

I guess what's going on outside the  
veil,  
Just as a prisoned crane feels pairing-  
time  
In the islands where his kind are, so  
must fall  
To capering by himself some shiny  
night,  
As if your back-yard were a plot of  
spice—  
Thus am I 'ware o' the spirit-world :  
while you,  
Blind as a beetle that way,—for  
amends,  
Why, you can double fist and floor  
me, sir !  
Ride that hot hardmouthed horrid  
horse of yours.  
Laugh while it lightens, play with the  
great dog.  
Speak your mind though it vex some  
friend to hear,  
Never brag, never bluster, never  
blush,—  
In short, you've pluck, when I'm  
coward—there !  
I know it, I can't help it,—folly or no,  
I'm paralyzed, my hand's no more a  
hand,  
Nor my head a head, in danger : you  
can smile  
And change the pipe in your cheek.  
Your gift's not mine.  
Would you swap for mine? No !  
but you'd add my gift  
To yours : I dare say ! I too sigh at  
times,  
Wish I were stouter, could tell truth  
nor flinch,  
Kept cool when threatened, did not  
mind so much  
Being dressed gaily, making strangers  
stare,  
Eating nice things ; when I'd amuse  
myself.  
I shut my eyes and fancy in my brain  
I'm—now the President, now Jenny  
Lind,  
Now Emerson, now the Benicia  
Boy—  
With all the civilized world a-wonder-  
ing

And worshipping. I know it's folly  
and worse ;  
I feel such tricks sap, honeycomb the  
soul,  
But I can't cure myself : despond,  
despair.  
And then, hey, presto, there's a turn  
o' the wheel,  
Under comes uppermost, fate makes  
full amends ;  
Sludge knows and sees and hears a  
hundred things  
You all are blind to,—I've my taste  
of truth,  
Likewise my touch of falsehood,—  
vice no doubt,  
But you've your vices also : I'm  
content.  
What, sir? You won't shake hands?  
"Because I cheat!"  
"You've found me out in cheating!"  
That's enough  
To make an apostle swear ! Why,  
when I cheat,  
*Mean to cheat, do cheat, and am  
caught in the act.*  
*Are you, or, rather, am I sure o' the  
fact?*  
(There's verse again, but I'm inspired  
somehow.)  
Well then I'm not sure ! I may be,  
perhaps,  
Free as a babe from cheating : how  
it began,  
My gift,—no matter ; what 'tis got to be  
In the end now, that's the question ;  
answer that !  
Had I seen, perhaps, what hand was  
holding mine,  
Leading me whither, I had died of  
fright :  
So, I was made believe I led myself.  
If I should lay a six-inch plank from  
roof  
To roof, you would not cross the  
street, one step,  
Even at your mother's summons : but,  
being shrewd,  
If I paste paper on each side the  
plank  
And swear 'tis solid pavement, why,  
you'll cross