"Death"

By Katherine Philips

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Death.

How weak a Star doth rule Mankind, [Star],
Which owes its ruine to the same
Causes which Nature had design'd
To cherish and preserve the frame!

As Commonwealths may be secure,
And no remote Invasion dread;
Yet may a sadder fall endure
From Traitors in their bosom bred:

So while we feel no violence,
And on our active Health do trust,
A secret hand doth snatch us hence,
And tumbles us into the dust.

Yet carelesly we run our race,
As if we could Death's summons wave;
And think not on the narrow space, [narrow_space]
Between a Table and a Grave.

But since we cannot Death reprieve,
Our Souls and Fame we ought to mind,
For they our Bodies will survive;
That goes beyond, this stays behind.

If I be sure my Soul is safe,
And that my Actions will provide
My Tomb a nobler Epitaph,, [Epitaph]
Then that I onely liv'd and dy’d.

So that in various accidents, [Accidents]
I Conscience may and Honour keep;
I with that ease and innocence
Shall die, as Infants go to sleep.

Footnotes

Star Compared to the universe's other stars, the sun was considered weak.

narrow_space a limited lifespan; from the table, where life begins, to the grave, where it ends.

Epitaph A tribute written in memory of a deceased person, often as an inscription on a tombstone (Oxford English Dictionary).

Accidents Events that happen by chance or without expectation. Sometimes with a negative connotation, as in being unfortunate or unforeseen (Oxford English Dictionary).