

Humming a tune the while, in ignorance

Beacon Street stretches a hundred feet below :

I walked thus, took the paper-cheat for stone,

Some impulse made me set a thing o' the move

Which, started once, ran really by itself ;

Beer flows thus, suck the siphon ; toss the kite,

It takes the wind and floats of its own force,

Don't let truth's lump rot stagnant for the lack

Of a timely helpful lie to leaven it !

Put a chalk-egg beneath the clucking hen,

She'll lay a real one, laudably deceived,

Daily for weeks to come. I've told my lie.

And seen truth follow, marvels none of mine :

All was not cheating, sir, I'm positive ! I don't know if I move your hand sometimes

When the spontaneous writing spreads so far,

If my knee lifts the table all that height,

Why the inkstand don't fall off the desk a-tilt,

Why the accordion plays a prettier waltz

Than I can pick out on the pianoforte.

Why I speak so much more than I intend.

Describe so many things I never saw.

I tell you, sir, in one sense, I believe Nothing at all, that everybody can,

Will, and does cheat : but in another sense

I'm ready to believe my very self — That every cheat's inspired, and every lie

Quick with a germ of truth.

You ask perhaps

Why I should condescend to trick at all

If I know a way without it ? This is why !

There's a strange secret sweet self-sacrifice

In any desecration of one's soul

To a worthy end, — isn't it Herodotus (I wish I could read Latin !) who describes

The single gift o' the land's virginity,

Demanded in those old Egyptian rites, (I've but a hazy notion — help me, sir !)

For one purpose in the world, one day in a life,

One hour in a day — thereafter, purity, And a veil thrown o'er the past for evermore !

Well, now, they understood a many things

Down by Nile city, or wherever it was !

I've always vowed, after the minute's lie,

And the end's gain, — truth should be mine henceforth.

This goes to the root o' the matter, sir, — this plain

Plump fact : accept it and unlock with it

The wards of many a puzzle !

Or, finally,

Why should I set so fine a gloss on things ?

What need I care ? I cheat in self-defence,

And there's my answer to a world of cheats !

Cheat ? To be sure, sir ! What's the world worth else ?

Who takes it as he finds, and thanks his stars ?

Don't it want trimming, turning, finishing up

And polishing over ? Your so-styled great men.

Do they accept one truth as truth is found,

Or try their skill at tinkering ? What's your world ?

Here are you born, who are, I'll say at once,

Of the luckiest kind, whether in head and heart,

Body and soul, or all that helps them both.