

And whence the gems, and lace, and silks ye wear,
Which takes the whole and nothing leaves to share,
From golden, grinding, greedy, grasping gain,
With toil-worn hands, that gave you all, but bear
The fateful chill necessity, the pain
That toils, though Hope can never sing again ?

XXII.

'Tis all so dark ; the church but drags and drifts
In the fierce current of all-grinding power ;
The leeway slight, but daily yielding shifts,
Saps her stern righteousness from hour to hour.
She trims her sails to catch the golden shower
That plants her missions on far heathen coast,
But near her walls, foul vipers creep and cower,
Whose sin-stained triumphs broken hearts may boast ;
And near her portals human souls are lost.

XXIII.

Where shall we blame in this entangled maze
Of strangely dim, unutterable things ?
O'er him who curses and o'er him who prays
Slow in the dark a fateful plummet swings.
To-day, faith-warmed, the soul devoutly sings ;
Yet near, so near, the hemp of madness grows,
And doubt and death slow move their sable wings,
Till he, at morn all certainty, scarce knows
At evening whence he comes, or whither goes.

XXIV.

Sin leads us onward by insidious wiles,
And grain by grain builds up its mountain load :
Our venture first, one short and shady mile,
Soon leads us far by long, uncertain road ;
And drives us still, by intermittent goad
Of good or ill, which, like the drip that wears
The adamant rock, can only bode
That somehow evil in its armour bears
The power to hide and multiply its snares.

XXV.

In tall cathedrals golden censors swing,
And sensuous incense warms to dreamy prayer,
And moves the lips, if not the heart, to sing,
'Mid sacred somnolence that gathers there.
We call it duty, when we burdens bear,
That spread the wiles of sacerdotal art,
As holy lures to catch the young and fair,
And name the fruit, Christ's triumph o'er the heart,
Which now, as then, is of the world a part.

XXVI.

'Tis the white sunbeam only shows the dust
That floats throughout the ambient fields of air ;
'Tis brightest shield alone displays the rust
That fouler surface long may hidden bear.
Sin marks its place by contrast everywhere ;