

When silver-shrined in shadowy grove:
Aye, or let offerings nicely plac'd
But hide Priapus to the waist,
And whoso looks on him shall see
An eligible deity.

370

Why, Jenny, waking here alone
May help you to remember one,
Though all the memory's long outworn
Of many a double-pillowed morn.
I think I see you when you wake,
And rub your eyes for me, and shake
My gold, in rising, from your hair,
A Danaë for a moment there.

Jenny, my love rang true! for still
Love at first sight is vague, until
That tinkling makes him audible.

380

And must I mock you to the last,
Ashamed of my own shame, — aghast
Because some thoughts not born amiss
Rose at a poor fair face like this?
Well, of such thoughts so much I know:
In my life, as in hers, they show,
By a far gleam which I may near,
A dark path I can strive to clear.

390

Only one kiss. Good-bye, my dear.
[1848, 1858-69] [1870]

THE PORTRAIT

THIS is her picture as she was:
It seems a thing to wonder on,
As though mine image in the glass
Should tarry when myself am gone.
I gaze until she seems to stir, —
Until mine eyes almost aver
That now, even now, the sweet lips part
To breathe the words of the sweet heart: —
And yet the earth is over her.

Alas! even such the thin-drawn ray
That makes the prison-depths more rude. —
The drip of water night and day
Giving a tongue to solitude.
Yet only this, of love's whole prize,
Remains; save what in mournful guise
Takes counsel with my soul alone, —
Save what is secret and unknown,
Below the earth, above the skies.

10

In painting her I shrined her face
'Mid mystic trees, where light falls in
Hardly at all; a covert place
Where you might think to find a din
Of doubtful talk, and a live flame
Wandering, and many a shape whose name
Not itself knoweth, and old dew,
And your own footsteps meeting you,
And all things going as they came.

20

A deep dim wood; and there she stands
As in that wood that day: for so
Was the still movement of her hands
And such the pure line's gracious flow.
And passing fair the type must seem,
Unknown the presence and the dream.
'Tis she: though of herself, alas!
Less than her shadow on the grass
Or than her image in the stream.

30

That day we met there, I and she
One with the other all alone;
And we were blithe; yet memory
Saddens those hours, as when the moon
Looks upon daylight. And with her
I stooped to drink the spring-water,
Athirst where other waters sprang:
And where the echo is, she sang, —
My soul another echo there.

40

But when that hour my soul won strength
For words whose silence wastes and kills,
Dull raindrops smote us, and at length
Thundered the heat within the hills.
That eve I spoke those words again

50

Beside the pelted window-pane;
 And there she hearkened what I said,
 With under-glances that surveyed
 The empty pastures blind with rain.

Next day the memories of these things,
 Like leaves through which a bird has flown,
 Still vibrated with Love's warm wings;
 Till I must make them all my own
 And paint this picture. So, 'twixt ease
 Of talk and sweet long silences,
 She stood among the plants in bloom
 At windows of a summer room,
 To feign the shadow of the trees.

And as I wrought, while all above
 And all around was fragrant air,
 In the sick burthen of my love
 It seemed each sun-thrilled blossom there
 Beat like a heart among the leaves.
 O heart that never beats nor heaves,
 In that one darkness lying still,
 What now to thee my love's great will
 Or the fine web the sunshine weaves?

For now doth daylight disavow
 Those days, — nought left to see or hear.
 Only in solemn whispers now
 At night-time these things reach mine ear;
 When the leaf-shadows at a breath
 Shrink in the road, and all the heath,
 Forest and water, far and wide,
 In limpid starlight glorified,
 Lie like the mystery of death.

Last night at last I could have slept,
 And yet delayed my sleep till dawn.
 Still wandering. Then it was I wept:
 For unawares I came upon
 Those glades where once she walked with me:
 And as I stood there suddenly,
 All wan with traversing the night,
 Upon the desolate verge of light
 Yearned loud the iron-bosomed sea.

Even so, where Heaven holds breath and hears
 The beating heart of Love's own breast, —
 Where round the secret of all spheres
 All angels lay their wings to rest, —
 How shall my soul stand rapt and awed,
 When, by the new birth borne abroad
 Throughout the music of the suns,
 It enters in her soul at once
 And knows the silence there for God!

Here with her face doth memory sit
 Meanwhile, and wait the day's decline,
 Till other eyes shall look from it,
 Eyes of the spirit's Palestine,
 Even than the old gaze tenderer:
 While hopes and aims long lost with her
 Stand round her image side by side
 Like tombs of pilgrims that have died
 About the Holy Sepulchre.

[1848-69]

[1870]

THE BURDEN OF NINEVEH

In our Museum galleries
 To-day I lingered o'er the prize
 Dead Greece vouchsafes to living eyes, —
 Her Art for ever in fresh wise
 From hour to hour rejoicing me.
 Sighing I turned at last to win
 Once more the London dirt and din;
 And as I made the swing-door spin
 And issued, they were hoisting in
 A winged beast from Nineveh.

A human face the creature wore,
 And hoofs behind and hoofs before,
 And flanks with dark runes fretted o'er.
 'Twas bull, 'twas mitred Minotaur,
 A dead disembowelled mystery:
 The mummy of a buried faith