

SEAN O'CASEY

Inishfallen, Fare Thee Well



MACMILLAN PAPERBACKS



Inishfallen

FARE THEE WELL

BY

Sean O' Casey

*The wheel of th' wagon's broken,
It ain't goin' to turn no more;
The wheel of th' wagon's broken,
An' there's weeds round th' ranch-house door.*

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style - very descriptive. Uses a lot of personification. Uses alliteration to empathize. His writing comes out - it has warmth - not cold. Uses a lot of sharp contrasts to help the war + cruelty stand out. Murder vs. humor.
Cory thinks it's crazy that the people were not seeing the real conditions - Blind.

TO
WALTER McDONALD, D.D.

*Professor of theology in St. Patrick's Roman
Catholic College, Maynooth, for forty
years; a great man gone, and almost
forgotten; but not quite forgotten*

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HIGH ROAD AND LOW ROAD

THINGS had changed, but not utterly; and no terrible beauty was to be born. Short Mass was still the favourite service, and Brian Boru's harp still bloomed on the bottles of beer. But the boys were home again from prison-camp and prison cell. First the venial sinners from Frongoch; then the mortal sinners from Wakefield, Reading, Dartmoor, and other jails. They've had their lesson, thought the sophisticated British Authorities, and from this out they will be pure and prim. The convicts warned by the spitting and hissing of their departure to their prisons, hoped they'd steal quietly through the city to fireside and bed; but the people had changed utterly, and thronged their streets to cheer them. The wail of the Irish ochone had changed into the roar of the Irish hurrah. Again, the felon's cap had become the noblest crown an Irish head could wear. Nothing could be too good for the boys. When one spoke, all had to remain silent. They led at all meetings, dominated committees, won at cards, got everything anyone had to give, and were everywhere forced to lay down the law on all philosophy, patriotism, foresight, prophecy, and good manners. Was he out in Easter Week? became the touchstone of Irish life. And it was those who hadn't been out themselves who roared silence at anyone venturing to send a remark into a conversation led by a

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lad home from a prison or a concentration camp; for the lads, themselves, were exceedingly modest about it all, and were often embarrassed by their hangers-on, who forgot that most of Dublin, willy-nilly, was out in Easter Week; that there weren't many Dublin houses without bullet-holes in them; and that casualties were heavier among those who weren't out than among those who were. So for a long time, Easter Week became the Year of One in Irish history and Irish life.

Now the manœuvring began: the young leaders, still alive, circled round each other, wary and watchful, eager to snap up a well-considered trifle of position that would give them the power to govern. Spirals of political movement began to appear, with Michael Collins dancing a jig in one; Arthur Griffith doing a new Irish-Hungarian dance in another; and Eamonn De Valera, a fresh young fellow, a bit of a dancer himself, side-stepped from one group to the other, hands on hips, advising them to join hands, and foot it featly here and there, pointing a pliant toe himself to show others the way—now glide! De Valera was very supple.

At the big Sinn Fein Ard Fheis, stout with unity, the choice for President lay between a young man, a middle-aged one, and an old veteran; between De Valera, a soldier, and a man; Arthur Griffith, the politician; and Plunkett, Count of the Holy Roman Empire—wherever that was. There was the freshman, in a prominent place, waiting to blot out the figure of the old stager, Griffith, from the view of the people; just, too, when he was about to have a life-size picture taken. The modest young man was about to

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turn into the daring young man on the flying tripeace. Griffith was threatened with the job of sitting behind De Valera for the rest of his life, and he looked glum. Plunkett had only his prayers to help him; and Griffith had no chance, for the fires of Easter Week were still a halo round De Valera's head; he had been the last to surrender, and had shown such ability in minor military manœuvres, that had he had a fuller direction of the whole contest, the British would have been given a far tougher job to do. Griffith heard all bassi, tenori, soprani, and baratoni in the country singing, top-voiced, *We'll Crown De Valera King of Ireland*. So Griffith stood out to say, I withdraw in favour of Mr. De Valera, a soldier and a man. The white-bearded Vatican Count Plunkett stood forth to say, I withdraw in favour of Mr. De Valera, a man and a soldier, and the thing was done; so with a mighty cheerio, Ireland elected an heroic homily to be her leader.

