

5th March 1914. Kilkenny Journal report of founding of Irish Volunteers in Kilkenny.

IRISH VOLUNTEER MOVEMENT.

CORPS ESTABLISHED IN KILKENNY.

PUBLIC MEETING ON THE PARADE.

INTERESTING SPEECHES BY SIR
ROGER CASEMENT AND MR. T.
McDONAGH, DUBLIN.

On Thursday night last a public meeting was held on the Parade, for the purpose of establishing an Irish Volunteer Corps in Kilkenny. Much interest was manifested in the proceedings, prior to which a torch light procession was formed outside Town Hall. The route of the procession was through High St., Parliament St., Green St., Wolfe Tone St., and John St., and before arriving at the Parade it, had assumed immense proportions. The three city bands, St. Patrick's Brass Band, St. Rioch's Fife and Drum Band, and the Kilkenny War pipers' Band joined in the procession and discoursed several national airs during its progress.

Mr. John Magennis, T.C., Mayor, presided at the public meeting, the principal speakers at which were Sir Roger Casement and Professor Thomas McDonagh, representing the Volunteer Provisional Committee, Dublin.

The Mayor, who was received with applause, having explained the object of the meeting, said no doubt they were all aware that no party bluff or religious prejudice, entered into this, movement. They had waited a long time for the opportunity of forming such an organisation. The time had come now and he trusted that the young men of Kilkenny would rally round the standard, and that Kilkenny would take its place with the rest of Ireland in establishing a truly national corps of Volunteers (applause).

Aid. Joseph Purcell, who was warmly received, proposed the following resolution: "That a Corps of Irish Volunteers be established in the City of Kilkenny, and that all the necessary steps be taken for the enrollment of suitable members." He said that, knowing the people of Kilkenny so well, the Kilkenny Corps would not be behind anyone in Ireland. When the Kilkenny people took up any question, they were second to none (applause). Mr. Pierce Wall, T.C., seconded the resolution.

Sir Roger Casement's Speech

Sir Roger casement, who was loudly applauded, then addressed the meeting. He began by saying that he had not a very loud voice, and that if he did not reach all of those present it was not his fault.

A Voice: You have a good heart. (applause)

Sir Roger Casement: I have a good heart. It is an Irish heart.

Continuing, Sir Roger said that one thing that brought him there was love for the young men of Ireland, and nothing else would have brought him to Kilkenny. When he arrived in Kilkenny that night he was reminded of one thing that occurred when he was a boy, and that was Mr. Parnell's visit to Kilkenny (applause). Mr. Parnell said to the people of Ireland then, "Don't throw me to the wolves unless you get my price." Did they get his price? ("Not yet.") Were they going to get it? It depended on themselves, and their own manhood, and nothing else. No talking would get self-government, which was only to be won by their own manhood and resolution. They had talked for twenty years; they had brought the national cause to the issue of party politics in another country, and were they now going to be subject to the decision of a small number of Irishmen who said they would not have Home Rule? These men were going out against Home Rule, not with words at Westminster, but with action here in Ireland, and they would win unless the men in favour of Home Rule had greater resolution and greater manhood than they had. That was the whole question. Home Rule today was in the melting pot, and it would be tried, not by the votes of party politicians in England, but by the resolution of Irishmen here in Ireland and by that only. There were two reasons why they should have Volunteers here in Ireland.

The first and greatest reason was a national one, and the second was a political one. If our hopes for the self-government of the country were to be realised, we must prepare to assert our cause by something else than merely passing resolutions, We had not seen this question discussed in Ireland, because we had left the discussion to another country; but those who were opposed to our demand for self-government, had organised a body of Irishmen to oppose Home Rule. They had not been impeded in that work. They had been permitted to arm, drill and discipline themselves; and now, after the measure "had passed through two sessions of Parliament, we were told, it was to be re-considered, and modified, and changed — for what reason? Because a number of Irishmen had stood out in arms and said they would not have it, and if we were consistent, we would stand out in arms and say "We will have it (applause). It was not talk at Westminster that had changed the Home Rule Bill; it was because a small minority of Irishmen had stood out and said they were prepared to shed their blood and defeat it. If we would have Home Rule, we must be prepared to do the same thing, to match their manhood with a greater manhood. As regards the smaller issue, it was merely a political one. The political question was, after all, a minor question in the life of the people. Tho question of Home Rule was not the decisive question in Irish national life; it was only one of the means by which w hoped to realise and express our

national life. If we had not in our hearts a spirit of Irish Nationality, Home Rule would not bring it to us. What he came to say was that Irishmen must realise that this fight for Irish Nationality was a real one, and must be fought out by men and with weapons

A Voice: Give us the rifle.

