



EPILOGUE.

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THE EPILOGUE,
AND
ADDRESS RECAPITULATORY.

Spoken by Death in Character.

PRAY don't alarm yourselves!—'tis *only I!*
 Just come to speak the EPILOGUE,—and try
 To make my bow, for once, *before* the curtain—
Behind I've play'd an active part, that's certain :
 Aye, aye—sharp work I've had of late, I trow—
 Important “ DOINGS,” both with high and low ;
 The rich, the proud, the humble, and the poor,
 The learned sage, and the unletter'd boor,
 Have all succumb'd—and so must thousands more.
 Why, bless me, how you start! how pale you look!
 You tremble, eh, lest *you* be “ brought to book ?”
 Nay, do not fear! I now come but to *speak*,—
 Perhaps *on business* I may call next week :—
 Next week's too soon, you say?—well, then, I'll give
 A further respite, if you needs must live.

A little longer in this world of sorrow—
 But, stay—I'll think again of this to-morrow;
 For strange, aye, "passing strange" it doth ap-
 pear,

That you, so often as you've call'd me here,
 Should, now I'm *really* come, shrink back thro' fear.

What if the tragi-comedy of LIFE
 Be ended, with its ever-shifting strife
 Of pain and want, of trouble and alarm,
 Of passion's tumult—pleasure's fitful harm—
 Can *that* be cause for grief—*that* make you moan?
 Short-sighted mortals! you should *clap*—not *groan*;
 Yes—were you wise, my presence you would hail;
 And not, like dolts, your hapless fate bewail:
 Instead of sitting there, to sob and sigh,
 Your plaudits, long and loud, would rend the sky,
 And "*Bravo, Death! bravissimo!*" you'd cry.

I know that ALL some "grand excuse" may plead,
 Some worldly reason, or some urgent need,
 For tarrying longer on this earthly ball;—
 Indeed, there's nothing new in *that*, at all.
 One has not yet an ample fortune made;
 Another wishes just to change his trade;

A third protests *his* death is not expedient ;
 A fourth declares the *time* is inconvenient. —
 O what a scene of shuffling, shifting, shirking !
 What paltry lies—what quibbling, and what quirk-
 ing !

The SOLDIER hopes, when fools and tyrants quarrel,
 To grace his brows with never-fading laurel ;
 And begs I'll let him win some noble prize,
 Before he sheathes his sword, and prostrate lies.
 No, madman ! thy career of blood is o'er—
 No longer shalt thou dip thy hands in gore ;
 No longer fulminate the martial thunder,
 Nor glut thyself with rapine, blood, and plunder :
 List to the Widow's and the Orphan's cry !
 Thyself prepare ! *for Retribution's nigh !*

With many an artful touch of special pleading,
 The LAWYER comes ;—but hopes that, through good-
 breeding,
 I'll “ do the civil thing ” by the Profession,
 And not arrest him till a future session.
 Bold as he is before a half-starv'd client,
 To me he's wondrous mealy-mouth'd and pliant ;

And, oh! what lame and impotent excuses,
 The rogue invents, to hide his vile abuses!—
 All, all alike are—full of contradictions,
 Pleas, errors, counterpleas, demurrers, fictions!
 Ready, most ready all, to “make averment,”
 That services like theirs, should meet preferment;
 And 'twould be hard, they say,—oh, *very* hard,
 If from “preferment” *they* should be debarr'd:—
 Such meek and gentle lambs! so wondrous civil!
 To hurry them so quickly to the Devil!—
 Sweet babes of grace! it matters not a straw
 How soon the Devil on you claps his paw;
Have you he will—he's issued his subpœna—
 I must obey—and will not, dare not, screen ye;
 This world has seen too much of you—so go
 To kindred Demons in the *Courts below!*

The portly PRIEST, with expectation high,
 Entreats, for Virtue's sake, I'll pass *him* by.
 Virtue means purity, and good intention;
 Now, what his virtues are, perhaps he'll mention;
 For though, on *duty* bent, one day in seven,
 He proves *his own's the only way to Heaven*;
 Yet such the force of carnal appetite,

