



5.0 Roger Casement

He tried to recruit an Irish brigade from Irish prisoners of war in Germany and to import German arms.

Roger Casement (1864-1916) was born at Doyle's Cottage, Lawson Terrace, Sandycove, Co. Dublin, the son of Captain Roger Casement of the 3rd Dragoon Guards of the British army and Anne Jephson from Mallow, Co. Cork. His mother had him secretly baptised in her own religion, Roman Catholic, but he was raised in the Protestant faith of his father. As both his parents died young, Roger was taken in by his uncle, John Casement of Magherintemple, near Ballycastle, Co. Antrim, and educated as a boarder at the diocesan school in Ballymena.

After leaving school in 1880, Casement worked in various employments, including clerking, administration, and civil service work in Africa. From 1895 onwards he held consular appointments at various locations in Africa, including Boma in the Congo, where the British Foreign Office authorised him to investigate and report on Belgian mismanagement.

His report condemned the Belgian administration as ruthless, and it exposed systematic infringement of the human rights of the indigenous people. The report earned Casement a CMG (Order of St Michael and St George) in 1905.

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He resumed consular service with postings at Santos, Para and Rio in Brazil. He was then commissioned to undertake a report on the reported abuse of workers in the rubber industry in the Putumayo basin in Peru. The report was published as a parliamentary paper (1911) and had considerable impact, gaining Casement international recognition as a humanitarian, his contribution being acknowledged with a knighthood.

Meanwhile Casement had been a member of the Gaelic League for some years and participated in its cultural activities whenever he was in Ireland. He was learning Irish and had an active interest in Irish literature, history and tradition. It would also appear that by the time he left the consular service around 1911 he had become disillusioned with the British empire and what he had come to regard as its unjust dominion over Ireland. Moreover, he became increasingly radicalised by the opposition of the Ulster unionists to Home Rule from 1912 onwards. On the foundation of the Irish Volunteers in November 1913, he became a member of the provisional committee. When the war broke out in August 1914 he was in the United States raising funds for the Irish Volunteers. In the new political scenario, he identified Germany as a potential Irish ally and he determined to seek German assistance.

Casement was regarded with scepticism by many Irish nationalists who either suspected his integrity or considered him volatile and dangerous. Nevertheless, the Clan na Gael leader John Devoy, who hosted his American tour, put him in contact with the German ambassador who arranged for him to visit Berlin. Casement had three demands: arms, German officers to lead an insurrection in Ireland, and the formation of an Irish brigade consisting of Irish soldiers in the British army then held as prisoners of war in Germany. The Germans promised only a relatively small quantity of arms, and few of the prisoners of war were willing to join the Irish brigade. On learning that an insurrection was planned for Easter, Casement determined to stop it, as he believed it was doomed to failure without substantial arms and German support.

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Casement was arrested at Banna Strand in Co. Kerry on Good Friday 1916, having been put ashore by a German submarine. Meanwhile, the ship transporting the German rifles, the Aud, was intercepted by the British navy off the south coast and scuttled by her captain. Casement was taken to the Tower of London and tried for high treason at the Old Bailey. In the meantime, British officials privately circulated diaries, seemingly in his hand, which detailed homosexual activity, the intention presumably being to discredit him and so ensure that he did not achieve the status of a martyr for the Irish cause. He was found guilty of treason. Before his execution he was received into the Roman Catholic Church. Roger Casement was hanged at Pentonville Prison on 3 August 1916. He was unmarried.

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Roger Casement as a young man. (Ms. 21,536, Biggar Papers).

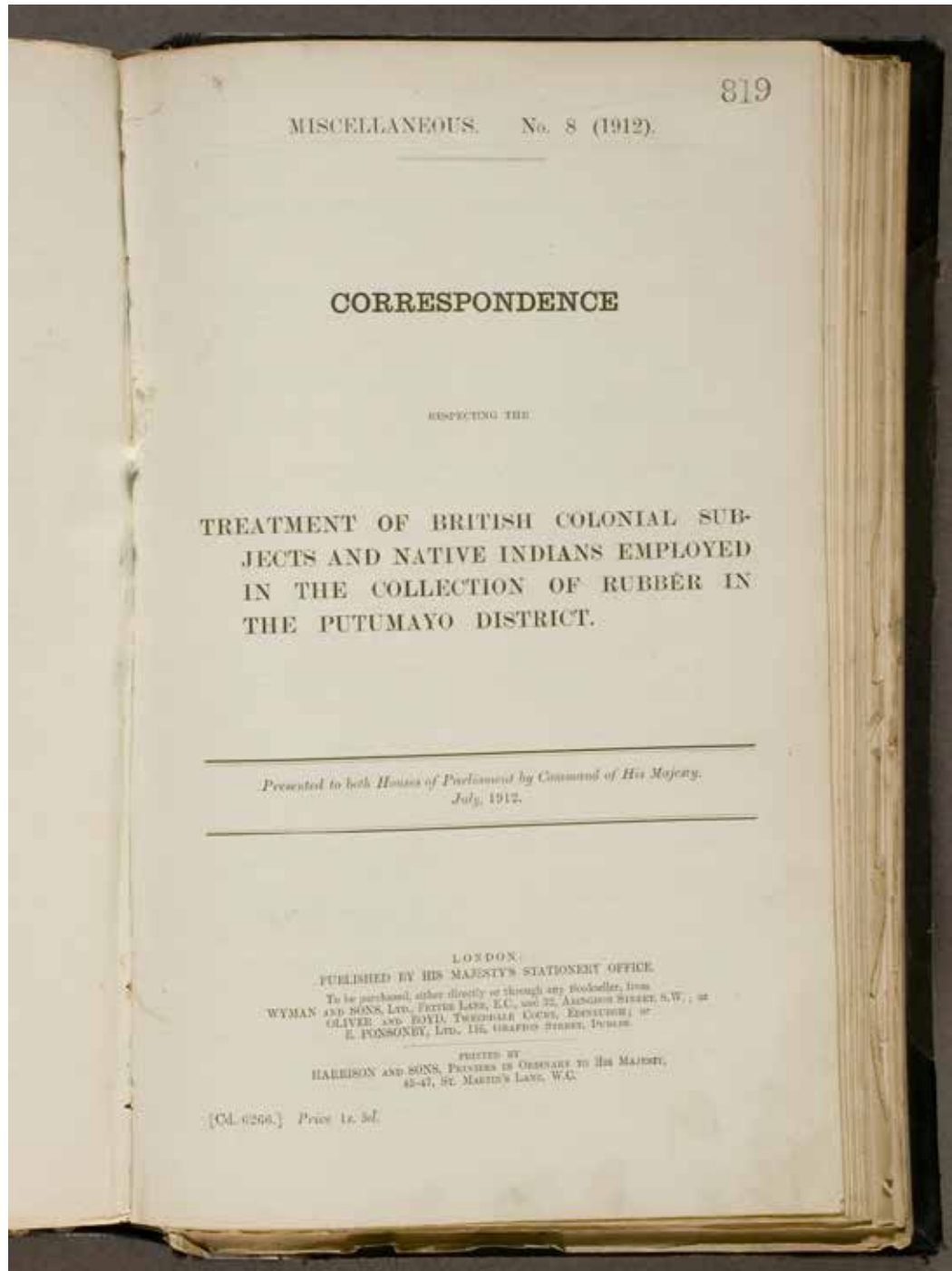
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Roger Casement



