

Brandeis Madeline

# Shaun O'Day of Ireland



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**Shaun O'Day of Ireland**

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### PREFACE

When I began to write these stories about children of all lands I had just returned from Europe whither I journeyed with Marie and Ref. Maybe you don't know Marie and Ref. I'll introduce them: Please meet Marie, my very little daughter, and Ref, my very big reflex camera.

These two are my helpers. Marie helps by being a little girl who knows what other little girls like and by telling me; and Ref helps by snapping pictures of everything interesting that Marie and I see on our travels. I couldn't get along without them.

Several years have gone by since we started our work together and Marie is a bigger girl – but Ref hasn't changed one bit. Ref hasn't changed any more than my interest in writing these books for you. And I hope that *you* hope that I'll never change, because I want to keep on writing until we'll have no more countries to write about – unless, of course, some one discovers a new country.

Even if a new country isn't discovered, we'll find foreign children to talk about – maybe the children in Mars! Who knows? Nobody. Not even Marie – and Marie usually knows about most things. That's the reason why, you see, though I sign myself

*I am really only  
Marie's Mother.*

## DEDICATION

To every child of every land,  
Little sister, little brother,  
As in this book your lives unfold,  
May you learn to love each other.

## WILL YOU WALK INTO MY STORY – ?

Just because I think it may interest you to know it: – In these photographs Kit Wain posed for Shaun O'Day. Kit is a real Irish boy, but he did not have the adventures that Shaun had in the story. He has had many other adventures, however, because Kit is a young actor. Dawn O'Day was played by Mary Jo Desmond. Mary Jo is just a little schoolgirl like you. She looked so much like Dawn O'Day in the story that I asked her to be Dawn for me. And because she is Irish and loves make-believe, she did it.

When Shaun grew older it was Maurice Murphy who posed. Maurice has had a wonderful life for a young boy. He has played on the stage and in motion pictures and also on the piano! For he is a very talented young musician. Maybe you remember seeing him act in the film called "Beau Geste."

Little saucy Marjorie was posed by a little saucy miss who is known as Carmencita Johnson. I should say "well known" because Carmencita, though only five, is already a picture star. She is a very interesting young person, and if I began to tell you all about her and her family of sisters and brothers it would take up all the book and leave no room for the story.

John O'Day, Shaun's son, is portrayed by another little film artist. His name is Gordon Thorpe. Gordon is only six. But he has appeared in more than sixty motion pictures. Do you remember the little Prince in Douglas Fairbanks' "The Iron Mask?" That was Gordon. And in "The Bridge of San Luis Rey?" You surely recognized him.

Dick Good was the fighting boy who didn't believe that Marjorie was a fairy. And of course I need not tell you that the scenes of cities and buildings and places in Ireland were all played by those cities and buildings and places *themselves*.

That is, when I was in Ireland I asked them to pose for me. And they did it willingly the way the children did. They posed very well, in fact. Very quietly.

Only the rain in Ireland is not willing. The rain does not want photographers to catch the beauty of the country. The rain tries to spoil everything for the poor photographers. But we forgive him because he makes Ireland so green.

Here are the names of the little children who helped me so nicely by coming to Marjorie's birthday party and posing as her guests: Alice and Howard Bucquet, Caroline Kuhns, Barbara and Patrick Ford, Betty and Stephen Kline, Marie Madeleine Brandeis and Dietrich Haupt.

The only grown-up in the story, John's girl-fairy, is Miss Alice White. Miss White is such a busy star that I think I should thank her for stopping long enough from her work to be John's girl-fairy in the pages of this book. And I think I should thank all the rest of these good people, even if they are only little people, for they too, are busy. And it is sometimes hard to tear oneself away from the work of the world and walk into a fairy tale.

But these in the photographs did it. And that is what I am going to ask you, young readers, to do now. Come along! See if you can!

*Madeline Brandeis.*

## PART I

### CHAPTER I ISN'T IT A GREAT WONDER?

The wee word "why"  
Is a fairy gift  
To little babes at birth,  
It opens wide the wonder world  
To every child on earth.

Isn't it a great wonder – the fair green Emerald Isle?

And do you know why Ireland is so green? It is because the rain fairies love Ireland. They have made it the greenest spot on earth. They do be sprinkling it forever with the drops of their fairy rain.

Ireland is divided into four provinces. They are Ulster, Leinster, Munster, and Connaught.

In Connaught is the County of Galway. In the County of Galway is the District of Connemara.

In Connemara there is a village that looks out upon a lake. And in that village are wee houses covered with thatched roofs – roofs of straw.

