

**SYLVIA, OR, THE  
MAY QUEEN: A  
LYRICAL DRAMA**

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Sylvia, or, The May queen: a lyrical drama by George Darley

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**GEORGE DARLEY**

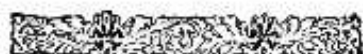
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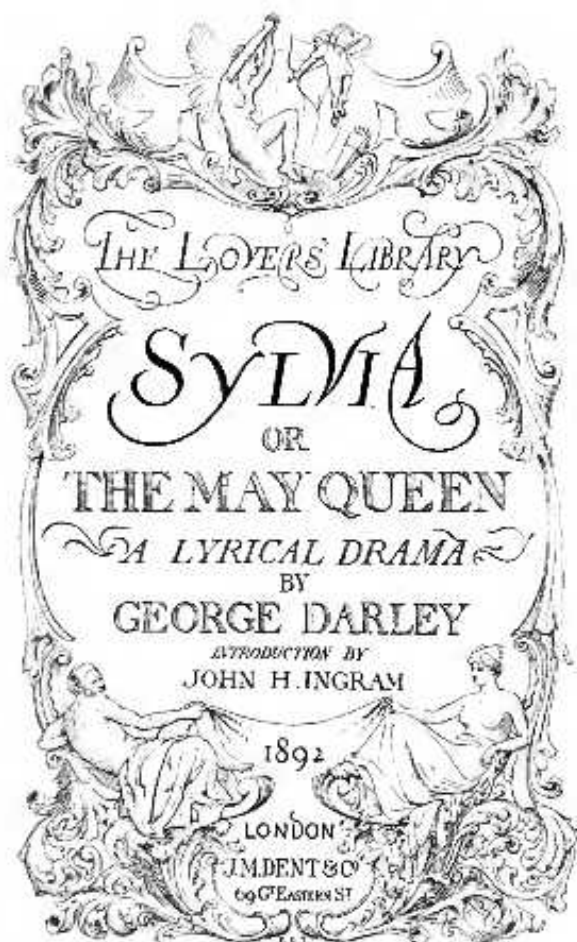
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Sylvia; or, the May Queen











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## George Darley.

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**I**N 1836, Miss Mitford, a leading spirit among the *litterati* of her day, writes:—  
“I have just had a present of a most exquisite poem, which old Mr Carey (the translator of Dente and Pindar) thinks more highly of than any poem of the present day—‘*Sylvia, or the May Queen,*’ by George Darley. It is exquisite—something between the ‘*Faithful Shepherdess*’ and the ‘*Midsummer Night’s Dream.*’”

Half-a-century ago, George Darley, author of the poem thus alluded to, although now known only to a select few, was numbered among the poets of his people. He lived in an age of poets, and yet Carey, no mean judge, held his poetry highest. Lord Tennyson, whose own early lyrics were yet young, was so struck by Darley’s power, that he volunteered to defray the cost of publishing his verse. Mrs Browning, another youthful poet, praised “*Sylvia*” as “a beautiful, tuneful pastoral,” and her future husband, Robert Browning, was deeply impressed by it and its influence. We have his own authority for stating that it did much to determine

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the form of his own early dramas. That "Sylvia" charmed Coleridge, and many other lesser men of his generation, is only natural.

What is the "Sylvia" thus commended, and who its author, Darley? Miss Mitford, whilom the leading authority for all published about the poet, in her wonted good-natured, well-meaning repetition of unreluctant gossip, condenses his story into these words:—"The author (of 'Sylvia') is the son of a rich alderman of Dublin, who disinherited him because he would write poetry; and now he supports himself by writing in the magazines."

As a matter of fact, the poet was not the son of Alderman Darley; he was not disinherited because he wrote poetry, and only the third assertion had a grain of truth in it. Such few biographical *data* as are known, and as are needed to be known, are as follows:—

The poet's father, Arthur, inherited a small independency from his father, George Darley, of the Scalp, County Wicklow. He married a cousin, who is remembered as "a woman of singular beauty and intelligence," and had several children, all of whom became more or less distinguished in their various ways.

George, the eldest, was born in Dublin, in 1795. His parents leaving their native land for the United States, the future poet, accompanied by two sisters, was left in charge of his paternal grandfather, with whom he remained until ten years of age. The boy had become a great favourite with the old Wicklow Squire, notwithstanding the fact that even at that time he was "much more full of thought than able of