

This passing entertainment in a hut
Whose bare walls take your taste
since, one stage more,

And you arrive at the palace: all
half real,

And you, to suit it, less than real
beside,

In a dream, lethargic kind of death
in life,

That helps the interchange of natures,
flesh

Transfused by souls, and such souls!
Oh, 'tis choice!

And if at whiles the bubble, blown
too thin,

Seem nigh on bursting,—if you nearly
see

The real world through the false,—
what *do* you see?

Is the old so ruined? You find you're
in a flock

O' the youthful, earnest, passionate—
genius, beauty,

Rank and wealth also, if you care for
these:

And all depose their natural rights,
hail you.

(That's me, sir, as their mate and yoke-
fellow,

Participate in Sludgehood—nay, grow
mine,

I veritably possess them—banish doubt,
And reticence and modesty alike!

Why, here's the Golden Age, old
Paradise

Or new Eutopia! Here's true life
indeed,

And the world well won now, mine
for the first time!

And all this might be, may be, and
with good help

Of a little lying shall be: so, Sludge
lies!

Why, he's at worst your poet who
sings how Greeks

That never were, in Troy which never
was,

Did this or the other impossible great
thing!

He's Lowell—it's a world (you smile
applause),

Of his own invention—wondrous
Longfellow,

Surprising Hawthorne! Sludge does
more than they,

And acts the books they write: the
more his praise!

But why do I mount to poets? Take
plain prose

Dealers in common sense, set these
at work,

What can they do without their help-
ful lies?

Each states the law and fact and face
'o the thing

Just as he'd have them, finds what
he thinks fit.

Is blind to what missuits him, just
records

What makes his ease out, quite
ignores the rest.

It's a History of the World, the
Lizard Age,

The Early Indians, the Old Country
War,

Jerome Napoleon, whatsoever you
please,

All as the author wants it. Such a
scribe

You pay and praise for putting life in
stones,

Fire into fog, making the past your
world.

There's plenty of "How did you
contrive to grasp

"The thread which led you through
this labyrinth?

"How build such solid fabric out of
air?

"How on so slight foundation found
this tale,

"Biography, narrative?" or, in other
words,

"How many lies did it require to make
"The portly truth you here present

us with?"

"Oh," quoth the penman, purring at
your praise.

"'Tis fancy all: no particle of
fact:

"I was poor and threadbare when I
wrote that book