



THE LOVE-KISS OF DERMID AND GRAINNE

WHEN by the twilit sea these twain were
come,
Dermid spake no one word, Grainne was
dumb,
And in the hearts of both deep silence was.
'Sorrow upon me, love,' whispered the grass;
'Sorrow upon me, love,' the sea-bird cried;
'Sorrow upon me, love,' the lapsed wave sighed.

'For what the king has willed, that thing must be,
O Dermid! As two waves upon this sea
Wind-swept we are,—the wind of his dark mind,
With fierce, inevitable tides behind.'

'What would you have, O Grainne: he is King.
'I would we were the birds that come with spring,
The purple-feathered birds that have no home,
The birds that love, then fly across the foam.'

'Give me thy mouth, O Dermid,' Grainne said
Thereafter, and whispering thus she leaned her head—
Ah! supple, subtle snake she glided there
Till, on his breast, a kiss-deep was her hair

That twisted serpent-wise in gold-red pain
From where his lips held high their proud disdain.
'Here, here,' she whispered low, 'here on my mouth
The swallow, love, has found his haunted South.'

Then Dermid stooped and passionlessly kissed.
But therewith Grainne won what she had missed,
And that night was to her, and all sweet nights
Thereafter, as Love's flaming swallow-flights
Of passionate passion beyond speech to tell.

But Dermid knew how vain was any spell
Against the wrath of Finn, and Grainne's breath
To him was ever chill with Grainne's death ;
And well he knew that in a shadowy place
His own wraith stood, and with a moonwhite face
Watched its own shadow laugh and shake its spear
Far in a shadowy dell against a shadowy deer.

FIONA MACLEOD.