It was a curious choice to Sean, for to him, De Valera seemed to be no Gael either in substance or in face, though he was probably one in theory. Though it is recorded, he played hurley when he was a kid, Sean couldn't see an excited De Valera rushing round a hurling field; and, certainly, he had never known him in the team attached to the Central Branch of the Gaelic League; he couldn't see De Valera abandoning himself to sweat and laughter in the dancing of a jig, nor could he see him swanking about in sober green kilt and gaudy saffron shawl; or slanting an approving eye on any pretty girl that passed him; or standing, elbow on counter in a Dublin pub, about to lower a drink, with a Where it goes, lads. No, such as he would be

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always in a dignified posture at Dail or Council, or helping to spray prayers at a church gathering. He knew, like Griffith, next to nothing about the common people. He was of the house with the bow-window, lace curtains, and the brass knocker—planetoids to the planet of the Big House. He was outside of everything except himself. Sean had listened often to him pouring out phrases by the ten thousand, not one of which had even on it the glisten of a tinsel dew-drop. There seemed to be no sound of Irish wind, water, folkchant, or birdsong in the dry, dull voice; not that of lark, linnet, blackbird, or thrush; not even the homely caw of an Irish crow: the entire man was invested with a mantle, made whole with half from the cloak of Dan O'Connell and half from that of Thomas Davis, pinned wide in front by an inscription of the Sacred Heart. Griffith's voice, at least, was cold; De Valera's was neither cold nor hot—it was simply lukewarm, and very dreary. But it inspired his followers, now almost the whole of Catholic Ireland, who looked upon him as a Bonnie Prince Charlie in sober suiting, and bruited his fame about the land with many banners. De Valera had chained together all ambitious and disagreeing Irishmen in the bond of peace and unenduring fellowship, so that England got nervous at this unforeseen sight, and began to order men in Connacht to go into Ulster, and men in Leinster to go into Munster, putting those in jail who waited to pack up a pair of pyjamas, because delays were dangerous.

Sean, to help on the good work, wrote a stirring ballad called *The Call of the Tribe*, and hurried to Liberty Hall to get Seumas Hughes, who was then secretary, or some-

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thing there, to the Transport Union, to put music on it. Seumas thrilled over the verses, saying he'd do all a man could to compose an air worthy of the song's sentiments. So in a week's time, off Sean hurried again to get the song adorned with the promised music, but it was handed back to him without a mark; Hughes telling him that he had had orders from above not to have anything to do with that fellow Casside. Dejected and oppressed, Sean tore the song into little pieces, and threw them from him into the silent square so that they might be lost with the valour, the enterprise, and the bold endeavour that had graced and lighted up the place when the indomitable Larkin spoke his flaming words from the window above, now sealed up and dumb with the gloom of a fell and angry caution. Orders! From whom? Not, surely, from Bill O'Brien, for he was a democrat of democrats, blandly tolerant of all men, and eager, as few other men were, to love his neighbour as himself?

Still, an odd man, this Bill O'Brien who now guided the workers of Ireland with the more cautious marching command of Right, right, right, right, right, instead of the old fiery one of Left, left, left, left, left, when the hearts of men stirred to the shout of the militant workers. Liberty Hall had been shoved back into order after the battering it had got from the guns of the Helga, but there was a woe-begone look on its face, for its great men had gone, and Ichabod was its name now. It was but a hatchway now for the payment of dues by its members. Odd the building looked, disarmed of its temper and temerity, and it seemed to be ashamed of still standing there with one of its cham-

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pions dead, and the other in a faraway prison. The Union's Executive had gone far from the madding crowd of workers, and had taken over a Georgian house in Rutland Square whose dignified doorway, tiled hall, plate glass, pinewood counters, and stately desks gave it a presence that made it ashamed of its parent, Liberty Hall, with its raucous voice, turbulent manner, and defiance of all power inimical to the workers' cause. Here, behind a formidable desk, sat William O'Brien, known among the workers as Old Bill, thinking deeply, and manœuvring cleverly, to gather all Ireland's workers into what was called The One Big Union.