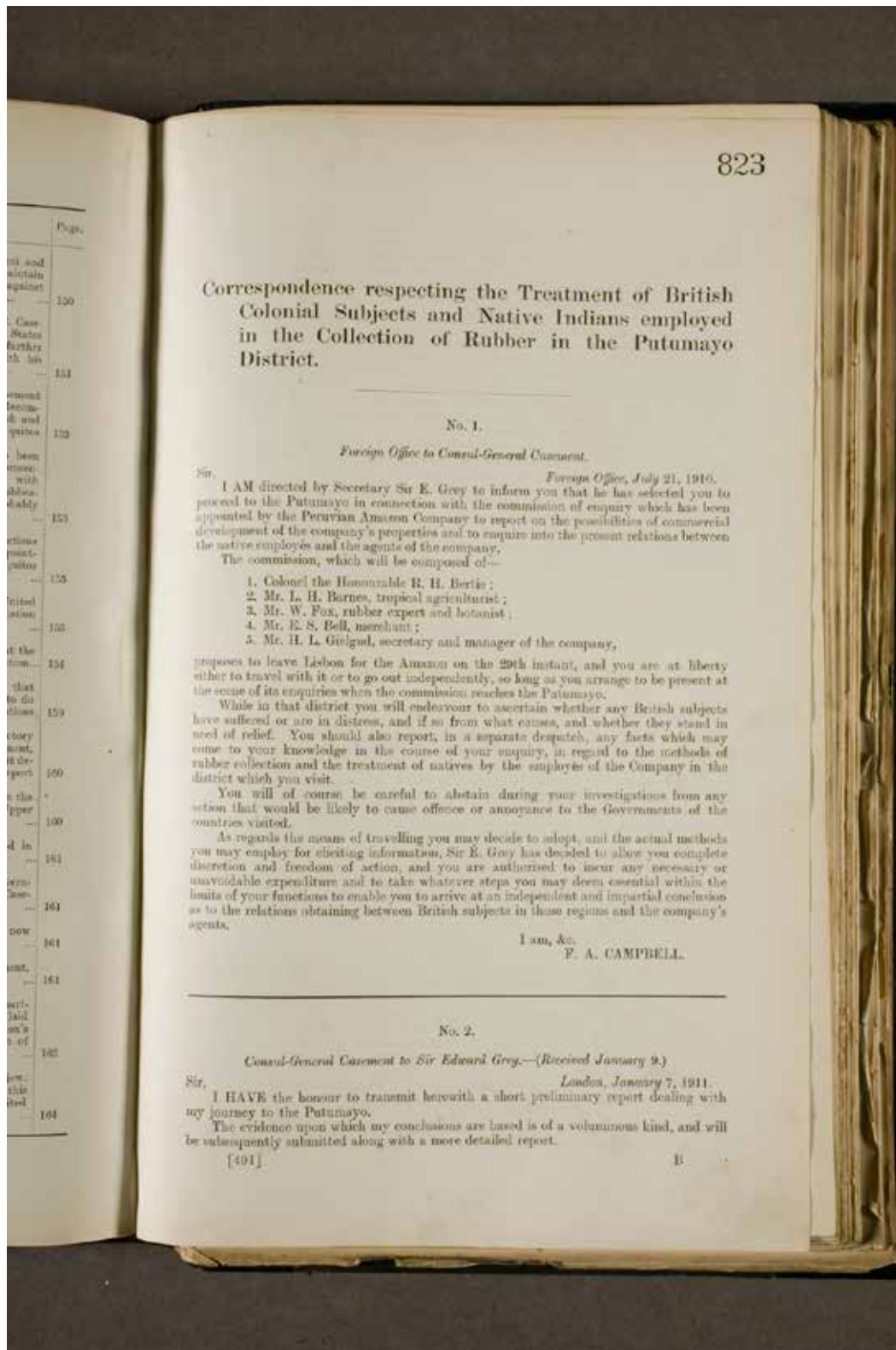
Insignia of the Most Distinguished Order of Saint Michael and Saint George awarded to Casement in June 1905. (Heraldic Museum).

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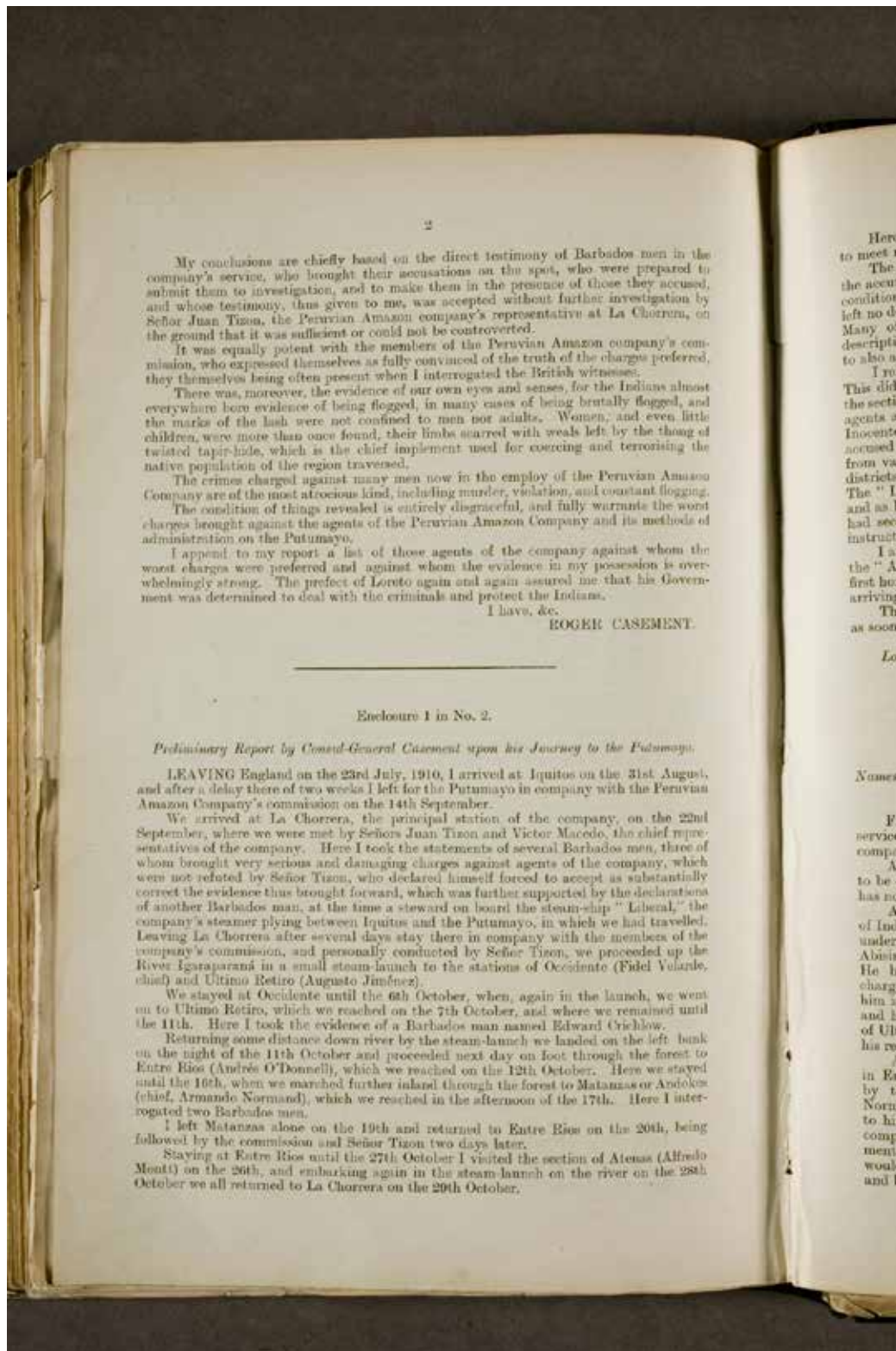
Pages from the official published report by Casement on the treatment of workers in the rubber industry in the Putumayo basin in Peru, July 1912.

