

THE BLESSED DAMOZEL

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FLOWERS OF PARNASSUS—IV.

THE BLESSED DAMOZEL



"The blessed Damozel leaned out."

"The blessed Damozel leaned out."

THE BLESSED DAMOZEL
BY DANTE GABRIEL
ROSSETTI. WITH
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ILLUSTRATIONS.

"The blessed Damozel leaned out" . . . Frontispiece

Heading

"Surely she leaned o'er me"

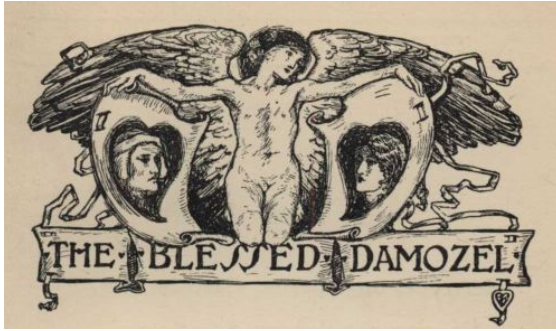
"We two will stand beside that shrine"

"And I myself will teach to him"

"Herself shall bring us, hand in hand"

"And laid her face between her hands"

Tailpiece

*Heading*

I.

The blessed Damozel leaned out
 From the gold bar of Heaven:
 Her blue-grey eyes were deeper much
 Than a deep water, even.
 She had three lilies in her hand,
 And the stars in her hair were seven.

II.

Her robe, ungirt from clasp to hem,
 No wrought flowers did adorn,
 But a white rose of Mary's gift
 On the neck meetly worn;
 And her hair, lying down her back,
 Was yellow like ripe corn.

III.

Herseemed she scarce had been a day
 One of God's choristers;
 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.

IV.

(To *one* it is ten years of years
 . . . Yet now, here 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.)

V.

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

VI.

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



"Surely she leaned o'er me."

VII.

But in those tracts, with her, it was
 The peace of utter light
 And silence. For no breeze may stir
 Along the steady flight
 Of seraphim; no echo there,
 Beyond all depth or height.

VIII.

Heard hardly, some of her new friends,
 Playing at holy games,
 Spake, gentle-mouthed, among themselves,
 Their virginal chaste names;
 And the souls, mounting up to God,
 Went by her like thin flames.

IX.

And still she bowed herself, and stooped
 Into the vast waste calm;
 Till her bosom's pressure must have made
 The bar she leaned on warm,
 And the lilies lay as if asleep
 Along her bended arm.

X.

From the fixt lull of heaven, she saw
 Time, like a pulse, shake fierce
 Through all the worlds. Her gaze still strove,
 In that steep gulph, to pierce
 The swarm: and then she spake, as when
 The stars sang in their spheres.

XI.

"I wish that he were come to me,
 For he will come," she said.
 "Have I not prayed in solemn heaven?
 On earth, has he not prayed?
 Are not two prayers a perfect strength?
 And shall I feel afraid?"

XII.

”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,
And we will step down as to a stream
And bathe there in God’s sight.



”We two will stand beside that shrine.”

”We two will stand beside that shrine,
 Occult, withheld, untrod,
 Whose lamps tremble continually
 With prayer sent up to God;
 And where each need, revealed, expects
 Its patient period.

XIV.

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

XV.

”And I myself will teach to him—
 I myself, lying so—
 The songs I sing here; which his mouth
 Shall pause in, hushed and slow,
 Finding some knowledge at each pause
 And some new thing to know.”

XVI.

(Alas! to *her* wise simple mind
 These things were all but known
 Before: they trembled on her sense,—
 Her voice had caught their tone.
 Alas for lonely Heaven! Alas
 For life wrung out alone!

XVII.



“ ‘And I myself will teach to him.’ ”

”And I myself will teach to him.”

Alas, and though the end were reached?
 Was *thy* part understood
 Or borne in trust? And for her sake
 Shall this too be found good?—
 May the close lips that knew not prayer
 Praise ever, though they would?)

XVIII.

”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.

XIX.

”Circle-wise sit they, with bound locks
 And bosoms coveréd;
 Into the fine cloths, white like flame,
 Weaving the golden thread,
 To fashion the birth-robés for them
 Who are just born, being dead.

XX.

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.

XXI.



“ ‘Herself shall bring us, hand in hand.’ ”

”Herself shall bring us, hand in hand.”

'Herself shall bring us, hand in hand,
 To Him round whom all souls
 Kneel—the unnumber'd solemn heads
 Bowed with their aureoles:
 And Angels, meeting us, shall sing
 To their citherns and citoles.

XXII.

"There will I ask of Christ the Lord
 Thus much for him and me:—
 To have more blessing than on earth
 In nowise; but to be
 As then we were,—being as then
 At peace. Yea, verily.

XXIII.

"Yea, verily; when he is come
 We will do thus and thus:
 Till this my vigil seem quite strange
 And almost fabulous;
 We two will live at once, one life;
 And peace will be with us."

XXIV.

She gazed, and listened, and then said,
 Less sad of speech than mild;
 "All this is when he comes." She ceased;
 The light thrilled past her, filled
 With Angels, in strong level lapse.
 Her eyes prayed, and she smiled.

XXV.



“And laid her face between her hands.”

”And laid her face between her hands.”

(I saw her smile.) But soon their flight
Was vague 'mid the poised spheres.
And then she cast her arms along
The golden barriers,
And laid her face between her hands,
And wept (I heard her tears).



THE END

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