

ECCLESIASTES

Under the fluent folds of needlework,
Where Balkis prick'd the histories of kings
Once great as he, that were as greatly loved,
Solomon stooped, and saw the dusk unfold
Over the apple orchards like a flower.
"O bloom of eve," he said, "diviner loss
Of all light gave us, dove of the whole world,
Bearing the branch of peace, the dark sweet bough,
Endure a little longer, ere full night
Comes stark from God and terrible with stars,
Eternal as He or Love. Now no one wakes,
But a lean gardener by my apricots,
Sweeping the withered leaves, the yellowing leaves
Down the wind's road.

Perish our years with them,
Our griefs, our little hungers, our poor sins,
Leaves that the Lord hath scattered. He shall quench
The fierce impetuous torches of the sun,
Yea, from our dead dust he shall quicken kings,
Loosen new battles, sharpen spears unborn,
Shadow on shadow. But His stars remain
Immortal, and Love immortal crowned with them."

Night came, and all the hosts thereof. He saw
Arcturus clear the doorways of the cloud
And One that followed with his shining sons
In the likeness of a gardener, that strode
Over the windy hollows of the sky
And with a great broom drave the stars in heaps,—
The yellow stars, the little withering stars—
Faint drifts along the darkness. New stars came,
Budded, and bloomed, and fell. These too He swept,
And all the heavens were changed.

Then Solomon stood
Silent, nor ever turned to the Queen's kiss.

M. L. C. PICKTHALL