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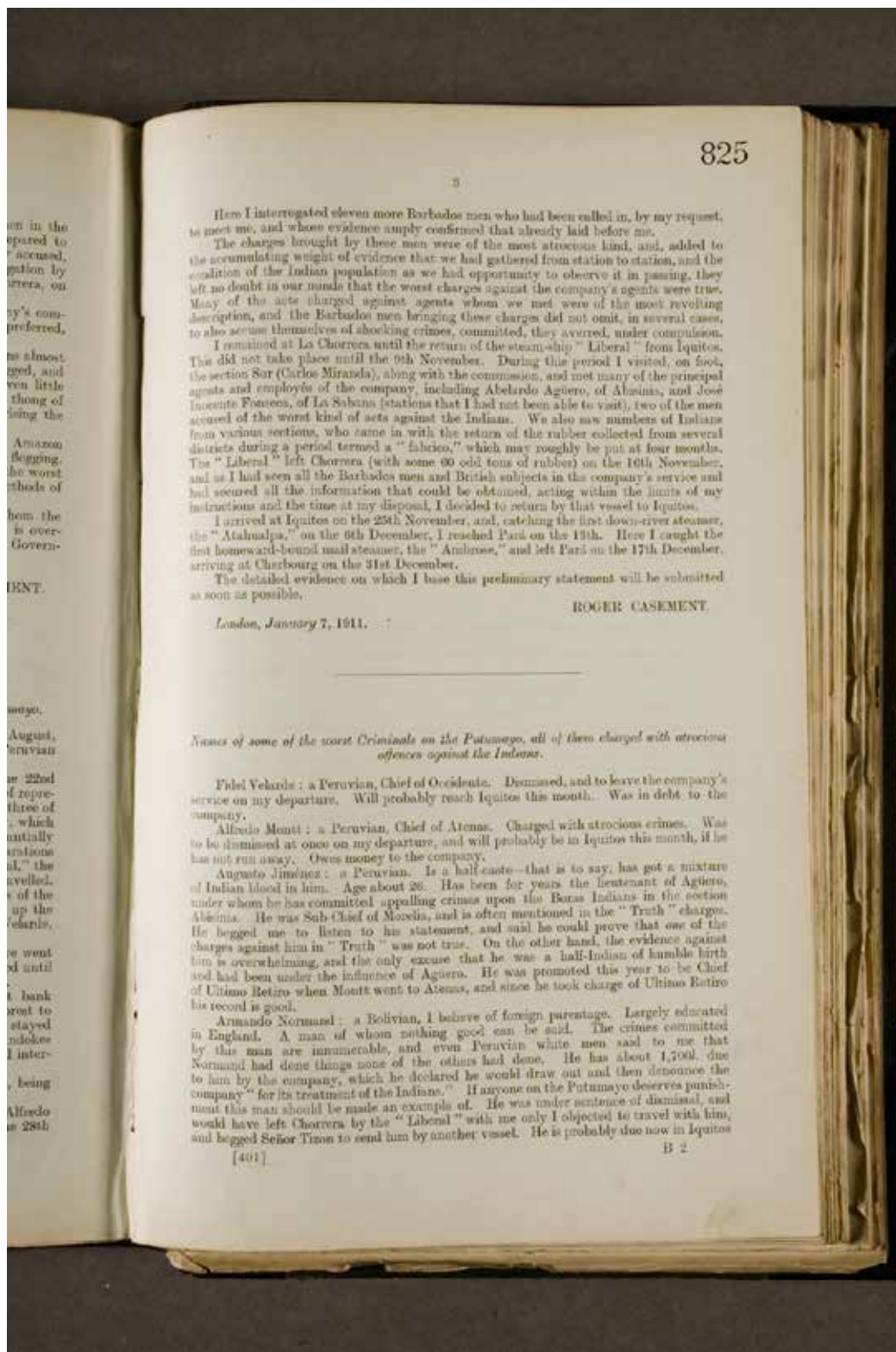
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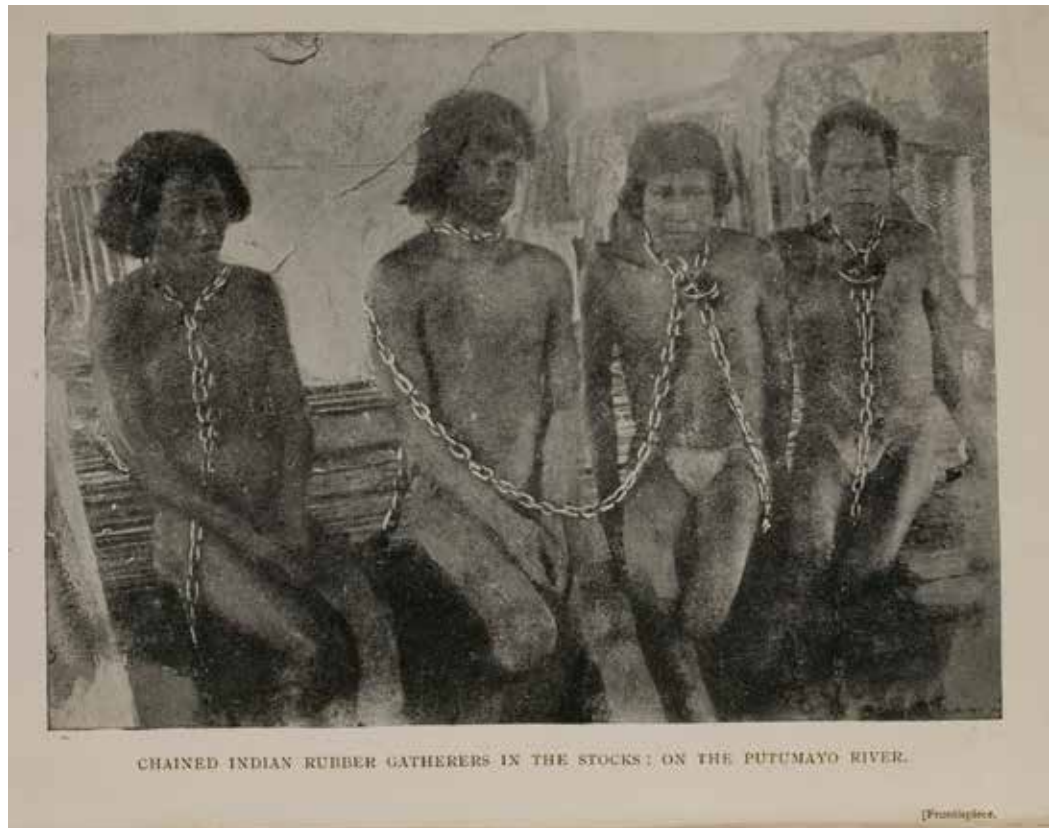
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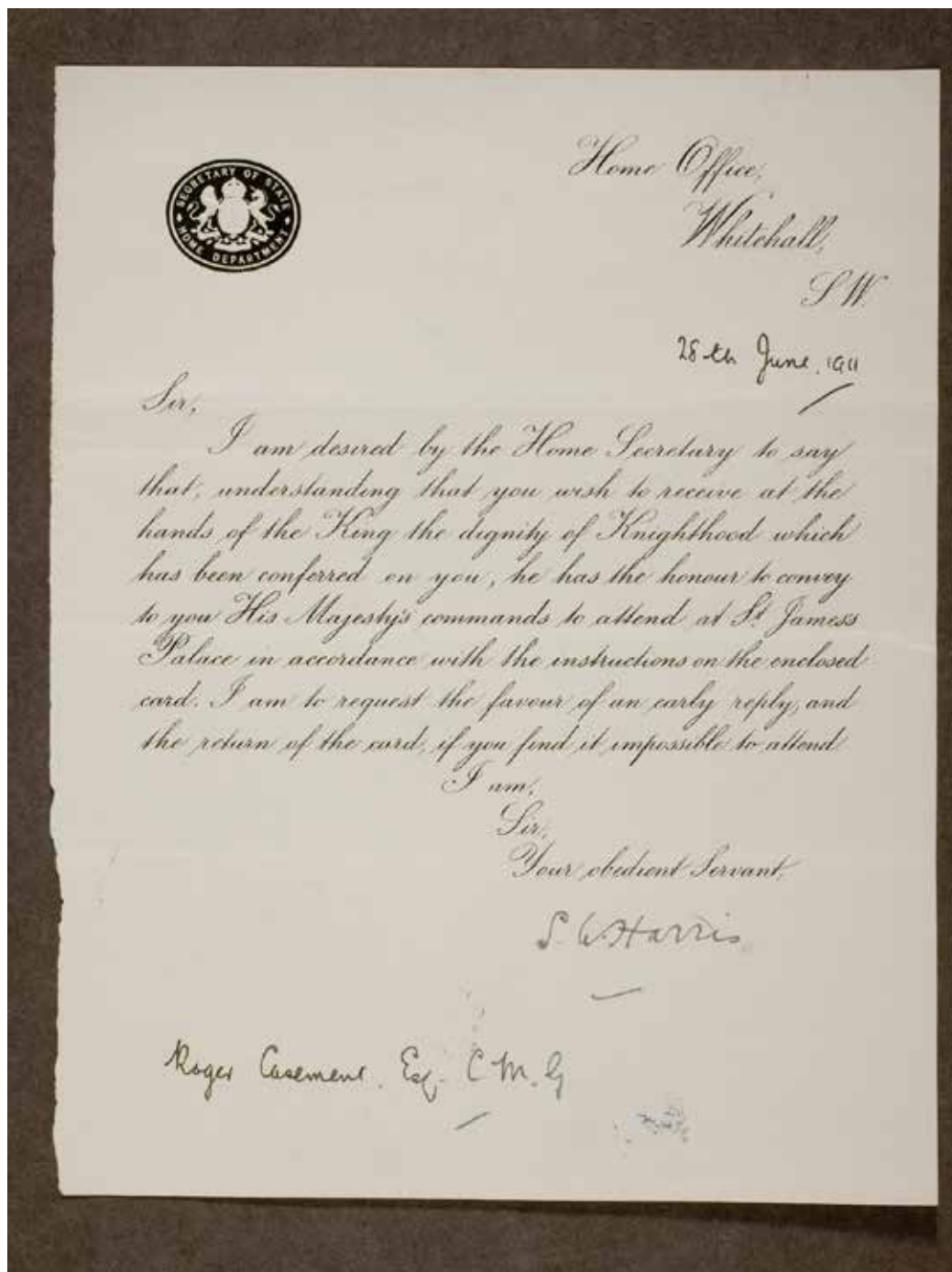
Pages from the official published report by Casement on the treatment of workers in the rubber industry in the Putumayo basin in Peru, July 1912.

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Indian rubber-gatherers in the stocks on the Putumayo. (From W.E. Hardenburg, *The Putumayo: The Devil's Paradise*, 1912).

