where he entertained O'Connell in 1836. Possibly the Fisher family formed the link between the poet and the painter. Mercier gave Gerald some of the fashionable Byronic gloom, and Gerald's brother points out that the portrait does not quite convey the sitter's wonted cheerful serenity. Otherwise it bears out Dr. Dan's pen-picture of the poet. "In personal appearance he was tall and well-formed and, though rather slender, possessed of considerable muscular strength." There is a street in the Irishtown called after Gerald, but it is his native parish which holds his most apt memorial. In the spring of 1820, while still a lad in his teens, Gerald reported for a local paper the sombre story of Ellen Hanly death, which he was later to transform into the theme of his greatest novel, The Collegians. The Courthouse in Quay Lane, an impressive little building in the severe classical style of the late eighteenth century, was superseded in 1846 by the present City Court. Father Brahan then purchased the building in which Gerald had done his youthful reporting, adapted it as a school, and brought the Christian Brothers, Gerald Griffin's Order, to instruct the boys of his parish. At the centenary of Gerald's birth, the house was raised and enlarged and dedicated to the memory of the Poet-Brother. From a niche in the added storey the bust of Gerald Griffin gazes across the Cathedral lawns to the home of his childhood under the shadow of old St. Mary's.

Of his contemporaries who paid tribute to Griffin, I shall quote one well fitted to judge him as an artist and a man. Addressing the members of the Limerick Philosophical and Literary Society on the eighth of February, 1842, Sir Aubrey De Vere gave his verdict in these words:

Neither can I forget Gerald Griffin, whose writings illustrate so well the national character and scenery of our country: too soon withdrawn from those literary labours which have won a reputation beyond the limits of his own land, and destined to endure: a man of a most winning modesty, shrinking from praise: dreading his own gifts, lest they should not sufficiently conduce to his virtuous designs: and finally turning with conscientious firmness from the open path of fame to that better retirement wherein he might dedicate his whole heart to God.

To the same contrast of shadow and substance Gerald Griffin gave poet's utterance in lines which Tennyson was fond of repeating:

Castles are sacked in war,
Chiefness are scattered far,
Truth is a fix-ed star,
Eileen aroon.

GERALD GRIFFIN'S NIECES.

(Record of Gerald Griffin's nieces, Alice, Geraldine, Anna and Lucy Leake-Griffin, daughters of Dr. Daniel Griffin and Anna Leake).

By MAIRE O'DONOVAN, B.A.

Alice Leake-Griffin (born February 23rd, 1847, died April 30th, 1901), was a nun of the Order of the Faithful Companions of Jesus. We have through the kindness of her Order a biographical note on her as a religious. "She was educated at Laurel Hill Convent, Limerick. She entered there on November 1st, 1865, and was received into the Order there on July 28th, 1869. She made her vows at the Convent of St. Anne d'Auray in Brittany on July 28th, 1872. About 1881 she went to Canada, where she died on April 30th, 1901. Mother Mary Magdalen (Alice) Griffin is remembered in the Order as "a very holy religious, witty and full of humour and as inheriting her uncle's gift of poetry." This conventual record links her with the unending line of our peregrini pro Christo and recalls in its manner and content the obituaries of religious in Gaelic annals. There is the same concentration on the things that are important in the life of the cloister and for the Hereafter.

It was from the Convent of the Order in Clarendon Street, London, that Mother Mary Magdalen went to Canada. During the end of her time in the Clarendon Street Convent, two of her sisters, Geraldine (d. March 6th, 1932), and Anna (d. August 6th,
1936), were also in London. Like their sisters, Mother Magdalen and Lucy, both were educated at Laurel Hill. Anna, who inherited her artistic talent from her mother, was a student of painting at the Lambeth School of Art. She went to Paris to pursue her studies and worked for some time there at the studio of a celebrated painter. On her return to London she continued the practice of her art. The two sisters lived in Chelsea at Milton Chambers, and many of Anna’s sketches and pictures at this period had for their subject the lovely river views from their windows.

