

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

(From *The Poetical Works of Gerald Griffin*. London,  
1842)