

To

The Right Honourable H. H. Asquith, K.C., M.P., Prime Minister,
AND

The Right Honourable H. L. Samuel, M.P., Home Secretary.

SIRS,

We beg respectfully to urge that the sentence passed on Roger Casement should not be carried out.

We plead for clemency, because of the great effects which, it is to be feared, his execution would have on the relations between England and Ireland.

There are multitudes who feel that a man who spent his life and health in the cause of suffering humanity in the Congo and the Putumayo cannot be treated as if he were on the moral level of a common murderer. Those who saw and heard him at his trial realised that his transgression of the law, however grave, left his own conscience clear. In his deep conviction of loyalty to his own people he would walk to his death upright and unashamed.

Whatever may be said as to the necessity for swift, sharp measures in the heat of an armed insurrection, it might not be wise, when blood is cold, to press the utmost rigour of the criminal law against such a man, even if he stood alone and moral sentiment were strongly on the side of the law.

But the danger is infinitely greater when there is a risk of a general divorce of moral sentiment from the law, especially in a case where the deepest and most sacred feelings are concerned, as in the long struggle to preserve and uphold Irish nationalism.

A large and growing number of Irish men and women would regard his execution, not as a just and necessary punishment of crime, but as a cruel act of vengeance.

In Ireland, when devotion to country has paid the price of death, respect for the law is swept away by an intensity of sympathy which has never been generally understood in England.

At this moment the divorce of feeling from the established order has grown in Ireland with alarming rapidity. After years of hope, which seemed on the point of realisation, of friendship between England and Ireland, the estrangement of the two peoples is now in danger of becoming deeper and more bitter and more complete than before. Education has made it possible for disaffection to grow and spread in ways that were impossible fifty years ago. At this moment the one great hope in both countries has been of pacification and reconciliation between parties in Ireland and between England and Ireland. We believe that the execution of Roger Casement would turn the scale in the direction of lawlessness and bitterness to such an extent that recovery could not take place in our generation.

For the sake of both England and Ireland we pray that that execution may not take place.

We have the honour to be, Sirs,

Yours most obedient humble servant,