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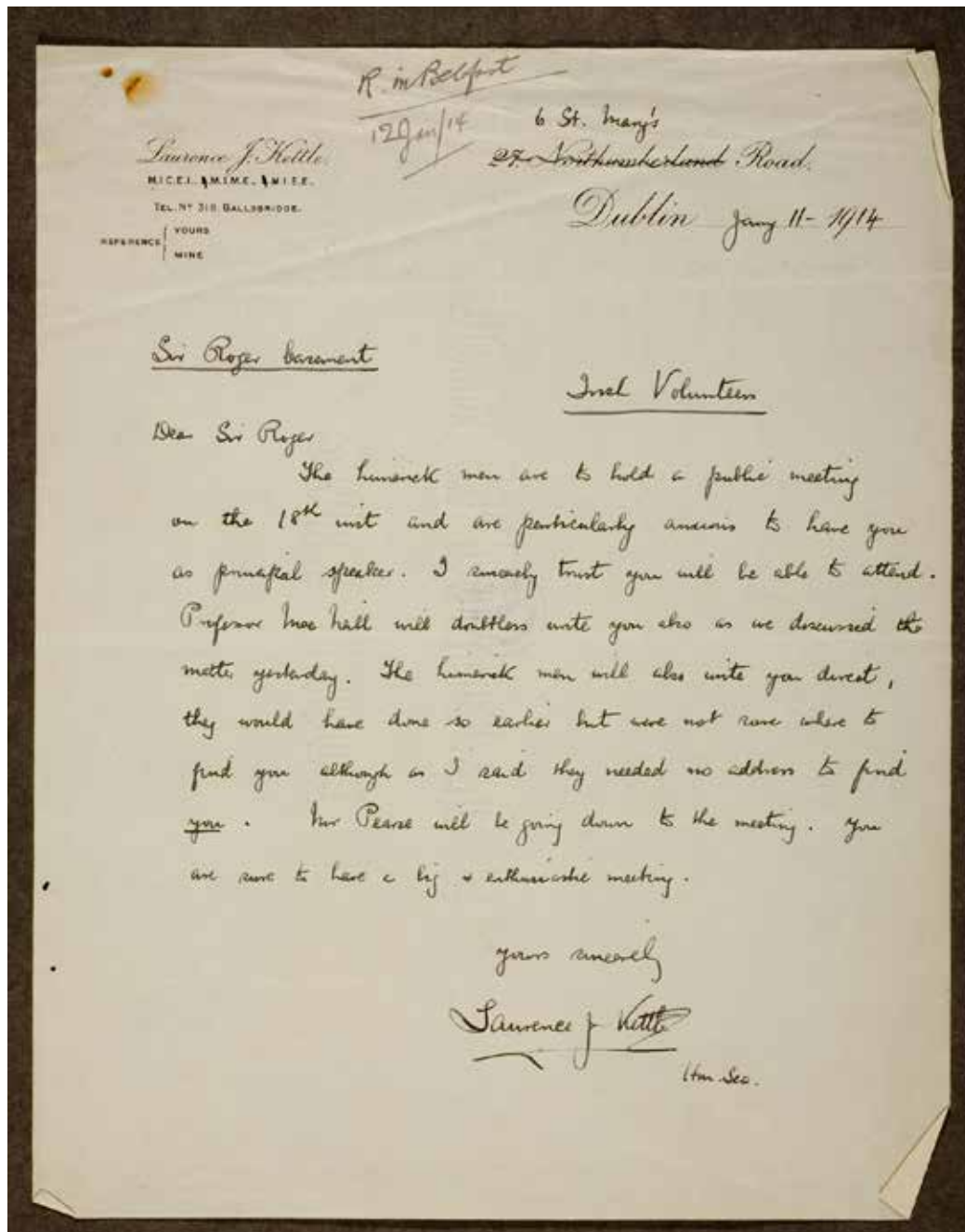
Invitation to Casement to attend for his knighthood, 28 June 1911. (Ms. 13,073).

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Casement in formal dress, possibly on the occasion of his knighthood.
(Ms. 21,536, Biggar Papers).

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Invitation to Casement to address the Irish Volunteers in Limerick, 11 Jan. 1914. (Ms. 13,073(9)).

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SEE NOTICE AT BACK.

POST OFFICE TELEGRAPHS.
(Inland Telegrams.)

No. of Telegram

For Postage Stamps.
To be affixed by the Sender.
Any Stamp for which there is no room here
may be placed on the back of this form.

Office 27 July 1914

A Receipt for the Charges on this Telegram
can be obtained, price one Penny.

Prefix Code

Office of Origin and Service Instructions.

Philadelphia

Words.

Sent

At

By

Charge.

7.8 am

TO { MacNeill of Herbert Par. Dublin

When a reply is to be received,
the address must be "Reply To"
in the space below. These
words are not charged for.

12 words including the words in the address.

6 D. Every additional word.

1 1/2 D.

FROM {

Cable full particulars today events. Irish America has
blood as well as money gold to give to the cause of Irish freedom
and those killed today are the first of thousands prepared to die
for Ireland.

Casement 5412 Springfield Ave Philadelphia

The Name and Address of the Sender, IF NOT TO BE TELEGRAPHED, should be written in the Space provided at the Back of the Form.

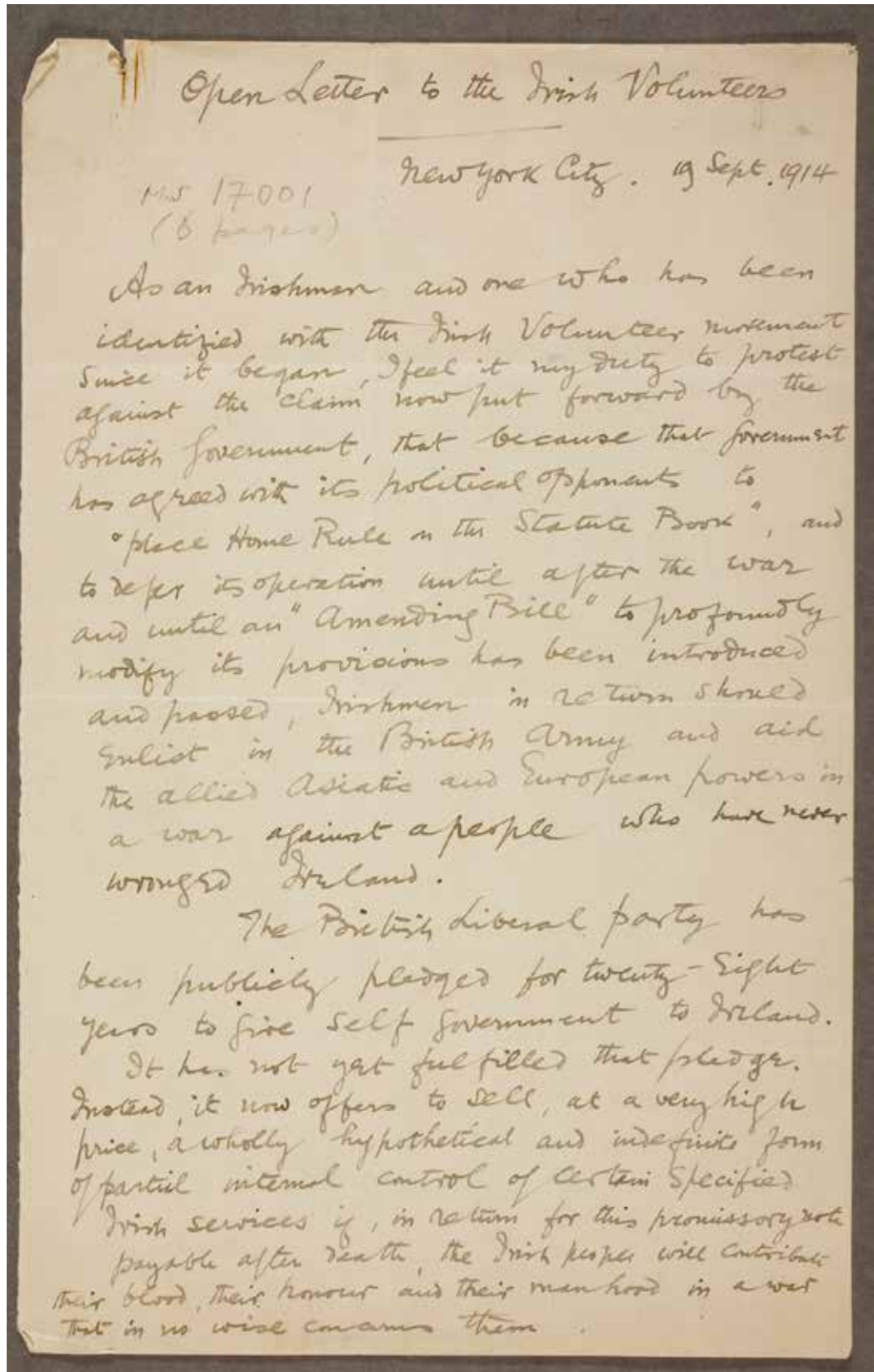
(This Paper Manufactured and Printed by McGOUGHDALE & CO. Limited.)

Wt. 2558 1402. 7.50/1000 11.12. Sch. 2

Telegram from Casement in Philadelphia to Eoin MacNeill requesting information regarding the shooting of people in Dublin by police and military following the landing of arms at Howth; 27 July 1914. (Ms. 13,174(6), Hobson Papers).