That "loaves and fishes" form his chief delight,
 His constant thoughts by day, his dreams by night.
 But hold—'twere well, ere we proceed, to see
 What arguments support "The Pastor's Plea":—
 "To mortals, bending 'neath the cumbrous load
 That weighs them down, he shows the heavenly road;
 Without *his* aid, their feet would devious stray,
 And half his flock would go—the *other way!*"—
 And dost thou really think, my reverend wight,
 That what thou say'st is rational and right?
 Dost thou the will of GOD presume to scan,
 And dare usurp his judgment-seat? vain man,
 Remember what thou art, and what thou know'st,
 And thou wilt find thy knowledge is, at most,
 A cloud of error and an empty boast!
 When modes of faith are variously profess'd,
 And different sects are found,—north, east, south,
 west—
 Who shall decide which wisest is, or best?—
 Although he call himself a true believer,
 A BIGOT is, at best, a self-deceiver;*

* These observations have reference to the spiritual teachers of no one sect in particular, but are intended to apply to all who are so blind, and so bigoted to their own tenets, as to preach up the absurd and uncharitable doctrine of *exclusive salvation*.

And he who hopes by faith alone to stand,
 Erects a tottering column on the sand.
 Be just and liberal—to your country true—
 High Heav'n revere—your neighbour's good pursue;
 Let virtue, honour, meekness, fill your breast,
 And to Almighty Goodness leave the rest :—
 Do this—and, trust me, you shall find the way
 To the bright regions of eternal day !—
 Oh ! if the path that leads to Heaven's gate,
 Were like a labyrinth, dark and intricate,
 How few, how very few would enter there !
 How few to tread the mystic path would dare !

Yon MAIDEN, peeping through her ivory fan,
 Would fain improve her mind, by studying—MAN !
 While that spruce BEAU, who ogles her, declares,
 For youth and beauty I should not lay snares,
 Nor interrupt their tender sighs and kisses,
 But give them time t' enjoy connubial blisses !—
 Now, should I grant these turtles their request,
 Although you'd think they were supremely blest,
 Yet such would be the bickerings and strife
 To interrupt that *blessed* state of life,
 That 'ere twelve months had o'er the couple roll'd,
 He would a tyrant prove, and she a scold ;

And each would call on me, by night and day,
To come and take the *other* one away!

Don't chuckle, Sir! the time is well nigh come
When *you'll* be summon'd, without beat of drum.

You wish to live, it seems, to play the RAKE,
And every dastardly advantage take
Of unsuspecting innocence and youth,

In spite of honour, manliness, and truth.

I saw you throw your lure for yonder beauty,
And try to wean her from the path of duty;

And yet, a wife more spotless none can claim,
Nor one more kind, than she who bears thy name.

Wretch that thou art! in crime and folly grey!

What! wouldst thou, reckless, rush upon thy prey,
And from her aged mother take her stay?

Rob her of all on earth that's worth possessing,
And make a *curse* where Nature meant a *blessing*?

Will no compunction check thy fierce desire?—

None, monster! none?—then *I* must quench thy fire.

Know then, that while each sense is wrapt in gloom,
Disease shall bring thee to a cheerless tomb;

For thee to Heaven no prayers shall ascend,
And thou, despis'd, shalt die—without a friend!

In yonder row a WIDOW meets my view,—
 My buxom dame, 'tis you I mean—yes, *you!*
 I saw how tremblingly alive you were,
 When I alluded to the amorous pair ;
 Your marriage was a *happy* illustration
 Of my remarks—'twas just your situation,
 Indeed it was—deny it if you can—
 How oft you call'd on me to take *the man!*
 And oh! how oft you vow'd, that ne'er again
 Would you be bound by Hymen's galling chain.
 I took him!—and the well-dissembled tear
 Of "*decent sorrow*" fell upon his bier ;
 Yet now, when fairly rid of him, you bait
 Your hook—and I (good-natur'd sprite) may wait
 Whilst you go fishing for another mate!
 Believe me, widow, I must have my due ;
 You shall your *promise* keep, or I'll keep *you*.

