  
 Some knock their wickets down—while others botch  
 And boggle so, that when they get a *run*,  
 It makes TIME laugh,—DEATH, too, enjoys the fun,  
 Shakes his spare ribs to see what he has done,—  
 Then out he bowls the bunglers in a second!

And yet, although old Messieurs DEATH and TIME  
 Are sure to come off winners *in the end*,  
 There's something in this "Game of Life" that's  
 pleasant;  
 For though "to die!" in verse may sound sublime—  
 (*Blank* verse I mean, of course—not doggrel rhyme),  
 Such is the love I bear for Life and Cricket,  
 Either at single or at double wicket,  
 I'd rather play a good long game, and spend  
 My time agreeably with some kind friend,  
 Than throw my bat and ball up—*just at present!*

S. M.