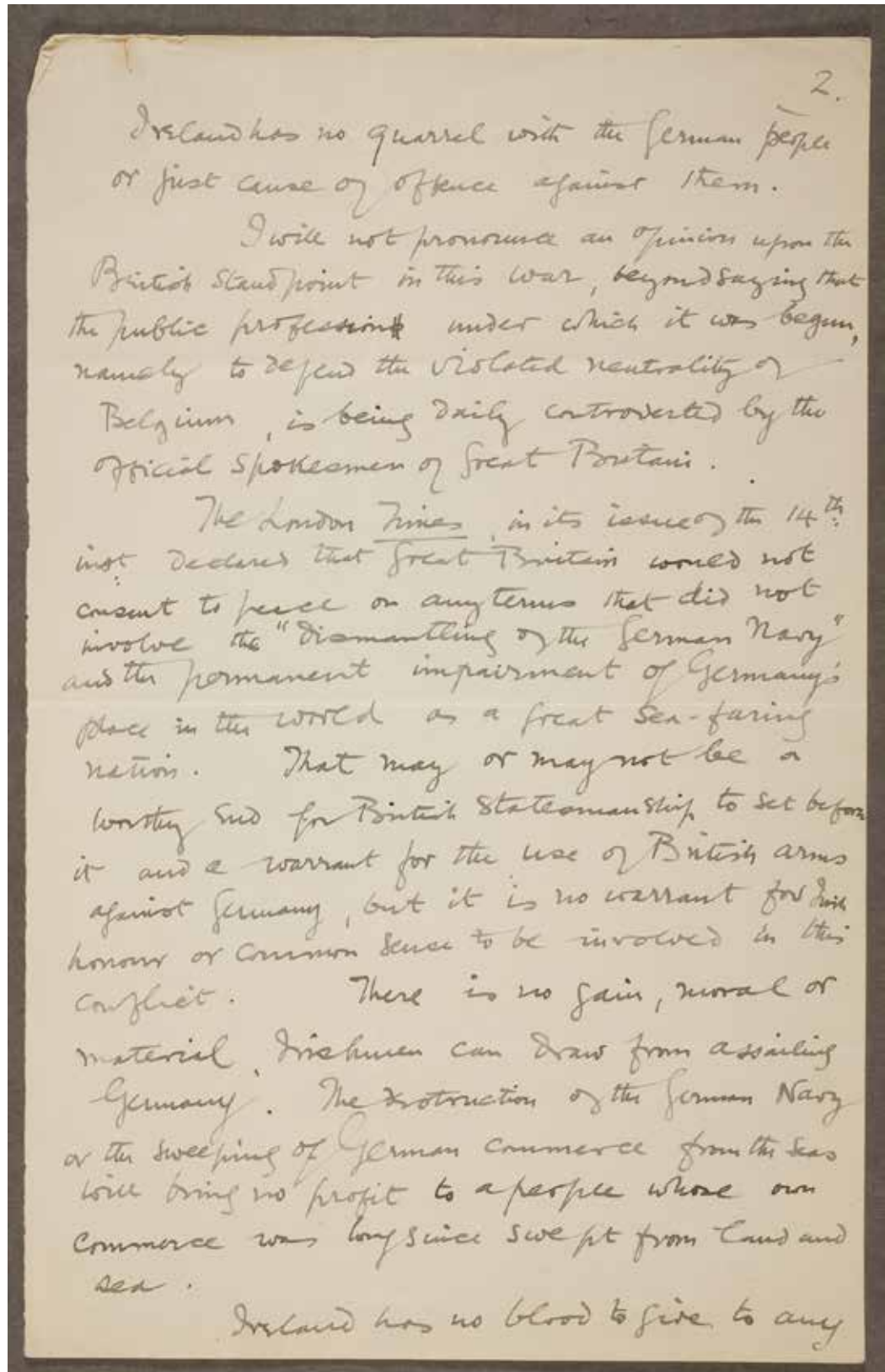
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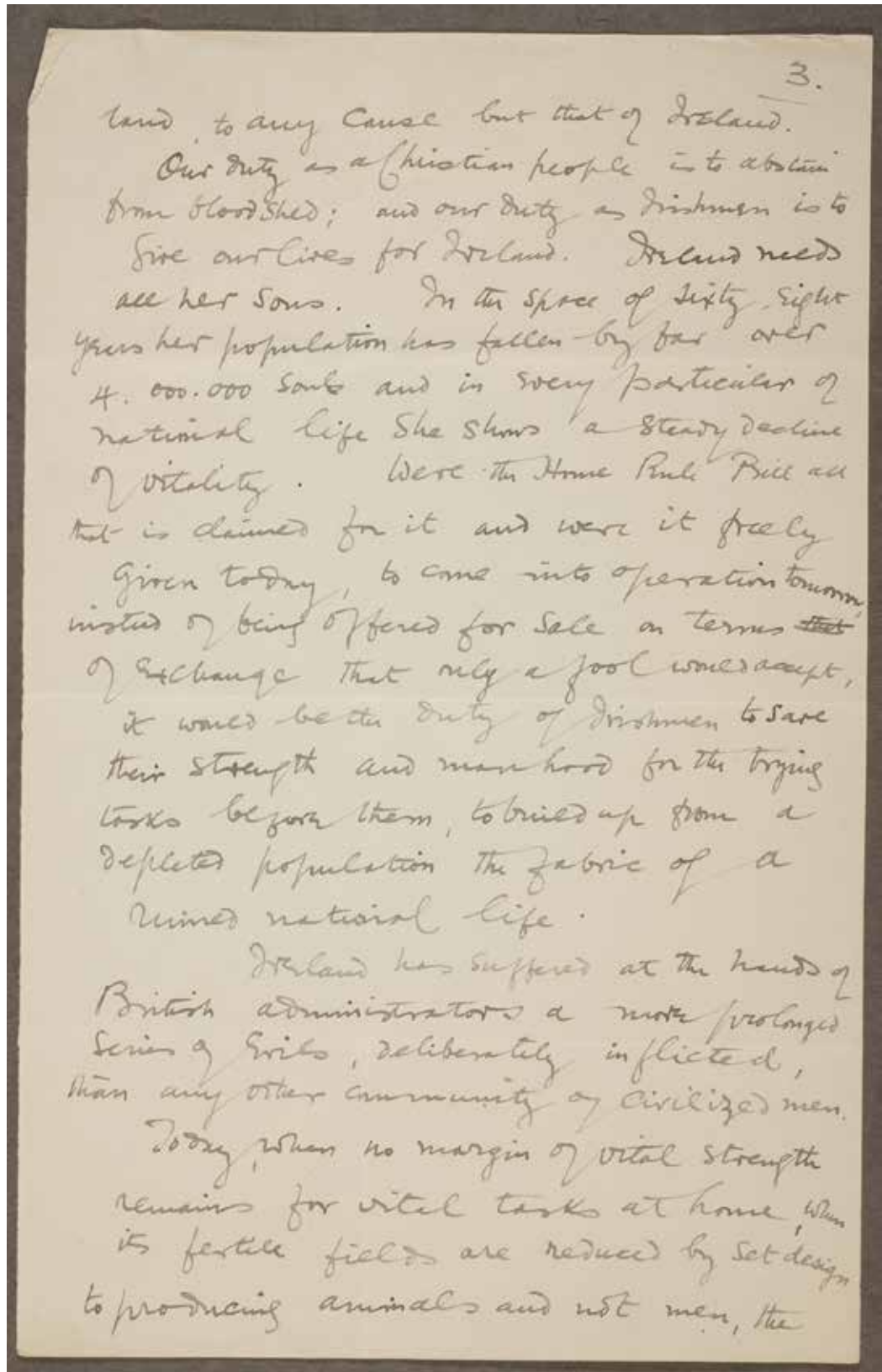
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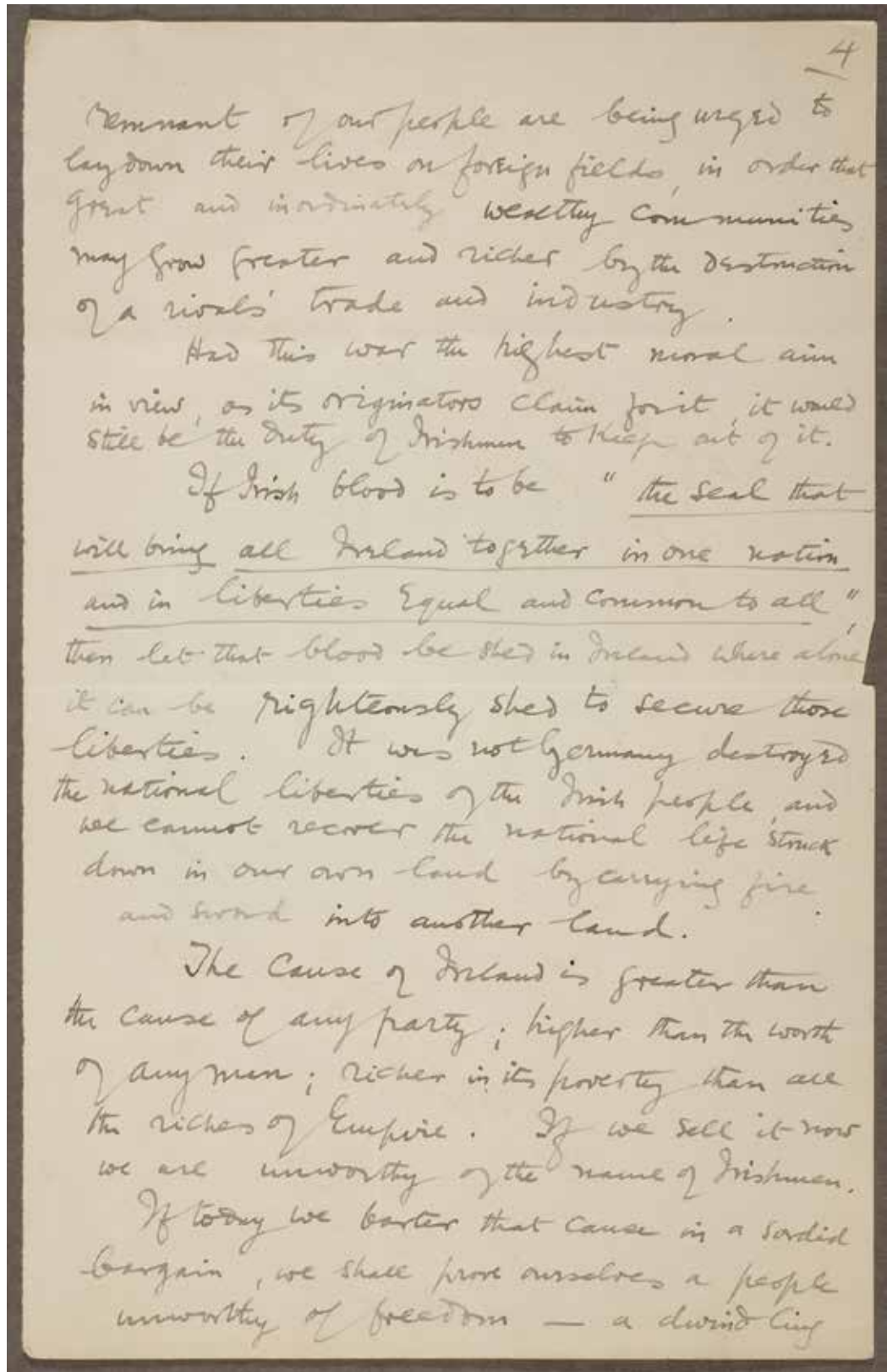
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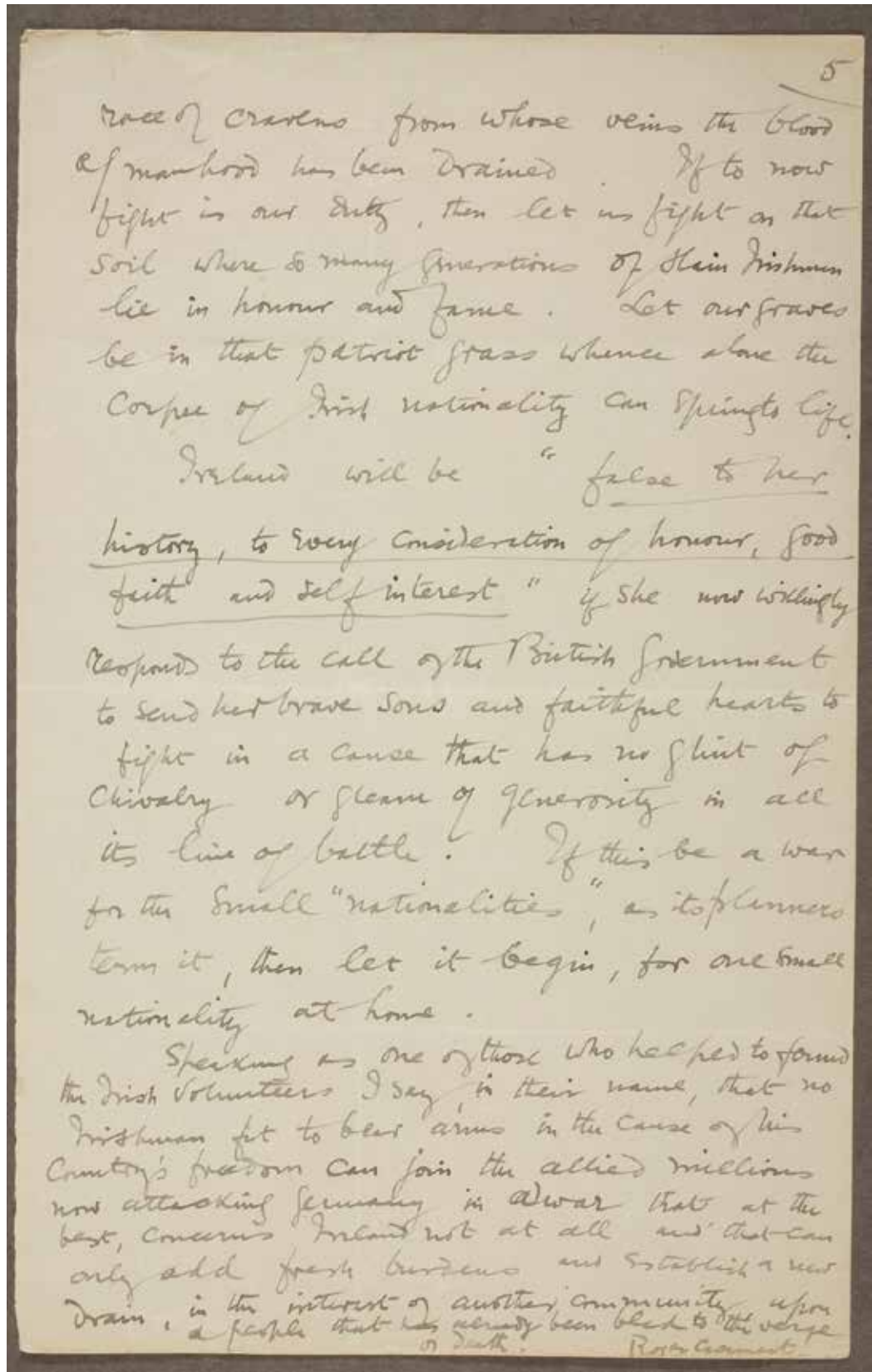
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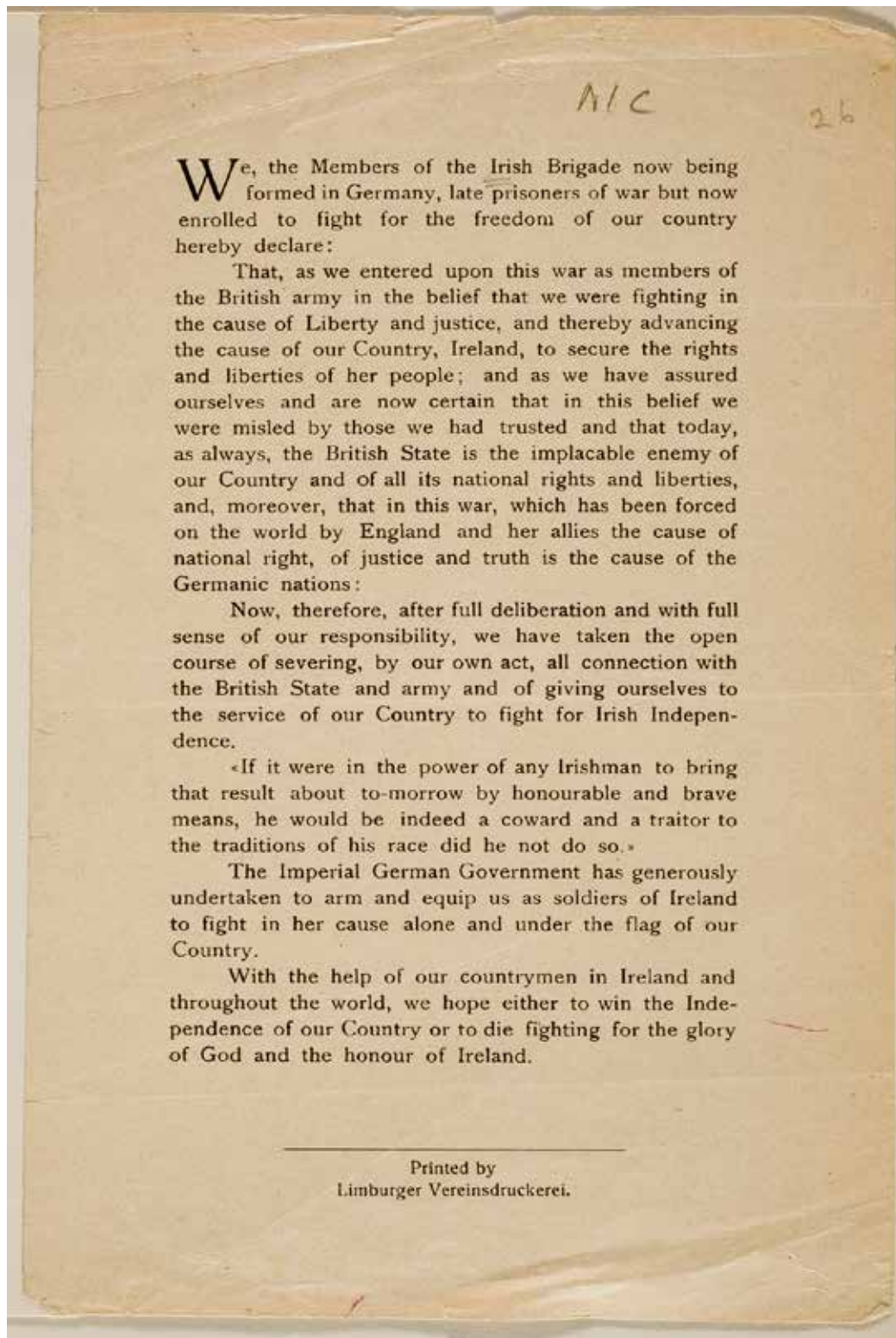