But, come—a truce to truths which seem unpleasant,
 And of my "*DOINGS*" *past* let's speak at present ;
 I'll not disturb the ashes of the dead,
 Though some brief sentences must needs be said,
 By which I trust to prove to demonstration,
 That none with greater zeal e'er fill'd his station ;

Meanwhile (although, perhaps, 'twill tire your pa-
tience

To wait while I recount my operations)

I hope to give you ample satisfaction,

That from the purest source sprang every action ;

And that, to none allied of flesh and blood,

No motive sway'd me but the common good :—

This is a merit I can fairly claim—

“ *Pro bono publico*” was e'er my aim,

The basis upon which I rest my fame!

THE POET.

Although I quench'd the sacred flame

That glow'd within his breast,

The BARD obtain'd a deathless fame—

A haven, too, of rest :

The laurels of poetic praise

Which now adorn his tomb,

Had, but for ME, been blighted bays,

To wither—not to bloom.

THE PILGRIM.

In PILGRIM'S guise I brought the fatal scroll,

Which told a Maiden of her lover's death ;
Grief took possession of her ardent soul,—

She bless'd his memory, and resign'd her breath :
Oft had she vow'd to love no other youth ;
That vow she kept,—an instance rare of truth !

THE ARTIST.

Mine was the task to stop the ARTIST'S hand,
Ere age had brought his genius to a stand ;
He'd finish'd TIME—and therefore 'twas my whim,
Just at that nick of time, to finish *him* :

And as I knew he meant a *Dance* to lead me,
To shew his skill in graphic witticisms,
I took his brush away !—and made him heed me,—
And saved him thus from *friendly* criticisms !

THE CRICKETER.

In the CRICKETER'S care-killing game
There was something so manly and gay,
That his pastime I never could blame,
But cheerfully join'd in the play :

And if TIME had not thought it a sin,

For *ever* to stand behind wicket;

The Batsman might still have been *in*,

And DEATH might have still play'd at cricket!

THE CAPTIVE.

'Twas I who set the wretched CAPTIVE free,

And eas'd him of his load of misery—

In mercy bore him from a dungeon's gloom,

And laid his body in the silent tomb:

His mortal part commingled with its kindred dust—

His spirit took its flight, to join "the good and just."

THE SERENADER.

Would you know why so slyly I grasp'd the stiletto,

And slew young Adonis, the gay SERENADER?

I had just before seen, in a foul lazaretto,

A fair one expire:—it was *he* first betray'd her!

No longer, said I, shall thy strains, tho' melodious,

Their aid lend to lead lovely woman astray;

Not a chord shalt thou strike for a purpose so

odious—

So haste, Serenader! Death calls thee away!

THE TOILET.

A lady so fair, or a maid half so sly,
 At a TOILET were never yet seen,
 As on that fatal night—when, in masquerade, I
 Attended on Laura (none other was nigh)
 And clad her in raiment so sheen.

But Laura coquetted—for Laura was vain—
 And though she professed to return
 Young Edward's true passion—(*I speak it with pain*)
 He perish'd, the victim of cruel disdain,—
 And his ashes now rest in yon urn!

So the false one I took! though I deck'd her so gay
 With trinkets, and jewels, and gold;—
 And the gossips still talk of that terrible day,
 When DEATH, as a *Waiting-maid*, bore her away
 To the charnel-house, darksome and cold!

THE MOTHER.

Methinks I hear some pitying MOTHER say,
 Why snatch a helpless INFANT thus away?

Why turn to clay that cheek on which was spread
 The lily's whiteness with the rose's red ?
 Why close those ruby lips—those deep-fring'd eyes ?
 Why seize so young, so innocent a prize !—
 Hold ! hold ! nor murmur at the wise decree
 That set a lovely earth-born seraph free,
 And gave it bliss and immortality !

THE HYPOCHONDRIAC.

Immers'd in apathy and mental gloom,
 The wasted form of HYPOCHONDRIA sits ;
 And as the phantoms flit around his room,
 With fear he shakes—or falls, convuls'd, in fits !
 The workings of his melancholy mind
 Present horrific spectres to his sight ;
 He sees no friend, beneficent and kind—
 But life, to *him*, is one dark cheerless night.
 O Melancholy ! bane of peace and health !
 When thy sad reign contaminates the breast,
 Nor pleasure's glittering charms, nor love, nor wealth
 Can give repose :—in DEATH alone there's rest !

