

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.

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. The question of Home Rule was not the decisive question in Irish national life; it was only one of the phases by which we