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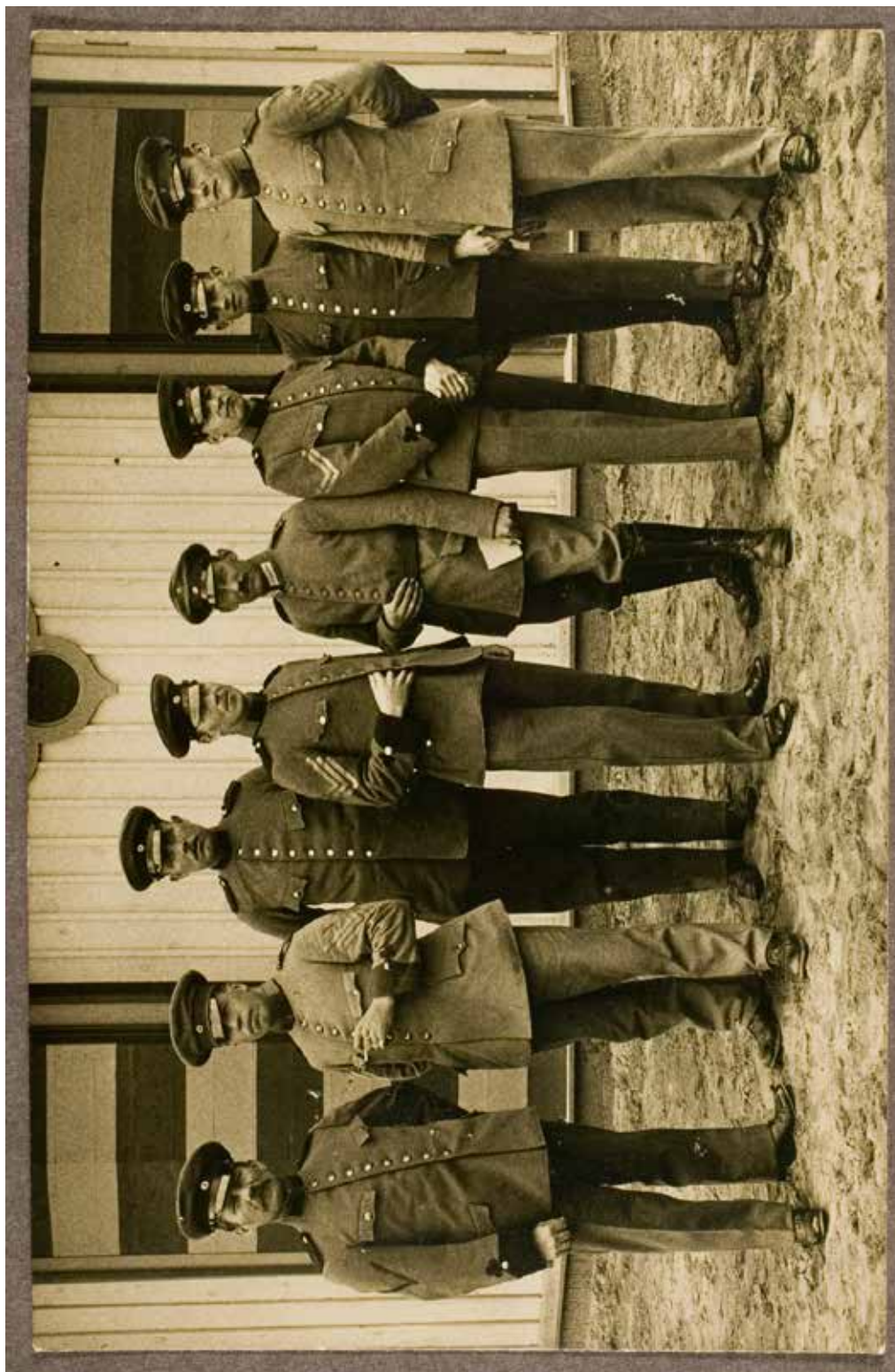
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Printed text of declaration by members of Casement's Irish brigade in Germany; the text was drafted by Joseph Plunkett.

