

Gerald Griffin (1803-40)

1 *The Bridal of Malahide*

An Irish Legend.

I.

The joy-bells are ringing
In gay Malahide,
The fresh wind is singing
Along the sea-side;
The maids are assembling 5
With garlands of flowers,
And the harpstrings are trembling
In all the glad bowers.

II.

Swell, swell the gay measure!
Roll trumpet and drum! 10
Mid greetings of pleasure
In splendour they come!
The chancel is ready,
The portal stands wide
For the lord and the lady, 15
The bridegroom and bride.

III.

What years, ere the latter,
Of earthly delight
The future shall scatter
O'er them in its flight! 20
What blissful caresses
Shall Fortune bestow,
Ere those dark-flowing tresses
Fall white as the snow!

IV.

Before the high altar 25
Young Maud stands array'd;
With accents that falter

Her promise is made —
From father and mother
For ever to part, 30
For him and no other
To treasure her heart.

V.

The words are repeated,
The bridal is done,
The rite is completed — 35
The two, they are one;
The vow, it is spoken,
All pure from the heart,
That must not be broken
Till life shall depart. 40

VI.

Hark! 'mid the gay clangour
That compass'd their car,
Loud accents in anger
Come mingling afar!
The foe's on the border, 45
His weapons resound
Where the lines in disorder
Unguarded are found.

VII.

As wakes the good shepherd,
The watchful and bold, 50
When the ounce or the leopard
Is seen in the fold,
So rises already
The chief in his mail,
While the new-married lady 55
Looks fainting and pale.

VIII.

“Son, husband, and brother,
Arise to the strife,
For the sister and mother,
For children and wife! 60

O'er hill and o'er hollow,
O'er mountain and plain,
Up, true men, and follow!
Let dastards remain!"

IX.

Farrah! to the battle! 65
They form into line —
The shields, how they rattle!
The spears, how they shine!
Soon, soon shall the foeman
His treachery rue — 70
On, burgher and yeoman,
To die or to do!

X.

The eve is declining
In lone Malahide,
The maidens are twining 75
Gay wreaths for the bride;
She marks them unheeding —
Her heart is afar,
Where the clansmen are bleeding
For her in the war. 80

XI.

Hark! loud from the mountain
'Tis Victory's cry!
O'er woodland and fountain
It rings to the sky!
The foe has retreated! 85
He flies to the shore;
The spoiler's defeated —
The combat is o'er!

XII.

With foreheads unruffled
The conquerors come — 90
But why have they muffled
The lance and the drum?
What form do they carry

Aloft on his shield?
And where does he tarry, 95
The lord of the field?

XIII.

Ye saw him at morning
How gallant and gay!
In bridal adorning,
The star of the day: 100
Now weep for the lover —
His triumph is sped,
His hope it is over!
The chieftain is dead!

XIV.

But O for the maiden 105
Who mourns for that chief,
With heart overladen
And rending with grief!
She sinks on the meadow
In one morning-tide, 110
A wife and a widow,
A maid and a bride!

XV.

Ye maidens attending,
Forbear to condole!
Your comfort is rending 115
The depths of her soul.
True — true, 'twas a story
For ages of pride;
He died in his glory —
But, oh, he *has* died! 120

XVI.

The war cloak she raises
All mournfully now,
And steadfastly gazes
Upon the cold brow.
That glance may for ever 125
Unalter'd remain,

But the bridegroom will never
Return it again.

XVII.

The dead-bells are tolling
In sad Malahide, 130
The death-wail is rolling
Along the sea-side;
The crowds, heavy hearted,
Withdraw from the green,
For the sun has departed 135
That brighten'd the scene!

XVIII.

Ev'n yet in that valley,
Though years have roll'd by,
When through the wild sally
The sea-breezes sigh, 140
The peasant, with sorrow,
Beholds in the shade
The tomb where the morrow
Saw Hussy convey'd.

XIX.

How scant was the warning, 145
How briefly reveal'd,
Before on that morning
Death's chalice was fill'd!
The hero who drunk it
There moulders in gloom, 150
And the form of Maud Plunket
Weeps over his tomb.

XX.

The stranger who wanders
Along the lone vale
Still sighs while he ponders 155
On that heavy tale:
"Thus passes each pleasure
That earth can supply —
Thus joy has its measure —

We live but to die!"

160

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