POEMS.

THE BLESSED DAMOZEL.

The blessed damozel leaned out
From the gold bar of Heaven;
Her eyes were deeper than the depth
Of waters stilled at even;
She had three lilies in her hand,
And the stars in her hair were seven.

Her robe, ungirt from clasp to hem,
No wrought flowers did adorn,
But a white rose of Mary's gift,
For service meetly worn;
Her hair that lay along her back
Was yellow like ripe corn.

Her seemed she scarce had been a day
One of God's choristers;
THE BLESSED DAMOZEL.

The wonder was not yet quite gone
From that still look of hers;
Albeit, to them she left, her day
Had counted as ten years.

(To one, it is ten years of years.
   . . . Yet now, and in this place,
Surely she leaned o'er me—her hair
   Fell all about my face. . . .
Nothing: the autumn fall of leaves.
The whole year sets apace.)

It was the rampart of God's house
   That she was standing on;
By God built over the sheer depth
   The which is Space begun;
So high, that looking downward thence
   She scarce could see the sun.

It lies in Heaven, across the flood
   Of ether, as a bridge.
Beneath, the tides of day and night
   With flame and darkness ridge
The void, as low as where this earth
   Spins like a fretful midge.
THE BLESSED DAMOZEL.

Heard hardly, some of her new friends
   Amid their loving games
Spake evermore among themselves
   Their virginal chaste names;
And the souls mounting up to God
   Went by her like thin flames.

And still she bowed herself and stooped
   Out of the circling charm;
Until her bosom must have made
   The bar she leaned on warm,
And the lilies lay as if asleep
   Along her bended arm.

From the fixed place of Heaven she saw
   Time like a pulse shake fierce
Through all the worlds. Her gaze still strove
   Within the gulf to pierce
Its path; and now she spoke as when
   The stars sang in their spheres.

The sun was gone now; the curled moon
   Was like a little feather
Fluttering far down the gulf; and now
   She spoke through the still weather.
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THE BLESSED DAMOZEL.

Her voice was like the voice the stars
Had when they sang together.

(Ah sweet! Even now, in that bird's song,
Strove not her accents there,
Pain to be hearkened? When those bells
Possessed the mid-day air,
Strove not her steps to reach my side
Down all the echoing stair?)

'I wish that he were come to me,
For he will come,' she said.

'Have I not prayed in Heaven?—on earth,
Lord, Lord, has he not pray'd?
Are not two prayers a perfect strength?
And shall I feel afraid?

'When round his head the aureole clings,
And he is clothed in white,
I'll take his hand and go with him
To the deep wells of light;
We will step down as to a stream,
And bathe there in God's sight.

'We two will stand beside that shrine,
Occult, withheld, untrod,
THE BLESSED DAMOZEL

Whose lamps are stirred continually
With prayer sent up to God;
And see our old prayers, granted, melt
Each like a little cloud.

‘We two will lie i’the shadow of
That living mystic tree
Within whose secret growth the Dove
Is sometimes felt to be,
While every leaf that His plumes touch
Saith His Name audibly.

‘And I myself will teach to him,
I myself, lying so,
The songs I sing here; which his voice
Shall pause in, hushed and slow,
And find some knowledge at each pause,
Or some new thing to know.’

(Alas! We two, we two, thou say’st!
Yea, one wast thou with me
That once of old. But shall God lift
To endless unity
The soul whose likeness with thy soul
Was but its love for thee?)
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THE BLESSED DAMOZEL.

‘We two,’ she said, ‘will seek the groves
Where the lady Mary is,
With her five handmaidens, whose names
Are five sweet symphonies,
Cecily, Gertrude, Magdalen,
Margaret and Rosalys.

‘Cirlewise sit they, with bound locks
And foreheads garlanded;
Into the fine cloth white like flame
Weaving the golden thread,
To fashion the birth-robcs for them
Who are just born, being dead.

‘He shall fear, haply, and be dumb:
Then will I lay my cheek
To his, and tell about our love,
Not once abashed or weak:
And the dear Mother will approve
My pride, and let me speak.

‘Herself shall bring us, hand in hand,
To Him round whom all souls
Kneel, the clear-ranked unnumbered heads
Bowed with their aureoles:

"
And angels meeting us shall sing
To their citherns and citoles.

‘There will I ask of Christ the Lord
Thus much for him and me:—
Only to live as once on earth
With Love,—only to be,
As then awhile, for ever now
Together, I and he.’

She gazed and listened and then said,
Less sad of speech than mild,—
‘All this is when he comes.’ She ceased
The light thrilled towards her, fill’d
With angels in strong level flight.
Her eyes prayed, and she smil’d.

(I saw her smile.) But soon their path
Was vague in distant spheres:
And then she cast her arms along
The golden barriers,
And laid her face between her hands,
And wept. (I heard her tears.)
LOVE'S NOCTURN.

Master of the murmuring courts
Where the shapes of sleep convene!—
Lo! my spirit here exhorts
All the powers of thy demesne
For their aid to woo my queen.

What reports
Yield thy jealous courts unseen?

Vaporous, unaccountable,
Dreamland lies forlorn of light,
Hollow like a breathing shell.
Ah! that from all dreams I might
Choose one dream and guide its flight!

I know well
What her sleep should tell to-night.
LOVE'S NOCTURN.

There the dreams are multitudes:
Some whose buoyance waits not sleep,
Deep within the August woods;
Some that hum while rest may steep
Weary labour laid a-heap;
Interludes,
Some, of grievous moods that weep.

Poets' fancies all are there:
There the elf-girls flood with wings
Valleys full of plaintive air;
There breathe perfumes; there in rings
Whirl the foam-bewildered springs;
Siren there
Winds her dizzy hair and sings.

Thence the one dream mutually
Dreamed in bridal unison,
Less than waking ecstasy;
Half-formed visions that make moan
In the house of birth alone;
And what we
At death's wicket see, unknown.
LOVE'S NOCTURN.

But for mine own sleep, it lies
In one gracious form's control,
Fair with honorable eyes,
   Lamps of an auspicious soul:
   O their glance is loftiest dole,
   Sweet and wise,
   Wherein Love descries his goal.

Reft of her, my dreams are all
   Clammy trance that fears the sky:
Changing footpaths shift and fall;
   From polluted coverts nigh,
   Miserable phantoms sigh;
   Quakes the pall,
   And the funeral goes by.

Master, is it soothly said
   That, as echoes of man's speech
Far in secret clefts are made,
   So do all men's bodies reach
Shadows o'er thy sunken beach,—
   Shape or shade
In those halls pourtrayed of each?