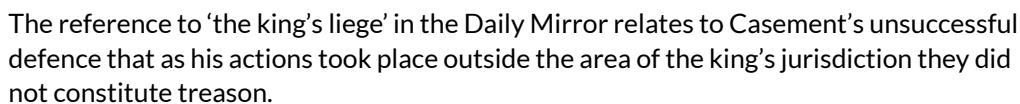
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Non-commissioned officers of Casement's Irish brigade at Zossen, Germany, 1915. From left: Corporal Peter Golden, Sergeant-Major Keogh, Corporal O'Mahony, Sergeant Daniel Julian Bailey (alias Beverley), Interpreter Zerhussen, Corporal Kavanagh, Corporal O'Callaghan and Quartermaster-Sergeant H. Quinlisk. (Ms. 18,081(10)).

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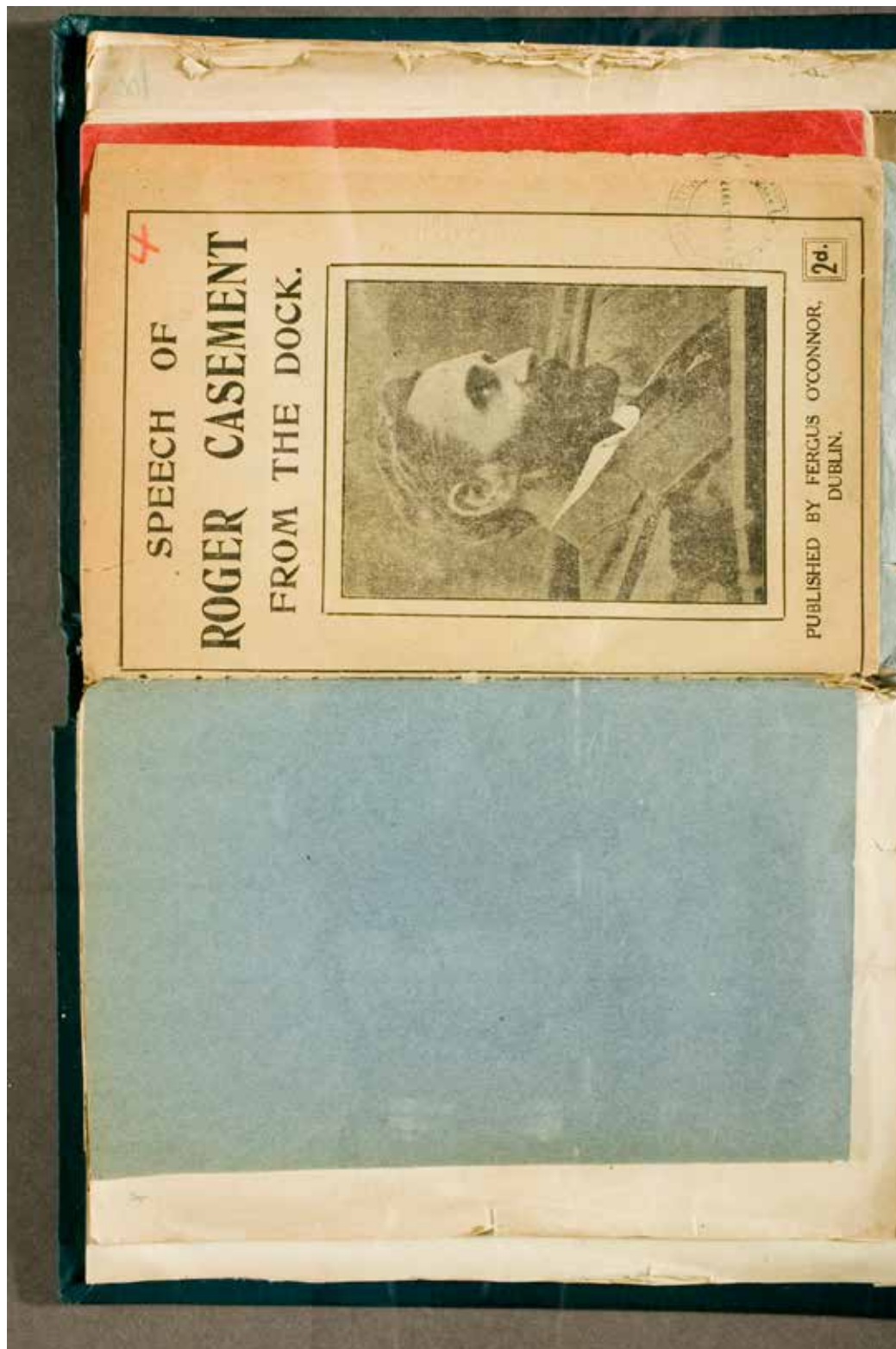


