

As you drive along the rugged road from Glandore to the Glen of Roury, you obtain a glimpse of the steep roofs, the tall chimneys, and the grey walls of Droumgarri, peeping forth from the ancestral trees. You see 'the blue, blue smoke' curling softly upward from the many chimneys into the sunlit air. You hear the mellow cawing of the rooks in the trees, where they have made their undisturbed home for centuries.

It was no wonder that Dan O'Connor, impressionable young Celt that he was, in every fibre and in every vein, should fall in love with Droumgarri and with its surroundings; for the scenery in that neighborhood is like the scenery of a dream, and the people who live there seem to have stepped straight out of the pages of an old Irish novel.

And in this old place, in the mellow month of October, under the very eyes, although he knew it not, of the watchful Martha, Dan O'Connor's love-romance began during the first week after his arrival at Droumgarri.

CHAPTER II.

Dan O'Connor had always loved the sea, and his favorite walks during these first days at Droumgarri led him southward to the magnificently rugged coast extending between Cregg and the entrance to the sheltered harbor of Glandore.

One sunny afternoon in the second week in October, Dan was strolling along the heathy sward in the direction of the mouldering beacon-tower of Reenogriana, half-a-dozen dogs careering ahead of him, a huge pipe between his lips.

Dan was a handsome fellow—exactly six feet two in his stockings—broad-shouldered, well set-up, with an erect, graceful carriage and an easy swing of the body as he walked.

Dan had the jet-black, curly hair, the fair, clear skin and the blue-grey, long-lashed eyes of the typical southern Celt. The expression of his face, while in repose, was somewhat dreary and pensive; but when Dan smiled—and Dan often smiled—a beam of sunshine seemed suddenly to illumine every feature and to sparkle in the eyes, until they flashed like jewels.

Dan was drinking in the loveliness of the scene around—the sapphire sea, the grey crags, the brown moorland covered in parts with golden bracken and faded heather—when just as he had reached the ruined beacon-tower he heard a woman's scream from the summit of the cliffs immediately below.

With startled eyes he glanced in the direction whence the cry had come, and then he beheld a middle-aged, well-dressed woman waving frantically to him, with wildly uplifted arms, while scream after scream broke from her lips. 'Good heavens! is she mad? What can be the matter?' Dan cried, as he hastened down the hillside to the cliff-top.

'Oh, come as quickly as you can, for God's sake!' the woman gasped, as he approached. 'My daughter has fallen over the cliff. She was climbing down to get hold of a wounded sea-bird, which someone must have shot in the wing, when she slipped and fell. She is clinging on to the face of the cliff about twenty feet from the summit.'

Almost before this explanation was finished Dan had beheld the terrified girl, who was, as her mother had stated, clinging on to a tuft of coarse grass growing in a crevice of the precipice, and a moment later he had begun the gallant work of rescue.

It was, after all, an easy matter enough to climb down to the spot where the unknown girl stood on a narrow ledge of the cliff-wall; and a minute or two later Dan, with one arm about the girl's waist, had succeeded in scrambling back to the summit of the cliff.

'Oh, how can I ever, ever thank you sufficiently for this!' the girl's mother said—she was a handsome, kindly-faced woman, and her dark eyes were now full of tears. 'I warned Delia not to attempt such a mad thing, as the cliffs are so abrupt and dangerous-looking just here; but she persisted in having her own way. Delia, you look like a ghost! You seem to be on the point of fainting.'

The girl was, indeed, alarmingly pale. She was a tall, slender, very beautiful girl, with dark hair and dark-brown eyes, and something extraordinarily winning and arresting in the expression of her face.

Dan O'Connor was gazing at her with open, undisguised admiration, as she partly rested against the rugged, heathy bank.

Her large blue felt hat, with its blue and white feathers, had been put somewhat out of shape as the result of her accident. Her exquisitely-fitting dark-blue gown and jacket were soiled and slightly torn.

'I am so glad I appeared at that moment,' Dan said, glancing from the girl to her mother. 'When did the accident happen? Was it only just then?'

'About a minute before I caught sight of you,' the elder woman said.

She was gazing as she spoke with a peculiar intentness into Dan's handsome face.

All of a sudden a look of recognition—of surprised certainty—flashed into her dark-grey eyes.

'Either I am making a very great mistake, or you are a son of Lucy O'Connor's,' she said; then: 'Lucy O'Connor, who was before her marriage to Dr. Robert O'Connor, Lucy Ronayne, of Kilronayne, near Bantry?'

'Lucy O'Connor is my mother's name,' Dan said smiling. 'Dr. Robert O'Connor was my father. I am their only child.'

