James Shirley, â??Deathâ??s Final Conquestâ?•

Description

[JAMES SHIRLEY]

â??Deathâ??s Final Conquest.â?•

The glories of our blood and state
Are shadows, not substantial things:
There is no armour against Fate,
Death lays his icy hands on kings.
Sceptre and crown
Must tumble down,
And in the dust be equal made
With the poor crooked scythe and spade.

Some men with swords may reap the field,
And plant fresh laurels where they kill:
But their strong nerves at last must yield,
They tame but one another still.
Early or late
They stoop to Fate,
And must give up their murmuring breath
When they, pale captives, creep to Death.

The garlands wither on your brow,
Then boast no more your mighty deeds,
Upon Deathâ??s purple altar now
See where the victor victim bleeds.
All heads must come
To the cold tomb,
Only the actions of the just
Smell sweet, and blossom in the dust.

NOTES:

Author *James Shirley* â??Shirley flourished in the reign of Charles I. and II. He died October 29, 1666, aged 72.â?• [*GM* Note]

8 *Scythe* â??A tool used for cutting crops such as grass or wheat, with a long curved blade at the end of a long pole attached to which are one or two short handlesâ?• (*OED*).

10 *Laurels* â??The foliage of the bay tree woven into a wreath or crown and worn on the head as an emblem of victory or mark of honour in classical timesâ?• (*OED*).

17 *Garlands* â??A wreath of flowers and leaves, worn on the head or hung as a decorationâ?• (*OED).*

19 *Purple* â??(In ancient Rome) a position of rank, authority, or privilegeâ?• (*OED*). Generally pertaining to someone of royal blood.

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