

I am sitting in a tea parlor in Torquay, England with the esteemed Irish author, Sean O’Casey. It is an honor to be speaking with such an admired and prolific writer, and I hope this interview will provide readers with insight into Mr. O’Casey’s life and talent.

Interviewer: Good afternoon Mr. O’Casey. I am so pleased to be meeting with you.

O’Casey: Please, call me Sean.

Interviewer: Alright, Sean, how about we start off with a little background about your childhood?

O’Casey: Well... let’s see.... I was born in 1880 in the slums of Dublin, and I spent my childhood there. My childhood was nothing short of hell. I wanted desperately to better myself and to learn, but my poor eyesight and family’s poverty prevented me from doing this. I was forced to stay home from school throughout my childhood. I was very angry as a child. My eyesight hindered me from many normal childhood activities. I was constantly reminded of my family’s grim position. But I kept reading.... you should always keep reading. It gets you through the tough times.

Interviewer: So, do you think your eyesight influenced your outlook on life? Would you say it made you more, or less, curious about the world and about bettering yourself?

O’Casey: Oh, of course it had an impact on me. You can’t escape something like that. I had a strong spirit, and I was more desperate to learn than most kids my age. My eyes were cloudy and seeing anything at all became difficult. That kind of thing really affects you, you know? It’s gruesome to me now, but I would have to sponge my eyes with scalding water to try and clear my dim vision. I think in the end though, I knew I had to work harder to succeed. I had to keep seeing, I had to keep my vision so I could read and write. I think I’ve done okay.

Interviewer: I think you’ve done more than okay! You have many, many admirers—myself among them. Anyway, I’m looking here at some of our reader’s questions. One reader asks, “Was there any event in your childhood that had a significant effect on you?”

O’Casey: My childhood was grim and continual—not much ever changed around there. A big event for me was my father’s death. He died as a result of choking, and it really shook my family up. My mother was forced to relocate our family constantly, all over Dublin. I had to give up schooling to work on the railways, and I ended up wasting nine years of my life doing it.

Interviewer: That *is* a lot of time. Yet you managed to be so prolific. A lot of your works entail socialism and nationalism. Could you tell us a bit about your interest in those philosophies?

O’Casey: Well I’ve always been an idealist. The injustices I experienced during my childhood piled up on me and I responded to this by thrusting all my passion into my plays. I was angry at the people of Ireland, I was angry at the country... I didn’t think anyone should have to live the way my family did. I was sick of people, and the way they celebrated fake heroism and embraced war. Three of my plays, The Shadow of the Gunman, Juno and the Paycock, and The Plough and the Stars are evidence of that. I was bitter, and it definitely shows through my earlier works. I eventually got caught up in the socialist movement... it gave me something I hadn’t found previously. It gave me faith in the human race, and it made me happy to believe and to hope.

Interviewer: I see. I’ve also noticed that your works also feature sympathy toward women, in a noticeable and continual fashion. Was there anyone in your life who inspired these feelings?

O'Casey: Haha, I don't know if I would say there was someone specific. I've always felt sympathy for women. I don't know if that's just a gentlemanly way to be or if I'm just like that, but either way. I respect my mother greatly, and I respect women in general. At one point I found it hard to believe that women continue to keep the human race going. I had such little faith in people... but nationalism helped me to embrace others.

Interviewer: Haha, yes, what a refreshing outlook. I'm glad you embraced people or you may not be meeting with me here today! One more question before I let you go. Would you say that you are satisfied with your life? Are you content with everything you've accomplished, despite some major setbacks?

O'Casey: Let's put it this way... I have to be content. Of course, like anyone else, I expect a lot of myself. I'm proud of my work, even though my plays were banned from dozens of theatres. Even though the public wasn't happy... they caught up to me eventually. Now I'm this celebrated author, but forty years ago I was hated. It takes people time to adjust to change. But I can't complain. I could've let my blindness get the better of me. I could've also let my poverty overcome me as well. I have risen far and I am definitely satisfied, if not more than that.

Interviewer: Well, thank you Mr. O'Casey for your time. I admire your work and our readers will really enjoy this.

O'Casey: It was nothing. Thank you for your interest.

By **Dylan Levene**