GEORGE DARLEY
1795–1846

Over Hills and Uplands High

Over hills and uplands high
Hurry me, Nymphs! O, hurry me!
Where green Earth from azure sky
Seems but one blue step to be;
Where the sun his wheel of gold
Burnishes deeply in her mold,
And her shining walks uneven
Seem declivities of Heaven.
Come! where high Olympus nods,
Groundsill to the hall of Gods!
Let us through the breathless air
Soar insuperable, where
Audibly in mystic ring
The angel orbs are heard to sing;
And from that bright vantage ground
Viewing nether heaven profound,
Mark the eagle near the sun
Scorching to gold his pinions dun;
With fleecy birds of paradise
Upfloating to their native skies;
Or hear the wild swans far below
Faintly whistle as they row
Their course on the transparent tide
That fills the hollow welkin¹ wide!

Hurry me, Nymphs! O, hurry me
Far above the groveling sea,
Which, with blind weakness and base roar
Casting his white age on the shore,
Wallows along that slimy floor;
With his widespread webbed hands
Seeking to climb the level sands,
But rejected still to rave
Alive in his uncovered grave.
Light-skirt dancers, blithe and boon²
With high hosen and low shoon,
'Twixt sandal bordure and kirtle rim
Showing one pure wave of limb,
And frequent to the cestus³ fine
Lavish beauty's undulous line,

1. The air.
2. Benign; gay.
3. Sash.
40 Till like roses veiled in snow
'Neath the gauze your blushing glow;
Nymphs, with tresses which the wind
Sleekly tosses to its mind,
More deliriously disheveled
45 Than when the Naxian widow4 reveled
With her flush bridegroom on the ooze,
Hurry me, Sisters! where ye choose,
Up the meadowy mountains wild,
Ay by the broad sun oversmiled,
50 Up the rocky paths of gray
Shaded all my hawthorn way,
Past the very turban crown
Feathered with pine and aspen spray,
Darkening like a soldan’s5 down
55 O’er the mute stoopers to his sway,
Meek willows, daisies, brambles brown,
Grasses and reeds in green array,
Sighing what he in storm doth say—
Hurry me, hurry me, Nymphs, away!

The Phoenix1

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

5 Half-buried to her flaming breast
In this bright tree, she makes her nest,
Hundred-sunned Phoenix! when she must
Crumble at length to hoary dust!

Her gorgeous deathbed! her rich pyre
Burnt up with aromatic fire!
Her urn, sight high from spoiler men!
Her birthplace when self-born again!

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.

4. Ariadne, deserted by Theseus on the Aegean island of Naxos, was later found there and married by Dionysus (Bacchus), god of wine.
5. Sultan’s.

1. A legendary bird: only one exists at a time; it dies periodically, singing, in aromatic flames, and is reborn from the ashes.
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 breathe 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.
The Mermaidens’ Vesper Hymn

Troop home to silent 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 in 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 bower of love men take their rest,
    In loveless bowers we sigh alone,
With bosom friends are others blest—
    But we have none! but we have none!

1837