DEATH AND THE CRICKETER.

" Hold, cricketer ! your game has now been long,
Your stops and battings, numerous and strong ;
But see ! Time takes the wicket, I the bowl—
'Tis vain to block—your innings are all full."

THIS allegory of Time and Death, though of general application, has also a reference to an individual, whose skill at an advanced age gave rise to the affixed design, which was suggested by a friend and companion. The following sketch of his character is given by one who knew him long and well.

Poor T—— B——! little did I image to myself in your boyish days of fifty, that I should have witnessed the wreck of so much buoyant mirth and spirits ; have seen a kindness of heart bordering on childish weakness, sinking beneath the pressure (not of misfortune, or the common calamities of life, but) of an ill-placed confidence, and the " sharp-toothed unkindness of a trusted friend."—But a truce with this—Death has not indeed quite bowled thee out; but Time has taken thy wicket—thou art only a looker-on.

T—— B———, like many other men, had his hobby,—it was cricket; but then he had his hacks for ordinary occasions. There was his pugilistic hack,—his game of draughts—of marbles—yes—insignificant as these playthings may seem in the eyes of the sober, the learned, and the scientific, it would have amazed them to see the steadiness of his hand, the correctness of his eye, and the certainty of his shot. Not the most skilful billiard-player could pocket his ball under the most adverse circumstances, better than could B——— take his adversary's taw in the most difficult situation. It was like magic. The brain of a philosopher might have been set at work by it to consider the wonderful connexion between the eye and the hand, or an engineer have taken a hint from it for directing his operations in the art of gunnery.

With what pride would our veteran of the bat relate the notches that he made, and the bets that were laid on his skill, and the odds that were taken in his favour, both at cricket and at taw!

If you are not proud, reader, you may in imagination accompany me to the sign of ———, at Walworth, or to the ———, at Battersea, or any other sign in that neighbourhood, that signifies the presence of pipes, ale, and tobacco; where you will see a smooth piece of ground, on which is marked a ring, filled with marbles. But this is not the grand match, it is only the rehearsal; yet the players are no less in earnest, nor the spectators less intent on the play, or sapient in remarking on the various hits and misses that take place; and each fancies he can tell how this or that player might have made better shots.

But there is a silent observer, who appears to take no part except that of a looker-on, and who at the end of the rehearsal approaches our hero, with this question,—" Are you not, sir, to play a match at —— ?"—" Yes," was the reply. —" Then I'll not play; I'll pay the forfeit."

This was one of the many triumphs poor B—— obtained, in marbles and at cricket; in draughts, too, equal success awaited his skill; and it was his *own* powers that gained him his victories. It was not his horse, or his dog, that gave him credit, as by proxy. Is the man at Doncaster, York, or Newmarket, an inch the taller, or a whit the better, that the strength or speed of his mare or gelding wins the race? Even his brethren of the turf think him not a skilful, but a lucky dog.

It may so happen that the possessor and the thing possessed may have mutual relations, and reflect credit the one on the other. The possessor of an English house and grounds may be a man of taste; the collector of pictures, a man of judgment; that of antiquities, a man of virtu; and so on; but to suppose that any or all of these should obtain credit from the mere possession, would be idle in the extreme: we might just as well attribute to the vase the sweetness of the flowers it contains, or praise the pedestal that sustains the statue, or panegyrize the frame that holds the picture.

But it is the game of cricket that should occupy the principal place in these remarks, and though it is not apparently so connected with Danger and Death as war, or the hunting of wild animals, it is yet a service of danger, and has been fatal to many: and I remember it is related by Wraxall, that his present Majesty's grandfather got his death (though not immediately) by the blow of a cricket-ball:—to say nothing of the many fractures and contusions incident to this manly and skilful exercise.

Nothing is known of the origin or history of this game but that it is purely English; and it perhaps deserves as many encomiums as Roger Ascham bestows on his favourite archery, or Isaac Walton pours forth when descanting on the art of angling.

What Dr. Johnson has so judiciously and so elegantly applied in a dedication to Payne's Treatise on the Game of Draughts, might equally be said of the game of cricket, or even of that of marbles.*

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* This dedication, under the name of Payne, is "To the Right Honourable William Henry, Earl of Rochford, &c."

" Triflers," observes the profound critic, " may find or make any thing a trifle ; but since it is the characteristic of a wise man to see events in their causes, to obviate consequences, and to ascertain contingencies, your lordship will think nothing a trifle by which the mind is inured to caution, foresight, and circumspection. The same skill, and often the same degree of skill is exerted in great and in little things."

It may also be observed that in drawing a parallel between the game of life and that of cricket, there is more aptness of allusion than may at first strike the reader; for in the former, as in the latter game, there is much to *do,* and much to *guard against;* and if any *runs* are made, in the way of speculation, whether of pleasure or of gain, they must be made with caution, skill, and vigour; or the presumptuous adventurer, through some adverse event, will inevitably be *bowled out!*

BARNARD BATWELL.