

**Classic Poetry Series**

# **George Darley**

**- poems -**

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## **Dirge**

Prayer unsaid, and mass unsung, Deadman's dirge must still be rung:  
Dingle-dong, the dead-bells sound! Mermen chant his dirge around!

Wash him bloodless, smooth him fair, Stretch his limbs, and sleek his hair  
Dingle-dong, the dead-bells go! Mermen swing them to and fro!

In the wormless sand shall he Feast for no foul glutton be:  
Dingle-dong, the dead-bells chime! Mermen keep the tone and time!

We must with a tombstone brave Shut the shark out from his grave  
Dingle-dong, the dead-bells toll! Mermen dirgers ring his knoll!

Such a slab will we lay o'er him All the dead shall rise before him!  
Dingle-dong, the dead-bells boom! Mermen lay him in his tomb!

George Darley

## **It Is Not Beauty I Demand**

It is not Beauty I demand,  
A crystal brow, the moon's despair,  
Nor the snow's daughter, a white hand,  
Nor mermaid's yellow pride of hair.

Tell me not of your starry eyes,  
Your lips that seem on roses fed,  
Your breasts where Cupid trembling lies,  
Nor sleeps for kissing of his bed.

A bloomy pair of vermeil cheeks,  
Like Hebe's in her ruddiest hours,  
A breath that softer music speaks  
Than summer winds a-wooing flowers.

These are but gauds; nay, what are lips?  
Coral beneath the ocean-stream,  
Whose brink when your adventurer sips  
Full oft he perisheth on them.

And what are cheeks but ensigns oft  
That wave hot youth to fields of blood?  
Did Helen's breast though ne'er so soft,  
Do Greece or Ilium any good?

Eyes can with baleful ardor burn,  
Poison can breath that erst perfumed,  
There's many a white hand holds an urn  
With lovers' hearts to dust consumed.

For crystal brows--there's naught within,  
They are but empty cells for pride;  
He who the Syren's hair would win  
Is mostly strangled in the tide.

Give me, instead of beauty's bust,  
A tender heart, a loyal mind,  
Which with temptation I could trust,  
Yet never linked with error find.

One in whose gentle bosom I  
Could pour my secret heart of woes.  
Like the care-burdened honey-fly  
That hides his murmurs in the rose.

My earthly comforter! whose love  
So indefeasible might be,  
That when my spirit won above  
Hers could not stay for sympathy.

George Darley

## Song

Sweet in her green dell the flower of beauty slumbers,  
Lull'd by the faint breezes sighing through her hair;  
Sleeps she and hears not the melancholy numbers  
Breathed to my sad lute 'mid the lonely air.

Down from the high cliffs the rivulet is teeming  
To wind round the willow banks that lure him from above:  
O that in tears, from my rocky prison streaming,  
I too could glide to the bower of my love!

Ah! where the woodbines with sleepy arms have wound her,  
Opes she her eyelids at the dream of my lay,  
Listening, like the dove, while the fountains echo round her,  
To her lost mate's call in the forests far away.

Come then, my bird! For the peace thou ever bearest,  
Still Heaven's messenger of comfort to me—  
Come—this fond bosom, O faithfullest and fairest,  
Bleeds with its death-wound, its wound of love for thee!

George Darley

## **The Anonymous Poet**

You, the choice minions of the proud-lipped nine  
Who warble at the great Apollo's knee,  
Why do you laugh at these rude lays of mine?  
I seek not of your brotherhood to be:  
I do not play the public swan, nor try  
To curve my proud neck on your vocal streams.  
In my own little isle retreated, I  
Lost myself in my waters and my dreams:  
Forgetful of the world, forgotten too,  
The cygnet of my own secluded wave  
I sing, whilst dashing up their silver dew  
For joy, the petty billows try to rave:  
There is a still applause in solitude,  
Fitting alike my merits and my mood.

George Darley

## **The Fallen Star**

A star is gone! a star is gone!  
There is a blank in Heaven;  
One of the cherub choir has done  
His airy course this even.

He sat upon the orb of fire  
That hung for ages there,  
And lent his music to the choir  
That haunts the nightly air.

But when his thousand years are pass'd,  
With a cherubic sigh  
He vanish'd with his car at last,  
For even cherubs die!

Hear how his angel-brothers mourn -  
The minstrels of the spheres -  
Each chiming sadly in his turn  
And dropping splendid tears.

The planetary sisters all  
Join in the fatal song,  
And weep this hapless brother's fall,  
Who sang with them so long.

But deepest of the choral band  
The Lunar Spirit sings,  
And with a bass-according hand  
Sweeps all her sullen strings.

From the deep chambers of the dome  
Where sleepless Uriel lies,  
His rude harmonic thunders come  
Mingled with mighty sighs.

The thousand car-bourne cherubim,  
The wandering eleven,  
All join to chant the dirge of him  
Who fell just now from Heaven.

