

Heavily laden from foot to crown,
Like fairest of brides with heads bowed down,
In park and square, demurely they stand,—
Stand by the wayside all over the land.
Thick-crustèd with pearls of marvellous size,
Whose lustre rebukes our aching eyes.

II.

Thus for a night and a day have they stood,
Modest and chaste in their virginhood ;
But are they as happy, as joyful at heart,
As when, in green vesture, they gladly took part
In all the fresh bliss that to spring-time they owed,—
In all the hot pleasure that summer bestowed ?
“ Nay, verily, nay ! ” I hear them repeat ;
The blood in our veins, even down to our feet,
Is gelid and still,—we are sick unto death ;
Oh send us, ye heavens ! oh send us a breath
Of warmth that will bear all these jewels away !
These fetters that we for a night and day
Have borne in silence with infinite pain.
Oh give us our freedom ! our bare arms again ! ”

III.

A wind that had slept all this time in the south,
In an orange grove that was faint from drouth,
Heard the soft plaint of the jewelled trees,
And came in the guise of a gentle breeze,—
Came, and with kisses tenderly
Unbound the captives, and set them free.
Their crystalline chains were broken asunder,
Filling all earth with a blinding wonder ;—
With a crash and a flash and a musical sound,
Like a shower of stars they fell to the ground ;