LIFE'S ASSURANCE.

Saw you that aged man, whose tottering feet
 Could scarce support him to the office door?
 He was a LIFE ASSURER;—and, though poor,
 Deposits from his pittance made, to meet
 His offspring's need. O happiness complete,
 When man *so* dies! The miser's store
 May serve some idle spendthrift!—seldom more;
 But competency thus acquir'd is sweet!
 Sweet 'tis to *him* who, providently kind,
 Protects his wife and children from the blast
 Of Poverty;—and oh, how sweet *they* find
 The succour it affords!—such joys will last!—
 Who blames me, then, for keeping Life's Assurance?
 Thro' DEATH, you see, Life may be worth endurance.

THE ANTIQUARY.

What wild illusions mock their sight,
 When ANTIQUARIES pore
 O'er mouldering relics, day and night,
 With patient, plodding lore!—
 Life's meant for *rational* enjoyment;
 And if, while here below,
 Man seeks not—finds not—wise employment,
 To *Davy* let him go!

THE CHAMPION.

O mourn not for prize-fighting kiddies inglorious ;
 Lament not the fate of those swells of the Ring :
 The Championship's mine ! for I'm ever victorious,
 And fam'd *Boxiana* my prowess shall sing !
 Then hoist the black fogle—let marrow-bones rattle—
 And push round the skulls which with claret o'er-
 flow ;
 Drink, drink to the *Champion*, who, fairly in battle,
 The famed men of muscle for ever laid low !

THE GLUTTON.

No matter what—flesh, fowl, or fish—
 If man become a GLUTTON ;
 With *goût* he feeds from ev'ry dish—
 Veal, ven'son, beef, or mutton.
 Eating—drinking—panting—puffing !—
 O the dear delights of stuffing !

But when the greedy Epicure
 A god thus makes his belly,
 I mix some poison—slow, but sure—
 In gravy, soup, or jelly.
 On the couch, then, see him lying !—
 Writhing—groaning—gasping—dying !

THE BACCHANALIANS.

Tho' BACCHANALS boast of their ivy-crown'd god,
 And sing of the bright sparkling glass,
 With the juice of the grape, how they hiccup and
 nod,—
 How it likens a man to an ass !

The balm of the bottle, they say, lightens care,—
 But far more it lightens the purse ;
 While it brings to its vot'ry a load of despair,
 It brings, too, his heaviest curse—

The groans of the parent, the child, or the wife,
 Who famish while Bacchanals swill !
 Then say, can you blame me for taking the life
 Of such as so recklessly kill ?

THE HUNTER.

The fearless HUNTER took his dangerous leap ;
 For though I warn'd, he held my warning cheap.
 At length he fell—another fill'd his place,
 And, like him, heedless, follows in the chase.

THE ALCHEMIST.

His time and health the ALCHEMIST destroys,
 In vain pursuit of visionary joys!
 What if he find the rare and hidden treasure,
 More pain his golden prize would bring than pleasure.
 Gold! Gold! thou bane of life! thou fancied good,
 Thy *use* to Man, how little understood!

ACADEMIC HONOURS.

Should I the MARTYR STUDENT'S portrait draw,
 And shew that genius, with each good combin'd,
 That virtue, and that nobleness of mind,
 Were his, without a blemish or a flaw—
 You'd blame me for my act—and yet 'twas kind!
 For well I knew, although he'd worth and merit,
 Posthumous fame was all that he'd inherit;
 And those, indeed, who court fame ought to know,
 That DEATH alone can lasting fame bestow.

THE EMPIRIC.

The QUACK kill'd his patient, and I kill'd the Quack;
 Thus a fool and a knave were got rid of at once;
 But tho' I contriv'd to lay *him* on his back,
 Behind he's left many a death-dealing dunce!

THE PHAETON.

Behold, my love, how fine the day!

Cried Charles, as he the PHAETON mounted;

His heart was light, his spirits gay,

And tales of love the youth recounted.

But false as fair the syren he

That day had honour'd with his name;

And I resolv'd to set him free

From private grief and public shame.

DEATH'S REGISTER.

