

# Gable's inscribed *Blessed Damozel* & General Jones's Training Binding

At auction last year I bid on a copy of Mosher's *The Blessed Damozel* (1905; Bishop 47.2) inscribed by Mosher to William F. Gable. I wasn't successful and didn't know who outbid me for this little book I normally would have been able to snatch from the market place without competition. Several months afterward I received an electronic book catalogue from an ABAA dealer and I had my answer, only this time its price was three times above that which I had bid. If I wasn't willing to buy it at the lower price tag, I certainly wasn't about to purchase it at the higher. It nagged me, however, and I eventually saw it listed separately on-line with the thousands upon thousands of other books for sale on ABE Books and elsewhere, of course reaching an even wider audience. I turned a mostly blind eye to its reappearance, that is, until I found a way to get it for the collection.

Sometimes patience pays, and I had been keeping tabs not only this book, but another Mosher volume as well. Both were owned by the same dealer and I finally got something I thought he might take in a trade and cash deal from the seller. I was right, and so now I can explain a little about both volumes now in the Bishop Collection.

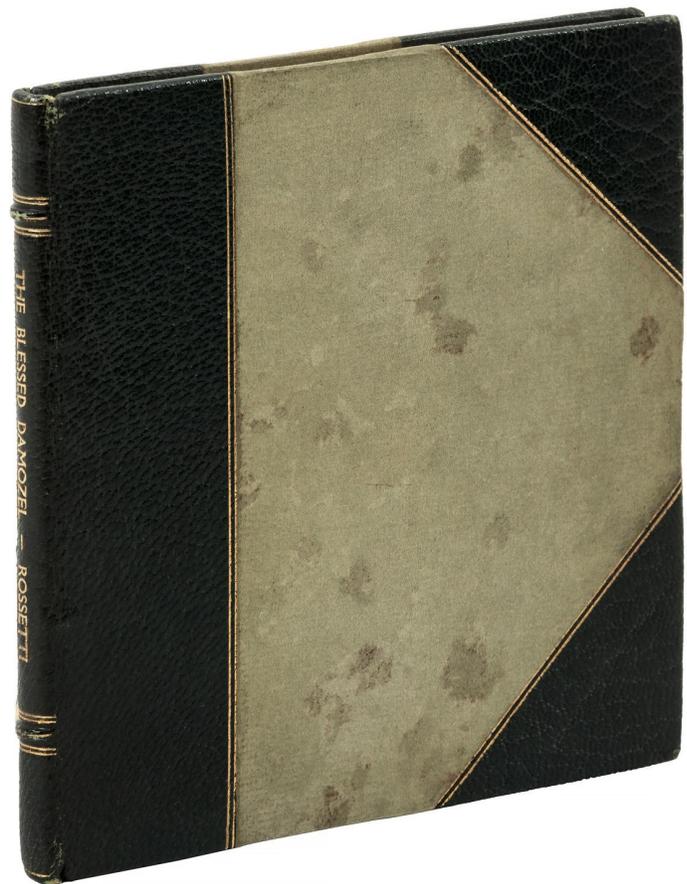
Thomas Bird Mosher trade published one book which carried both his name and that of his co-publisher: William Francis Gable (1856-1921). There were two privately printed volumes in which Mosher shared the billing, those being George Parsons Lathrop's *The Casket of Opals* (1900) with the colophon reading "...fifteen copies printed on pure vellum by Thomas B. Mosher and Gertrude Cowdin..." and the *Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám* (1899) with limitation page reading "...on pure vellum was privately printed by Thomas Bird Mosher and Emilié B. Grigsby..." These were both privately printed volumes, but the Mosher/Gable collaboration was for a regular trade publication of a facsimile volume of Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* (1919). William F. Gable became the volume's patron, he putting up \$1,200 along with Mosher's share to produce the book which included co-publisher billing. Gable certainly could afford the patron fee. He was the owner of a large and highly successful department store as part of the William F. Gable Company with 500 employees in Altoona, Pennsylvania. Gable's assembled a personal library of literary rarities, rare Americana, and manuscripts which took eight thick American Art Association auction catalogues (1923-25), and three Samuel T. Freeman auction catalogues (1932) to dispose of. He moved around book circles for years including the Roycrofters and with members of the Walt Whitman Fellowship, particularly with Horace Traubel.

The earliest correspondence between Gable and Mosher that I've been able to uncover is a 1915 letter in which Mosher briefly discusses "the books of humanity" (Houghton Library), but Gable's introduction to *The Mosher Books* certainly began much earlier. The Mosher Collection already includes a number of William F. Gable association books: (1) a copy of *The Poems of Oscar Wilde* (Mosher, 1905) inscribed "To Elbert Hubbard with sincere regards of William F. Gable. Altoona PA. April 22, 1908", (2) a Japan vellum copy of Clara Sherwood Steven's *Passages from the Philosophy of Herbert Spencer* (Mosher, 1910) bound by L. Averill Cole for William F. Gable which appeared as entry No. 112 in the Nov. 5-6, 1923 American Art Association auction catalogue, (3) a copy of Compton Leith's *Sirenica* (Mosher, 1915) inscribed "With love and Greetings to Horace Traubel from his friend, William F. Gable, December 1915. Altoona, Pa", and lastly—but certainly not least—Gable's copy of John Hay's *In Praise of Omar—An Address Before the Omar Khayyám Club* (Mosher, 1898), this being copy No. 3 of 4 printed on American vellum (bought by Gable from Henry William Poor's library sale), bound in