Bill had no look of a Labour leader about him, but rather that of a most respectable clerk at home in a sure job; though Sean had met him at a Socialist gathering where little Walter Carpenter, the Wicklow Englishman, had auctioned tiny red flags—the first, he said, seen in the streets of Dublin—a man named Lee buying one for a fiver, and Bill taking one of a few left for ten shillings; the joyful event ending by a Mrs. Cogley singing *The Marseillaise*, and all singing, in unison, *The Red Flag*. O'Brien had a cold, keen mind, masked by a set, pale face, beaded by two small eyes darting out a point of light in any quick and sudden glance taken at another; a short brown beard covered the chin, its line carried along by two dark brows sprouting harshly across a bony-looking forehead. His body was usually bent forward at the waist from the habit of constantly stooping forward to balance away an imperfection in a foot. Sean had often listened to his cold voice speaking; and, at times, when angry, the face

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waxed deadly white, and the cold voice took on a bitter tone, without a spark of warmth in it, so that its intensity made a sensitive listener shiver.

He seemed to be a self-centered man, finding in himself all that was needed to live a cool and concentrated life; hardly ever seeming to take notice of things left or right of him. Riding his bicycle, he invariably looked straight ahead, as if he were passing through deserted streets; and at a meeting, the rather sour, but certainly sharp, face never wavered a hair's breadth from a straight-out stare to the centre in front of him. A frozen sense of self-importance animated the man; and the clever, sharp, shrewd mind at white heat behind the cold, pale mask, was ever boring a silent way through all opposition to the regulation and control of the Irish Labour movement. So this curious, silent shape, always neatly dressed, wearing in the lapel of his coat an invisible last shred of the tattered red flag, once held high by Larkin and Connolly, could be seen only at meetings, or on a bicycle on his way to one; or in his newly-furnished office, if one had a passport for admission; but never, as far as Sean knew, at a picture gallery, at a play, at a music hall; or in a pub with a pint before him, or a half a malt waiting at his elbow; never even to be seen rambling a country lane with a lassie on his arm; too high-minded, too busy, too full of all sweet, good things in himself to be troubled with these things of the earth, earthy. With De Valera, he would share the eternal glory of sacrificing himself for the common good; a bud that was to open into the tripartite government of all Irish life, the one to be supreme in politics, the other in labour, with a churchman to

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see that all went well with the faith, so that a new trinity, one and indivisible, should live in peace, unity, joy, and quadragesimal jubilation under the siestal shadow of the mighty mitre of Armagh.

As Sean couldn't be busy one way or another, he forged a third method, and joined the few who formed the little Socialist Party of Ireland, a Lett named Sidney Arnold (who since the Red Revolution in Russia, said his name was Semyon Aronson), Hector Hughes, a young barrister, and others. So Sean went about campaigning for Meals for Necessitous Schoolchildren; delivering handbills in the streets to the few who wanted them, hastily organising meetings, and doing most of the work while the others did most of the talk. To keep himself from the sin of idleness, he got together a concert, including a one-act play, in which he himself took one of the principal characters, and persuaded Arthur Armstrong to give them the Olympia free for the great occasion. On the night of the event, Armstrong met Sean, who had come early to prepare, and told him, angrily, that the thing hadn't been advertised, and no-one would be there, the bleak result of which would hurt the good name of his theatre; and he exploded into wrath when Sean told him his one trouble was that the Olympia wouldn't be able to hold all who came. Some time later, the stage carpenter came in, and the anxious Armstrong asked him if there was any sign of an audience collecting outside. Audience? echoed the carpenter; Jasus, th' street's jammed, an' they're holdin' up th' traffic! Then there came upon Armstrong fear that his theatre would be wrecked, and he rushed round, madly, looking for stew-

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ards. With tremendous difficulty, the doors were opened, and the stewards were swept off their feet by the incoming tide of people; so swift and sweeping that many with tickets for the boxes were carried up to the gallery, and some of those with tickets for the gallery were borne, almost shoulder-high, into the boxes. When the theatre was full, the doors bolted and barred, Sean, dressed for his part in plus-fours and gorgeous pullover, stood on a window-sill high up in the building, and appealed to a great crowd below in the street to go home quietly, and forgive the theatre for not being a bigger one. And, when all was done, Sister Helena, of the St. Laurence O'Toole Sisters of Charity, received a goodly sum to furnish out penny dinners for the poor.

