APPENDIX 1
SONGS OF ONE HOUSEHOLD

No. 1.

My Sister's Sleep.

1

She fell asleep on Christmas Eve.
Upon her eyes' most patient calms
The lids were shut; her uplaid arms
Covered her bosom, I believe.

2

Our mother, who had leaned all day
Over the bed from chime to chime,
Then raised herself for the first time,
And as she sat her down, did pray.

3

Her little work-table was spread
With work to finish. For the glare
Made by her candle, she had care
To work some distance from the bed.

4

Without, there was a good moon up,
Which left its shadows far within;
The depth of light that it was in
Seemed hollow like an altar-cup.

5

Through the small room, with subtle sound
Of flame, by vents the fireshine drove
And reddened. In its dim alcove
The mirror shed a clearness round.

6

I had been sitting up some nights,
And my tir'd mind felt weak and blank;
Like a sharp strengthening wine, it drank
The stillness and the broken lights.

7

Silence was speaking at my side
With an exceedingly clear voice:
Appendix 1

I knew the calm as of a choice
Made in God for me, to abide.

8

I said, "Full knowledge does not grieve:
This which upon my spirit dwells
Perhaps would have been sorrow else:
But I am glad 'tis Christmas Eve."

9

Twelve struck. That sound, which all the years
Hear in each hour, crept off; and then
The ruffled silence spread again,
Like water that a pebble stirs.

10

Our mother rose from where she sat.
Her needles, as she laid them down,
Met lightly, and her silken gown
Settled: no other noise than that.

11

"Glory unto the Newly Born!"
So, as said angels, she did say;
Because we were in Christmas-day,
Though it would still be long till dawn.

12

She stood a moment with her hands
Kept in each other, praying much;
A moment that the soul may touch
But the heart only understands.

13

Almost unwittingly, my mind
Repeated her words after her;
Perhaps tho' my lips did not stir;
It was scarce thought, or cause assign'd.

14

Just then in the room over us
There was a pushing back of chairs,
As some who had sat unawares
So late, now heard the hour, and rose.

15

Anxious, with softly stepping haste,
Appendix 1

Our mother went where Margaret lay,
   Fearing the sounds o'erhead—should they
Have broken her long-watched for rest!

16
She stooped an instant, calm, and turned;
   But suddenly turned back again;
   And all her features seemed in pain
With woe, and her eyes gazed and yearned.

17
For my part, I but hid my face,
   And held my breath, and spake no word:
   There was none spoken; but I heard
_The silence_ for a little space.

18
Our mother bowed herself and wept.
   And both my arms fell, and I said:
   "God knows I knew that she was dead."
   And there, all white, my sister slept.

19
Then kneeling, upon Christmas morn
   A little after twelve o'clock
   We said, ere the first quarter struck,
   "Christ's blessing on the newly born!"

_The Germ, No. 1._
The Blessed Damozel.

1

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

2

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.

3

Herseemed she scarce had been a day
One of God's choristers;
The wonder was not yet quite gone
From that still look of her's;
Albeit to them she left, her day
Had counted as ten years.

4

(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.)

5

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.

6

It lies from Heaven across the flood
Of ether, as a bridge.
Appendix 2

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.

7

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.

8

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.

9

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.

10

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.

11

"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?

12

"When round his head the aureole clings,
   And he is clothed in white,
Appendix 2

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.

13

"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.

14

"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.

15

"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."

16

(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!

17

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?)

18

"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.

19

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

20

"He shall fear, haply, and be dumb.  
Then I will 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.

21

"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.

22

"There will I ask of Christ the Lord  
This 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.

23

"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 shall be with us."

24

She gazed, and listened, and then said,  
Less sad of speech than mild:

[150]
"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.

25

(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 Germ, No. 2.