George Darley

## **The Joy of Childhood**

Down the dimpled green-sward dancing  
Bursts a flaxen-headed bevy,  
Bud-lipt boys and girls advancing  
Love's irregular little levy.

Rows of liquid eyes in laughter,  
How they glimmer, how they quiver!  
Sparkling one another after,  
Like bright ripples on a river.

Tipsy band of rubious faces,  
Flushed with joy's ethereal spirit,  
Make your mocks and sly grimaces  
At Love's self, and do not fear it!

George Darley

## **The Mermaidens' Vesper-Hymn**

Troop home to silents grots and caves!  
Troop home! And mimic as you go  
The mournful winding of the waves  
Which to their dark abysses flow!

At this sweet hour, all things beside  
In amorous pairs to covert creep;  
The swans that brush the evening tide  
Homeward and snowy couples keep;

In his green den the murmuring seal  
Close by his sleek companion lies;  
While singly we to bedward steal,  
And close in fruitless sleep our eyes.

In bowers of love men take their rest,  
In loveless bowers we sigh alone!  
With busom-friends are others blessed, -  
But we have none! But we have none!

George Darley

## **The Moon and Sea**

Whilst the moon decks herself in Neptune's glass  
And ponders over her image in the sea,  
Her cloudy locks smoothing from off her face  
That she may all as bright as beauty be;  
It is my wont to sit upon the shore  
And mark with what an even grace she glides  
Her two concurrent paths of azure o'er,  
One in the heavens, the other in the tides:  
Now with a transient veil her face she hides  
And ocean blackens with a human frown;  
Now her fine screen of vapour she divides  
And looks with all her light of beauty down;  
Her splendid smile over-silvering the main  
Spreads her the glass she looks into again.

George Darley

## The Phoenix

O Blest unfabled Incense Tree,  
That burns in glorious Araby,  
With red scent chalicing the air,  
Till earth-life grow Elysian there!

Half buried to her flaming breast  
In this bright tree, she makes her nest,  
Hundred sunn'd Phoenix! When she must  
Crumble at length to hoary dust!

Her gorgous death-bed! Her rich pyre  
Burnt up with aromatic fire!  
Her urn, sight high from spoiler men!  
Her birthplace when self-born again!

The mountainless green wilds among,  
Here ends she her unechoing song!  
With amber tears and oderous sighs  
Mourn'd by the desert where she dies!

Laid like the young fawn mossily  
In sun-green vales of Araby,  
I woke hard by the Phoenix tree  
That with shadeless boughs flamed over me,

And upward call'd for a dumb cry  
With moonbread orbs of wonder I  
Beheld the immortal Bird on high  
Glassing the great Sun in her eye.

Stedfast she gazed upon his fire,  
Still her destroyer and her sire!  
As if to his her soul of flame  
Had flown already whence it came;

Like those that sit and glare so still,  
Intense with their death struggle, till  
We touch, and curdle at their chill!  
But breathing yet while she doth burn  
The deathless Daughter of the Sun!

Slowly to crimson embers turn  
The beauties of the brightsome one.  
O'er the broad nest her silver wings  
Shook down their wasteful glitterings;

Her brinded neck high arch'd in air  
Like a small rainbow faded there;  
But brighter glow'd her plummy crown  
Mouldering to golden ashes down;

With fume of sweet woods, to the skies,  
Pure as a Saint's adoring sighs,  
Warm as a prayer in Paradise,  
Her life-breath rose in sacrifice!

The while with shrill triumphant tone  
Sounding aloud, aloft, alone,  
Ceaseless her joyful deathwail she  
Sang to departing Araby!

George Darley

## To Helene

I sent a ring—a little band  
Of emerald and ruby stone,  
And bade it, sparkling on thy hand,  
Tell thee sweet tales of one  
Whose constant memory  
Was full of loveliness, and thee.

A shell was graven on its gold,—  
'Twas Cupid fix'd without his wings—  
To Helene once it would have told  
More than was ever told by rings:  
But now all 's past and gone,  
Her love is buried with that stone.

Thou shalt not see the tears that start  
From eyes by thoughts like these beguiled;  
Thou shalt not know the beating heart,  
Ever a victim and a child:  
Yet Helene, love, believe  
The heart that never could deceive.

I'll hear thy voice of melody  
In the sweet whispers of the air;  
I'll see the brightness of thine eye  
In the blue evening's dewy star;  
In crystal streams thy purity;  
And look on Heaven to look on thee.

George Darley

## **To Helene, On a Gift-ring carelessly lost**

I SENT a ring--a little band  
Of emerald and ruby stone,  
And bade it, sparkling on thy hand,  
Tell thee sweet tales of one  
Whose constant memory  
Was full of loveliness, and thee.

A shell was graven on its gold,--  
'Twas Cupid fix'd without his wings--  
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