Inside one of these houses there lived a boy, Shaun O'Day. But I am not going to tell you now about Shaun O'Day, nor of the strange thing that befell him. Not now.

First, I shall tell you about his country. I shall tell you about his country because all children love to know the why and the wonder of things. And great is the wonder of Ireland.

This is the tale of the Province of Connaught and how it got its name. Long ago the western districts of Ireland were named after the person who took possession of them.

At this time there reigned a powerful king whose name was Conn. He was good as well as great, and dearly loved by his people.

His Queen was equally beloved. Her name was Eda. Their son was a blessed and good boy. They named him Conn-eda, after both his parents.

As Conn-eda grew to manhood, his strength and goodness grew with his years. All was harmony in the west until a great sorrow fell upon the land. The Queen died. The country mourned for a year and a day.

And then the King married again. But the new Queen was not good and kind as Queen Eda had been. She was wicked and cruel.

She had several children of her own, and was jealous of Conn-eda, who was the favorite of the King and the darling of the people.

She clearly foresaw that Conn-eda would be King after the death of his father. She wanted her own son to become King some day.

And so she planned to destroy Conn-eda or have him exiled from the country. With envy and hatred in her heart, the wicked Queen went to consult a witch.

The witch gave the Queen a chess-board and told her to invite Prince Conn-eda to play a game of chess.

The witch said to the Queen, "The loser of this game shall be obliged to obey the orders of the winner. And, you, great Queen, shall win the game! Having won the game, you are to send the Prince Conn-eda upon a dangerous journey. He must seek and bring to you, within a year and a day,



three golden apples, a magical black steed, and the Hound of Supernatural Powers. These things are so well guarded that the Prince will surely lose his life in attempting to seek them."

The Queen was delighted and hastened to invite Conn-eda to play a game of chess. He agreed to the conditions of the game, and it came about as the witch had promised. The wicked Queen won.

But so pleased was she with her triumph and so greedy for further power that she challenged the Prince to another game. To the Queen's astonishment and horror, Conn-eda won this second game.

"Since you won the first game," said Conn-eda, "you shall be first to command your reward."

The Queen said, "My reward shall be the three golden apples, the Black Steed, and the Hound of Supernatural Powers. These you must seek and bring to me within the space of a year and a day. If you fail you must leave your country forever or lose your life."

Conn-eda answered, "Then my order to you is that you sit upon the topmost spire of yonder tower until I return. If I do not return, you may come down at the end of the year and a day."

Conn-eda was troubled and went to consult with a great Druid. The poor Prince had no idea how he was to find these magical treasures.

The great Druid gave the Prince a little, shaggy pony. He bade Conn-eda obey this little horse.

After further instructions from the great Druid, Conn-eda mounted the shaggy steed and set out upon his journey.

His adventures were many. Through them all, the little shaggy horse helped and guided him. The animal had the power of speech.

After days of hardship and danger, Conn-eda reached the walls of a great city. Two huge towers stood on either side of the gate and sent forth flames of fire. The pony bade Conn-eda alight from his back and take from his ear a small knife.

"With this knife," said the steed, "kill me! Then wrap yourself in my skin, and you shall be able to pass the gates of the city unharmed. All I ask is that you return to my body and pour a drop of this powerful ointment upon my poor flesh."

With these words the pony gave Conn-eda a bottle of magic fluid.

The Prince cried, "Never, never! I would rather die than kill you, my good friend!"

But at last the pony persuaded Conn-eda, and the Prince stabbed his noble steed. His heart bled, and he was in despair at what he had done.

But he suddenly thought of the bottle of fluid which the steed had given him. Following the animal's advice, the Prince poured the ointment over the horse's body.

No sooner had he done this than the horse's shape changed to the form of a handsome young man.

"Behold!" cried the noble youth. "You have freed me from a wicked enchantment. I am brother of the King of the city. It was a wicked Druid who kept me so long in the form of a shaggy steed. Now, through your brave act, you have broken the spell, and I shall help you in your quest."

The handsome Prince asked his brother, the King, for those treasures which Conn-eda sought. Gladly did the King give to him the apples from his magic tree, the Black Steed, and the precious hound. With these three treasures did Conn-eda return to his country.

The wicked Queen, who was sitting upon the top of her tower, saw Conn-eda approaching. She saw him riding upon a prancing steed and leading a curious animal by a silver chain.

The Queen knew that he was returning in triumph. In despair she cast herself from the tower.