Prime dinners, wholesome dinners here—only a penny each! and Sean smiled ironically to himself, as he cautiously passed out over the polished floor of the convent, when he thought that no-one needed a penny dinner more than his mother and himself; but pride kept the two of them miles away from one. Oh, pride, oh, foolish pride! Oh, sweet and generous God, Who bringest the harvest in due season and fillest the heart of man with good things, here are two of Thy children who need a dinner of some sort, but who haven't a ha'penny to buy a penny one. Let us say a silent prayer of thanks for what we've got, and what we are to receive in the sour bye and bye: Oh, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, we whisper hearty thanks well up to Thee for the fruits of the earth which Thou hast not bestowed upon us, though Thy intention was good; though Thou hast failed to fill our

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hearts with food and gladness. We praise Thee, at least, for the fine display of all Thy good gifts in the wide shop windows; for the bread that strengthens the heart of a few men; and for the wine that maketh glad the hearts of others: moselle, hock, those of the Rhine, Sauterne, Burgundy, and the heady joy coming from Champagne. Though our hearts and those of our neighbours be thin with meagre joys, and fading towards dryness, we magnify Thee for the feverish dreams we have had sometimes, during fasts and the higher festivals, of all good things; of cheeses, camembert, stilton, cheddar, and roquefort; of the dark-gold sherries of Spain and the rich, red vintage of Portugal. We rejoice in our foiled dreams of the luscious plums, pears, and peaches of Europe, the delicious citrus fruits of Africa, the dates and figs of Barbary, making our poor mouths water, and our hearts widen out in free-will acknowledgement of Thy goodness and fair play; not forgetting the coffee of Mocha, pineapples of the Indies, and the gold-crustured bread born of the grain from Canada and Illinois, which, with well-brewed tea, gathered from the aromatic plant of Assam, enables us to live on, and enjoy, in dream, the goodly things Thou hast bestowed upon the children of men. We bless Thy name, too, for the kind hearts, that are more than coronets, who have got together the valuable penny dinners for the poor, invoking St. Anthony, himself, that he may induce Thee to provide the miracle that will put a cigar in every grimy hand when each gorgeous feast has ended.

Two fierce fights were going on for liberty: one on the little green dot in the world's waters, called Ireland; and

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the other over a wide brown, grey, blue, and scarlet expanse of land, later to overflow into the many-coloured, gigantic bloom of the Soviet Union. The first for a liberty of the soul that was to leave the body and mind still in prison; the other for the liberty of the body that was to send the soul and mind as well out into the seething waters of a troubled world on a new and noble adventure. Dublin was astir, for many were busy in its secret places hammering out in thought the iron nature of an ironic people into a shape of an Irish Republic. Young men, in slum and shady avenue, were concerning themselves with the idea of giving up any comfort they had, and risking their lives, that they might be numbered among them who would be remembered, if not forever, for awhile anyhow. Some had died already, and Thomas Ashe was dead now. Killed through the rigours of forcible feeding. In Mountjoy Jail, one of Eire's golden boys was changing into dust.

Sean had written two laments for Thomas Ashe, for he had been an old friend of his when both had been pipers; and now, with a Fergus O'Connor, who had published the two laments, he was on his way to the prison to get news as to when the body of the dead man would be allowed out for burial. This most handsome man, Ashe, six foot tall, straight as a standard, with a leonine head, bannered by a mass of hair that was almost golden, this most handsome man was dead. Turning into the long avenue leading to the prison, with a few birds still twittering on the languid trees, the entrance gate looked like a toy door in a toy fort in the distance, with a few tiny black figures before it, waiting permission to go in to a toy dead brother, a toy