Sir Roger Casement: Yes give you the rifle, but teach you first to use it (applause).

There was no use giving rifles to untrained men, he continued.. They must be first prepared to be drilled and disciplined and give up themselves whole-heartedly to the work. No Nation could have freedom without fighting for it (hear, hear). They could not have a pearl of great price without making a sacrifice, and they would have to make that sacrifice before they would have realised their ambition. A nation could not be made by Act of Parliament. It they wished to make Ireland a nation they should then Join the Volunteer Movement in Ireland and be drilled and disciplined and ready to fight for Ireland (applause).

Professor M'Donagh's Address

Professor M'Donagh, who was received with cheers and cries of "Go on the young blood," next addressed the meeting. Having stated that he attended that night as the representative of the Provisional Committee of the Irish Volunteers, he went on to say that they had begun in Dublin and had three thousand men drilling and preparing to serve their country in this cause. Kilkenny was the first place they looked to in Leinster and all Ireland, for help in this movement, and from the meeting that night they knew they had not counted falsely in counting on Kilkenny. Personally, he owed a debt of gratitude to Kilkenny. It was in Kilkenny that he received his first baptism of Nationalism (hear, hear). Twelve years ago he came to Kilkenny and it was in the national spirit of this town that he first learned what it was to feel the patriotism of an Irishman (applause). As Sir Roger Casement had said, the work they had to do was urgent, and it was their duty to set about it immediately. Their business was to drill and prepare themselves to be efficient in the cause of Ireland (hear, hear), The Irish Volunteers had been founded to secure the rights and liberties common to all the people of Ireland (applause). They had no rights and liberties to maintain at the present moment; they had been slaves in their own country. They were the only white people who were inefficient, and unable to defend themselves against foreign aggression. If a foreign power came to this country, favourable or unfavourable to Ireland, 60,000 English territorials would be landed in this country. The Irish people would have to take them into their own houses, put them up, feed them and entertain them, to preserve Ireland, forsooth, for the British crown. The people were not going to have that. Within this year they hoped to enroll a quarter of a million men in the Irish Volunteers. The body he represented was not a political body; it was an Irish body, a National body. They had no party or religious test. Their system was a territorial system. People of different religions, of different political parties, would drill side by side. The battle had not yet been won, and

it was possible the Irish People might yet have to make a great sacrifice, perhaps the greatest sacrifice of all. This organisation of the Irish Volunteers grew out of an organisation instituted in this country since the days of O'Connell, under such leaders as George Henry Moore, who, in 1861, advocated Irish Volunteers under the Fenian leaders; under Parnell and under the present leader of the Irish Party, and, to mention a leader more peculiarly his own, under the leaders of the Gaelic League (hear, hear). This movement was the culmination of those movements. The other night a Frenchman came to the hall in which his (speaker's) company was drilling. In France every citizen was a soldier, every man was trained to use arms, and this Frenchman could not very well understand how it was that the men he saw training in that company should think it necessary to spend their evenings drilling. He (speaker) explained that it was only the other day they got permission to do such a thing at all, and his visitor expressed his astonishment, but said the patriotism that inspired them was magnificent. The Irish Volunteer movement was going to give an opportunity to the manhood of the country to prove itself. There would be difficulty in getting the rifles, but it would not require an enormous amount of money to buy them. No man was too old or too young to work for his country in this matter. At the end of that meeting those who wished to enroll in the Irish Volunteers, should go up to the Town Hall and give in their names. Later on arrangements for drillings, etc., would be made. He laid stress on the fact that this was a democratic organisation. They did not want this country to be governed by force or by corruption, and if this Home Rule Bill was pushed, the country would be governed for a long time by corruption, doles and bribes to every department of life in Ireland.

Continuing, Mr. M'Donagh addressed the meeting in Irish, after which he said it was not necessary to appeal to his friends of the Gaelic League to become Irish Volunteers.

If a quarter of a million of Irishmen were to be trained and drilled in the use of arms, they would be able to give to Ireland whatever government they liked (applause).