That was her end. And that was also the end of trouble in the kingdom of the west. For at the death of the good King Conn, his son Conn-eda was made king. Conn-eda ruled wisely, and it was after his name that the province of Connaught was called.

In Connaught is the County of Galway. Sheep are raised in Galway. And it has a rugged, wild seacoast.

It was on this coast that the wreck of part of the Spanish Armada took place in 1588. For this reason there is still to be found, in this part of Ireland, people of Spanish descent. And the fairies are said to love the County of Galway. In Galway County is the District of Connemara.

Once upon a time there dwelt a powerful family named Conmac. In Irish "Connemara" means "Seaside of the Conmacs," for it was this wild and rocky shore that was used by these ancient royal people as their seaside.

Connemara is called the Congested District of Ireland. The word "congested" means "overcrowded." But in this case it does not mean that the country is overcrowded with people. For the people are few here in this wild land.

But the barren soil does not yield enough for those few people. And there is much poverty in Connemara.

But there also are lakes of great beauty, and valuable marble, known as Connemara marble. And there are fairies! Well do the fairies love Connemara!

In Connemara there is a village, and in that village lived a boy named Shaun O'Day.

Do you know the why of that name Shaun? It is the same as the name John. But it is an Irish name. It is spelled "Sean" in Irish and pronounced "hwan."

It is Jean in French, and Giovanni in Italian, and Hans in German, and Ivan in Russian. It is Juan in Spanish, Jock in Scotch, and Johnny in American.

It is a Hebrew word and has a very beautiful meaning: "Gift of God." Do you wonder that so many boys all over the world are given the name John?

Here we have the why and the wonder of the land of Shaun O'Day. So now we shall hear of the strange things that befell this lad, who lived in the Emerald Isle.

## CHAPTER II

### SHAUNEEN AND THE LEPRECHAUN

"Can you not catch the tiny clamor,  
Busy click of an elfin hammer,  
Voice of the Leprechaun ringing shrill  
As he busily plies his trade?"

– *W. B. Yeats*

We have been speaking of the fairies and how they love Ireland.

The fairies are divided into tribes just the way Ireland itself is divided into many districts, counties, and provinces.

There are many tribes of fairies, and these tribes are all quite different from one another.

There are those who dress like the flowers; and those that change themselves into various shapes. There are evil fairies and solitary fairies.

You must always call them the "Good People," for they are easily offended.

But if you believe in them and leave a bit of milk for them upon the window sill, they will bring luck and happiness to you.

Now the fairy that we are going to meet in this story is called the leprechaun, or fairy shoemaker. We are going to meet him, because if it had not been for him, there would be no story at all.

The fairy shoemaker sits under a toadstool making tiny shoes. The word "leprechaun" comes from two Irish words meaning "one shoe." The reason he bears this name is because he is always working upon one shoe.

The leprechaun is quick and mysterious. He is also mischievous. And one of his great pranks is stealing wee boys away.

He steals wee Irish boys away from their homes because they do work so well. He makes them work for himself – this mischief-making fairy!

He will not bother with wee girls.

"Wee girls are not so strong as wee boys," says he.

So when you meet Shaun O'Day, you must not be surprised to find him wearing a petticoat! You must not be surprised, because it is the fault of the leprechaun.

You see, Shaun O'Day lived in a very western part of Ireland, in Connemara, where fairies abound.

And in the village where he lived, the boys were all dressed in red petticoats! They were dressed in red flannel petticoats until they reached a tall and manly age.

This was many years ago. And though they would not tell you why they wore those petticoats, I am telling you 'twas because of the leprechauns.

Every wee boy's mother feared the leprechaun. And so she dressed her boy in the dress of the girl to trick that sly creature.

Boys were needed badly by the human folk. Why should the fairy folk be taking them away?

Shaun had a good, kind father. He was a fisherman. Shaun's mother was dead.

But Shaun and his father lived happily enough until one day Shaun's father married again.

He married a woman who had four sons. Grown-up boys they were, and lazy.

Like the Queen in the story of Conn-eda, this woman was unkind. Little love had she for Shaun, and she made him work hard.

Poor little lad! He was very young when he had to labor like a full grown man, while the sons of his stepmother rested or played.

Shaun was always called Shauneen by his father, who loved him dearly. "Shauneen" means "little Shaun." "Een" is the Irish for "little."

"Oh, Shauneen, lad," said the father, one night after his return from sea, "'tis tired you look, and worn. Faith! Can the school work be so hard?"