'I guessed it the moment I looked straight into your face. Why, you are the very image of your mother. Lucy Ronayne was the friend of my childhood and girlhood. Before my marriage I was Kate O'Meara. I married John McCarthy, of Ballintemple.'

'I've heard my mother speak of Kate O'Meara,' Dan said impulsively. 'At least, I'm almost sure I have,' he added quickly, as a flush of embarrassment swept over his face.

'I daresay you have; and I know why you have changed color now!' Mrs. McCarthy rapidly returned. 'Your mother quarrelled with me just before her marriage. She accused me of having endeavored to make mischief by means of an anonymous letter between Robert O'Connor and herself. I denied it; but it was no use. She was quite positive in her opinion; and certainly all the circumstances seemed to point to my guilt; and she at once broke off our old friendship, and she has never since forgiven me. So I can quite understand, Mr. O'Connor, that anything you may have heard of me from her lips cannot have been flattering to me, to say the least of it!'

'Oh, I assure you I did not mean to convey anything like that,' Dan said hastily. 'As a matter of fact, I cannot now remember exactly what my mother said about you; but I am sure—'

'Well, whatever she may have said,' Mrs. McCarthy quickly interposed, 'I am as attached to her as ever. I've never changed my old feelings for Lucy. I've never really lost sight of her during all the long years of our separation. From friends of mine, and of her's, I've always learned as to how she was getting on. I was sincerely genuinely grieved when I heard of your father's death five years ago.'

'I am certain of that; and I must say I feel drawn to you as to an old and valued friend!' Dan said, in his characteristically impulsive way, and he suddenly extended his hand and took Mrs. McCarthy's fingers within his very cordial grasp. 'I am really delighted that we've met to-day—really,' Mrs. McCarthy returned smiling. 'Only you had better not tell your mother of this meeting,' she went on, with a little sigh, 'for I'm certain she would not like it at all. Is she staying with you at Droumgarri at present? Of course, I heard of your Uncle Dan's death, but I did not know that you had come to this neighborhood.'

'I came only last week. My mother is living in Merrion square. I could not persuade her to accompany me to Droumgarri. She seems to loathe the country.'

'Poor dear Lucy! How glad I should be to see her again!'

'Aunt Alice is living with her now,' Dan said, feeling more and more drawn to his mother's old friend, and conscious of a wistful longing in his heart to be introduced to this old friend's lovely daughter, who still partly lay against the heathy bank. 'Of course, you remember Aunt Alice?'

A swift shadow passed across Mrs. McCarthy's face.

'Oh, yes, of course, I remember her,' she said, after a little pause. 'But Alice and I were never as intimate as your mother and I. Alice and Lucy were, as girls, at least, totally unlike each other.'

'And they are totally unlike each other still! I must say I never particularly cared for Aunt Alice. I cannot account for the odd feeling; but, frankly speaking, I never quite believed in her—never really trusted her! My mother, however, swears by her, and has always done so, so long as I can remember.'

'Yes, Lucy was passionately devoted to Alice. I used to be quite jealous long ago of Lucy's love for her sister, Mrs. McCarthy said, with another sigh.

'But I am a very selfish person, I fear,' she went on, in an altered voice, and she glanced smilingly at her daughter. 'Here am I, monopolising all the conversation and giving no one else the chance of getting in a word edgewise. Delia, dear, there seems no need of an introduction. This chivalrous young man's mother was at one time my best friend in the whole world!'

'Why, I've known Lucy Ronayne, or seemed to know her, all my life,' Delia McCarthy said, smiling, as she now extended her hand towards Dan. 'A thousand thanks, Mr. O'Connor, for rescuing me from a very risky position to-day. I really think I should have lost my life but for you.'

CHAPTER III.

Thus began Dan O'Connor's love-story; for a love-story it was destined to be, and that in an amazingly short time, moreover.

Mrs. McCarthy and her daughter were staying in Glandore—they had resided there since the previous August—and from the day on which Dan made their acquaintance he became a frequent visitor at their pretty cottage overlooking the sea, a little bit to the westward of Kilfinane Castle.

In his letters to his mother Dan, however, took care never to mention the name of Mrs. McCarthy and her daughter.

Full well he knew that his mother had never forgiven Mrs. McCarthy for that mysterious affair of the past, whatever the true solution of it may have been.

Many a time had Dan heard his mother speak of Kate O'Meara, and always with intense bitterness and anger.

'I am certain mother cruelly wronged her old friend,' Dan often said to himself at this time. 'Nothing could convince me that Delia's mother is other than the very soul and essence of honor, sincerity, and kind-heartedness. And