An ancient worthy, when of MAN he wrote,

Permitted me his REGISTER to quote;

And as I know I cannot make a better,

I'll quote it fairly, to the very letter:—

“ Man's bodie's like a house: his greater *bones*

Are the main timber; and the lesser ones

Are smaller *splints*; his *ribs* are *laths*, daub'd o'er,

Plaister'd with *flesh* and *bloud*: his *mouth's* the *doore*:

His *throat's* the narrow *entrie*, and his *heart*

Is the *great chamber*, full of curious art:

His *midriffe* is a large *partition-wall*

'Twixt the *great chamber* and the spacious *hall*:

His *stomack* is the *kitchen*, where the meat
 Is often but half sod, for want of heat :
 His *splene's* a *vessell*, nature does allot
 To take the *skumme* that rises from the pot :
 His *lungs* are like the *bellows*, that respire
 In every office, quick'ning every fire :
 His *nose* the *chimney* is, whereby are vented
 Such *fumes* as with the *bellows* are augmented :
 His *bowels* are the sink, whose part's to drein
 All noisome filth, and keep the *kitchen* clean :
 His *eyes* are chrystall *windows*, clear and bright ;
 Let in the object, and let out the sight.
 And as the *timber* is or great or small,
 Or strong, or weak, 'tis apt to stand, or fall :
 Yet is the likeliest *building*, sometimes known
 To fall by obvious chances ; overthrown
 Oft-times by *tempests*, by the full-mouth'd *blasts*
 Of heaven ; sometimes by *fire* ; sometimes it wastes
 Through unadvis'd neglect ; put case the stuffe
 Were ruin-prooffe, by nature strong enough
 To conquer time and age ; put case it should
 Ne'er know an end, alas our *leases* would.
 What hast thou then, proud flesh and blood, to
 boast ?
 Thy dayes are bad, at best ; but few, at most ;

But sad, at merriest; and but weak, at strongest;
 Unsure, at surest; and but short, at longest."

THE LAWYER.

I freely spoke my mind before, concerning this fra-
 ternity,
 Nor would I do aught less or more, if I talk'd to all
 eternity!
 If any mortal doubt my word—to LAW, then, let
 him go,—
 A *greater curse* 'twere quite absurd to wish one's
 bitterest foe.

THE BUBBLE-BLOWERS.

There are BUBBLES above and below,—
 On land, and at sea, and in air;
 But none of the bubbles I know,
 With the bubbles of Britain compare:—
 Such wonderful bubbles are they!
 What *puffing* it took, and what trouble,
 To blow all these bubbles at first!
 And the trouble was more than made double,
 When the bubbles of Britain all burst!—
 What troublesome bubbles were they!



But why should you mourn over bubbles,
 That are puff'd in and out with a breath,
 When the greatest of bubbles and troubles
 Are, one and all, puff'd out by DEATH!—
 'The bubbles and troubles of LIFE!

Vain, inconsistent, self-deluded race,
 Whose vision's limited to finite space,
 You grasp some idle phantom of the brain,
 And, maniac-like, would clank and hug your chain.
 All—all is vanity beneath the sun!
 Whene'er the sand of Life its course hath run—
 Or soon, or late—'tis then the *proper* time
 This grovelling world to quit, and seek the clime
 Where Life's eternal, glorious, and sublime!



But why should you mourn over bubbles,
 That are puff'd in and out with a breath,
 When the greatest of bubbles and troubles
 Are, one and all, puff'd out by Death—
 The bubbles and troubles of Life!

Vain, inconsistent, self-deluded race,
 Whose vision's limited to finite space,
 You grasp some idle phantom of the brain,
 And, maniac-like, would clank and bang your chain.
 All—all is vanity beneath the sun—
 Where'er the sand of Life its course hath run—
 Or soon, or late—'tis then the purple time
 This giddy world to quit, and seek the clime
 Where Life's eternal glories, and sublime!



LIST O

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- 6. Peter
- 7. Pindar
- 8. Pliny
- 9. Plutarch
- 10. Ptolemy
- 11. Pythagoras
- 12. Pyrrhus
- 13. Quintilian
- 14. Rabelais
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