

# The Glories of Our Blood and State

By James Shirley

The glories of our blood and state  
Are shadows, not substantial things;  
There is no armour against Fate;  
Death lays his icy hand 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 Death's purple altar now  
See where the victor-victim bleeds.  
Your heads must come  
To the cold tomb:  
Only the actions of the just  
Smell sweet and blossom in their dust.



James Shirley's first poem, *Echo, or the Unfortunate Lovers* was published in 1618. For eighteen years he was a prolific writer for the stage, producing more than thirty regular plays, tragedies, comedies, and tragicomedies until a stop was put to his occupation by the Puritan edict of 1642. He and his second wife died of fright and exposure after the Great Fire of London.

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