They had many interests and activities in London. Ardently patriotic, the core of their interest was Ireland, her culture, her history and the unsatisfied aspirations of her nationhood. This determined their milieu in London, the friends and associates they had there and their choice of work. Anna, on her return from Paris, became Assistant Secretary to the International Peace and Arbitration Association, of which Felix Moscheles, the celebrated painter, was President. She was deeply interested in the work of the Association, and her connection with it made many new friends for Ireland. Geraldine worked for ten years as Secretary of the Women’s National Liberal Association. This was a post that gave her opportunity for informing and influencing English political opinion in a time when there were some hopes of a “settlement” for Ireland from the Liberals. In 1893, the Gaelic League was founded, with its doctrine of the spiritual and cultural separatism of Ireland. The London Branch of the League was, almost literally, an Irish enclave in that city, with an allegiance, a language and a culture of its own. Geraldine and Anna Griffin were loyal and valued members of the London Gaelic League, and helped to organise its activities. They attended the classes, discussions and lectures regularly, and both had a good knowledge of Irish when they returned to Ireland, Geraldine in 1900, Anna shortly after.

Their home henceforward was in Co. Wicklow with their sister, Lucy, at her place, Cuain Ruadh, Enniskerry. Geraldine, was, principally by her interest in the Gaelic language, attracted to West Clare, and subsequently took a house in Kilkkee, where she and her sisters spent much of their time in the summer. That house, Corca Baiscinn, is still in the family. It suited the sisters to have also a pied-a-terre in Dublin, where Anna at times worked at her painting, and which afforded all three sisters extra opportunity for helping in the national activities that were carried on in the capital as the events of history passed through the Sinn Fein period, the start of the Volunteer Movement, the Rebellion of 1916, the Sinn Fein victory in the elections, the setting up of a national assembly in Dail Eireann and its taking over the functions of Government, and the bitter guerilla war which in its Black and Tan phase gained world-wide disrepute for England.

It may be merely fanciful to believe that half-way measures and half-way objectives waken no strong response in women, and that woman’s best service comes forth when the aim is high and the issue clear-cut. It is, however, indubitable that Irish women were during all this stirring period a valuable part of the national resources and that, in very large numbers they gave effective service to the cause of Irish freedom. Geraldine and Anna Griffin had come back from London to find themselves in a time of clarification of national thought and of reviving national hopes. The spirit that had kept them devoted workers for Ireland in the very different and less hopeful decade of their exile responded to the new spirit at home. Cultured, energetic, intellectual and experienced in public affairs, they had much to offer to the service of the community and of their country. All three were interested in the business of Local Government. Geraldine and Anna gave a great deal of time, thought and energy to their duties as members of the Kilkkee Urban Council, and Anna of the Rathdown Board of Guardians. Lucy’s special interest was in the health and welfare of the young. She had in 1898 begun her valuable and devoted service—under the Infant Life Protection Act, later known as the Children’s Act—as Inspector for South Co. Dublin. From this work she retired a couple of years ago. She retains her interest and it finds outlet in her connection with St. Ultan’s Children’s Hospital for which she acts as Chairman of Committee. It is to her generous kindness that the record of her sisters, Geraldine and Anna—and particularly of their time in London—owes most of its interest and substance. With their work in the broader field of national effort one can deal only in summary. It covered activities for the revival of the Irish language and the revivification of Irish culture; publicity for the information of opinion abroad on current events in Ireland and on Ireland’s case for Independence; the political education of our own people at home and abroad; work in the Sinn Fein Courts; and the organisation of
aid for prisoners and deportees and for their families and for the dependents of the fallen.

One part of Geraldine Griffin's work for the language was in connection with the O'Curry Irish College, Carrigaholt. Of this she was a foundation member. Her connection with the College dated from her co-operation with Nelly O'Brien in engaging public interest and support and in organising the financial resources that were required for the enterprise. The earlier years of the College held, for the Committee, normal duties and normal problems. Later came abnormal and testing years, when it was almost impossible for professors and students to attend the sessions and when, later, the College was occupied by English military, and no sessions could be held, and finally, when part of the buildings and much of the College property were burned by Black and Tans. Damage was repaired and normal work resumed when times allowed. Geraldine Griffin took more than her share of coping with these difficulties and her direct influence on the work and fortunes of the College continued till her death.

It is the good fortune of the writer to have known Geraldine, Anna and Lucy Griffin since 1911, and to have worked with Geraldine on the Committee of the O'Curry College for many years and to have been honoured with her friendship. Appreciation of what is fine in human personality and character is really incommunicable to those who have not, themselves, been within contact with it. All that can be offered to readers who were not privileged to know these distinguished Irishwomen is this bare little sketch of their lives. Those who were privileged to know them have the warm memory of their high qualities of mind and heart and of their rare nobility and charm of character, that is an enrichment and an inspiration.