full russet levant morocco, with floriated border of gilt tooling on sides, heavily gilt paneled spine with flower in each panel, gilt top, pages uncut, by the Club Bindery of New York (American Art Association auction catalogue, No. 5-6, 1923, entry 441). Gable owned a number of the Mosher Books printed on real vellum and bought some from the Emilie Grigsby sale of Jan. 29-31, 1912.

From the Gable auction catalogues one can see a number of books inscribed by Mosher to Gable. In "Part Seven" of the American Art Association catalogue (March 3-4, 1925) there appear a number of Mosher volumes, lots 649-671 inclusive. There are other Mosher books covered at places outside that range, but this represents the greatest concentration of Gable's Mosher collection, and of particular interest is lot 658 in which there appears "The Blessed Damozel. Half green morocco. 1905. *Second edition* [actually third], *limited to 450 copies, on Kelmscott handmade paper.*" Of the four volumes in this lot, the first three are bound by Sangorski & Sutcliffe, "except the last mentioned." This last is most certainly the 1905 edition of which the cataloguer didn't bother to mention Mosher's inscription. So here then is the book as now entered into the Mosher Collection here at Acorn Cottage which I put into the form of a dealer's description which corrects and amends some errors of the previous dealer's write-up:

(Inscribed by Mosher) Rossetti, Dante Gabriel. **THE BLESSED DAMOZEL.** Portland, ME: Thomas Bird Mosher, 1905. Third edition (1901, 1902, 1905; Bishop 47.2) Front., *xiv*, 30, [2] pp.; Photo-gravure frontispiece portrait of Alexa Wilding by Rossetti. About 5 ¾" x 5 ¼" Printed in two colors, including Ricketts drop-caps. Title and inner title page spreads ruled. Bound in contemporaneous three-quarter green French levant over green marbled boards signed: The Rose Bindery--Boston. Gilt tooling on rounded spine; top page edges gilt. One of 450 copies printed on Kelmscott "Hammer & Anvil" hand-made paper. Layout and design "based on the format of the Vale Press, as our reprint professedly is, it shows conclusively how much more beautiful a book can be made by adhering to well recognized standards of page and margin, than by treating the poem as a mere bit of decorative type-work as in the London edition." --Mosher's 1901 catalogue. Textual differences between the Mosher edition and the Vale Press edition include Mosher's additional eleven-page preface, two pages of notes, and the addition of variant phrases from other edition, including an alternate 10<sup>th</sup> stanza.



This copy is inscribed by Mosher to William F. Gable (W.F.G.) of the Gable Department Store in Altoona, PA in the same month/year Mosher was laying out his terms with Gable for the co-publication of the facsimile edition of Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* which was to be Mosher's *tour de force*. The handwriting reflects Mosher's shaky writing with his left hand after suffering a debilitating attack of neuritis which left his right arm lame nine years before. His phrase "a verie parfite lyttel book" in modern parlance is "a very perfect little book":

Dear W.F.G.  
I felt the joy of  
making "a verie parfite  
lyttel book" when I did  
this, the most beautiful of  
all Rossetti's poems.  
Thomas Bird Mosher  
August 8, 1919

Dear W. F. G.

I felt the joy of  
making "a verie parfite  
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this, the most beautiful of  
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The other little volume gotten as part of the "deal" was a copy of *Aucassin & Nicolette* (1907; Bishop 10.7) bound in three-quarter blue crushed morocco over paper boards, this being bound by Rosalie G. [Gardner] Jones, a noted Long Island suffragist known by her peers as "General Jones." This is what is called a training binding in that it was one of the books Rosalie Jones bound while progressing in the art and craft of binding under her instructor. In this case Jones actually inscribed the little volume on the front free endpaper: "Rosalie G. Jones, Cold Spring Harbor, Long Island, N.Y. Bound by her during lesson period in bookbinding." There are several such Mosher books in the collection, some reflecting the very early infancy of someone's training, and others more advanced. With this volume Jones was learning the forwarding of a book, i.e., that which is done up to the point where the binding is either blind- or gilt-tooled. What would be nice is to eventually find an example of her work after it progressed to more sophisticated levels, but finding such might be nearly impossible, especially if this volume represents the furthestmost advance in her training. She might have quite in favor of her suffragette work. Rosalie Jones went on to organize the first Suffrage Hike which left from Manhattan, leaving Dec. 16, 1912, and ended thirteen days later in Albany, NY, when five 'pilgrims' finished this 170 mile walk to bring attention to the issue of women's suffrage. This lady had grit and determination and I'm pleased to have one of her training bindings on a Mosher book in the collection!



Philip R. Bishop  
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