Shaun did not tell his father that the wicked stepmother had kept him from school that day. He did not tell his father that she had made him walk upon an errand, miles and miles away. He did not say that she had beaten him when he returned.

Shaun was often tempted to tell these things to his good, kind father. But he feared to cause the poor man sorrow.

"Sure, and 'twould be a pity to cause him grief, and he so good," the lad had often thought to himself. "And I can bear it all, for have I not myself to love me?"

Shauneen was a brave boy and felt that to whimper to his father would be weak.

He was a sturdy little lad. His hair was Irish red and his cheeks were bright and rosy from the damp, rainy wind. He was strong and manly.

He hated the red petticoat he was forced to wear. Often he had thought of putting on the clothing of a real boy.

But always in his heart, as in the hearts of other village boys, there was the fear of the leprechaun!

And if he were stolen away, what would his dear father do? His dear father, who loved him!

It was only because of his father that Shauneen did not give himself to the fairies.

He would not have been afraid of the fairies.

He would have liked them to take him away. They could not be so cruel as his stepmother.

Sometimes Shaun's stepmother made him mind her baby. He had to carry it upon his back. Many of the village boys did this sort of thing, and so it was not the disgrace that it would be in a present-day city.

He often went down to the shore.

To-day as he approached the shore, he met a friend. This friend was a girl, the daughter of a neighbor. Her name was Eileen. But Shauneen did not call her that.

She was his little schoolgirl sweetheart, and he called her Dawn. He called her Dawn because he told her that she was the dawn of day to him.

"Some day," he said, "'tis myself, Shaun O'Day, will marry you. Then you will be in truth my Dawn O'Day."

To-day they looked out across the great ocean and dreamed of a new world out there. They dreamed of America.

And Shaun said, "When I am tall and strong, I shall take you in a ship to America. Och, we'll be after building a houseen in the New Island!"

The New Island was their Irish name for America.

It was a rainy day, but they did not notice it. Rain is nothing to Irish children. And as they talked together on the shore in the drizzling rain, they heard a strange cry.

Louder grew the cry, and suddenly they saw men and women running toward the shore. They heard the women wailing. They heard the tramp, tramp of men's heavy boots.

Shaun stood up, with the baby on his back. He shaded his eyes and looked.

The girl stood, too. She gave a low cry.

"Och, Shauneen!" she moaned. "'Tis a fishing boat has been wrecked! Och, the poor wives and children of the men 'twere in it!"

And she moaned and rocked back and forth.

The waters made a roaring sound. The sky was leaden gray. The men were working, pulling in the wreck of the boat.

Shaun gave the baby to Eileen. Then the boy in his red petticoat started to run.

His feet were bare, but he could skim over those rough rocks like a wild animal. His feet never had known shoes.

His ruddy face had gone white. He reached the group of working men and moaning women. Then he fell upon his face, and a great sob came from his heart.

Among the lost men was his own father!

## CHAPTER III

### COME AWAY

"Come away, O human child!  
To the woods and waters wild,  
With a fairy hand in hand."

– *W. B. Yeats*

The sea had taken away Shaun's only loved one.

Shaun O'Day stood upon the banks of the little lake near his village. He stared out across the blue Irish lake. That morning his stepmother had beaten him.

It was several months since the sea accident had taken his father from him. It was several sad, cruel months to the boy Shaun.

If it had not been for his little Dawn O'Day, Shaun would have run away. He would have run and run – anywhere to get away from this life of hard work and cruelty.

But he did not want to leave little Dawn O'Day. She pleaded with him to stay. She was afraid of the fairies.

To-day he stood beside the lake, and he had a bundle by his side. It was a bulky bundle. He had worked hard all that morning. He had helped the men burn kelp.

Kelp is seaweed. The people burn it and make iodine from what is left of it. Kelp burning is an important occupation in western Ireland.

Shaun had worked hard. His little rough hands burned. His little sturdy body ached. He was hungry.

He had gone home and, seeing the family at dinner, he had helped himself to potatoes.

His stepmother had cried, "Begob, and did I tell you to serve yourself? Are you, indeed, the King himself?"

With that, she had beaten him.

Now Shaun stood upon the shore of that blue Irish lake near his village. He had taken a suit of clothes belonging to one of his stepbrothers. A suit of boy's clothes it was.

He would put it on. He would stand by the lake and call to the leprechauns to take him away. He would work for the leprechauns. Yes, willingly would he work and toil for the fairy folk!

He started to undo the paper in which he had wrapped the clothing. He heard a sound and looked up. Eileen was standing before him. It was his little Dawn O'Day.

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