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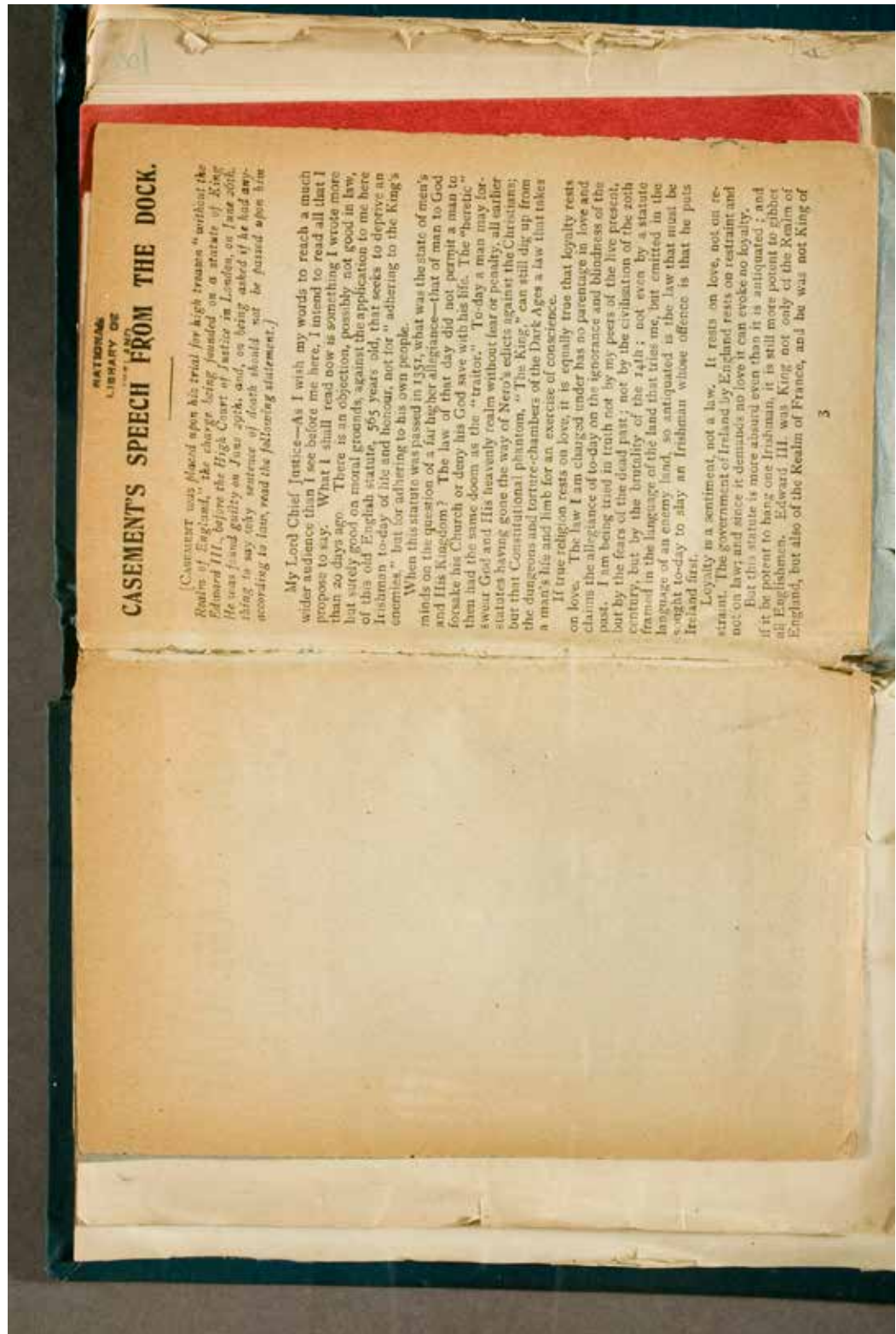
New York Freeman's Journal: Casement's reputation as a humanitarian was such that his trial and sentence made international news.

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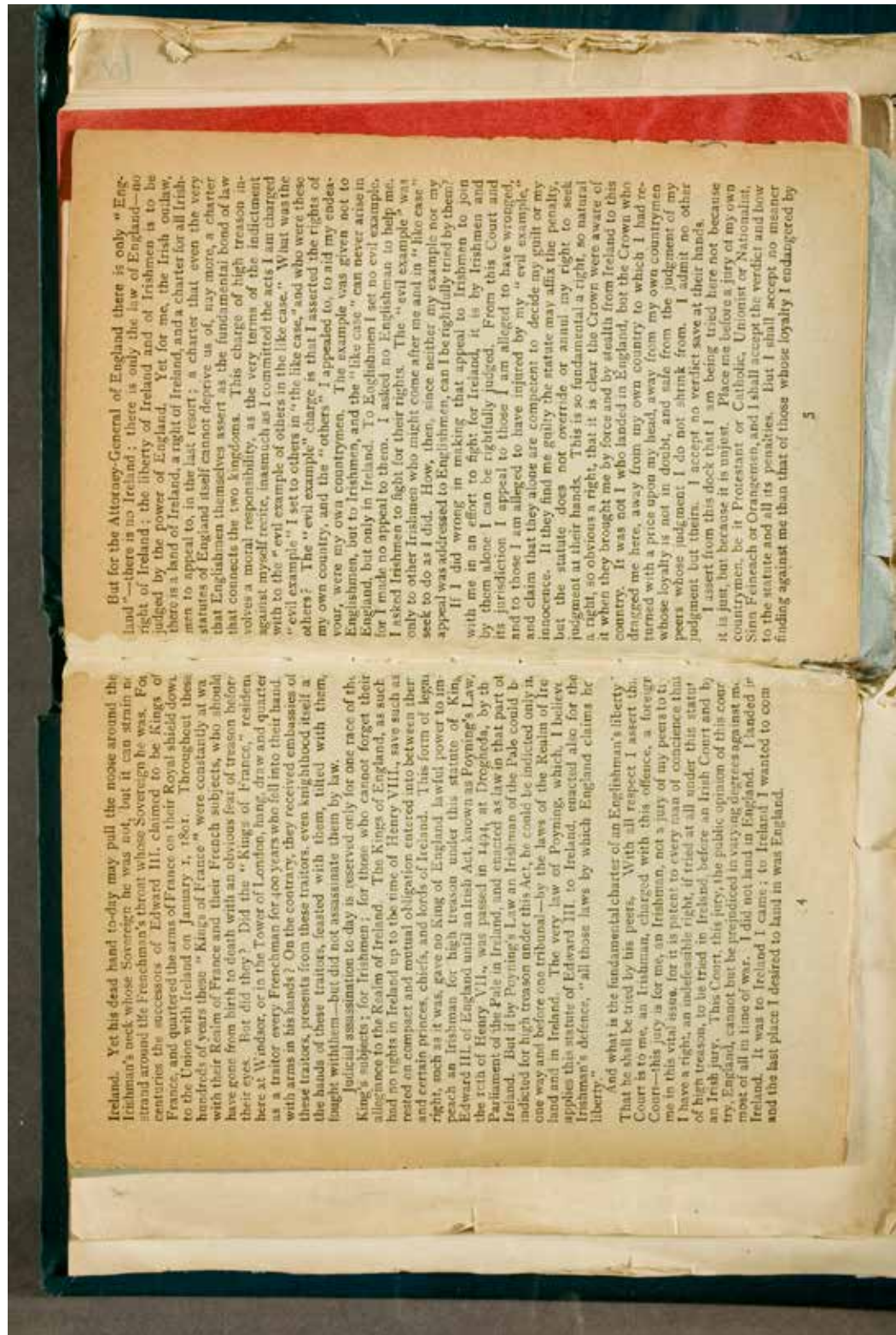
One of many printed editions of Casement's speech from the dock; undated but probably 1916.

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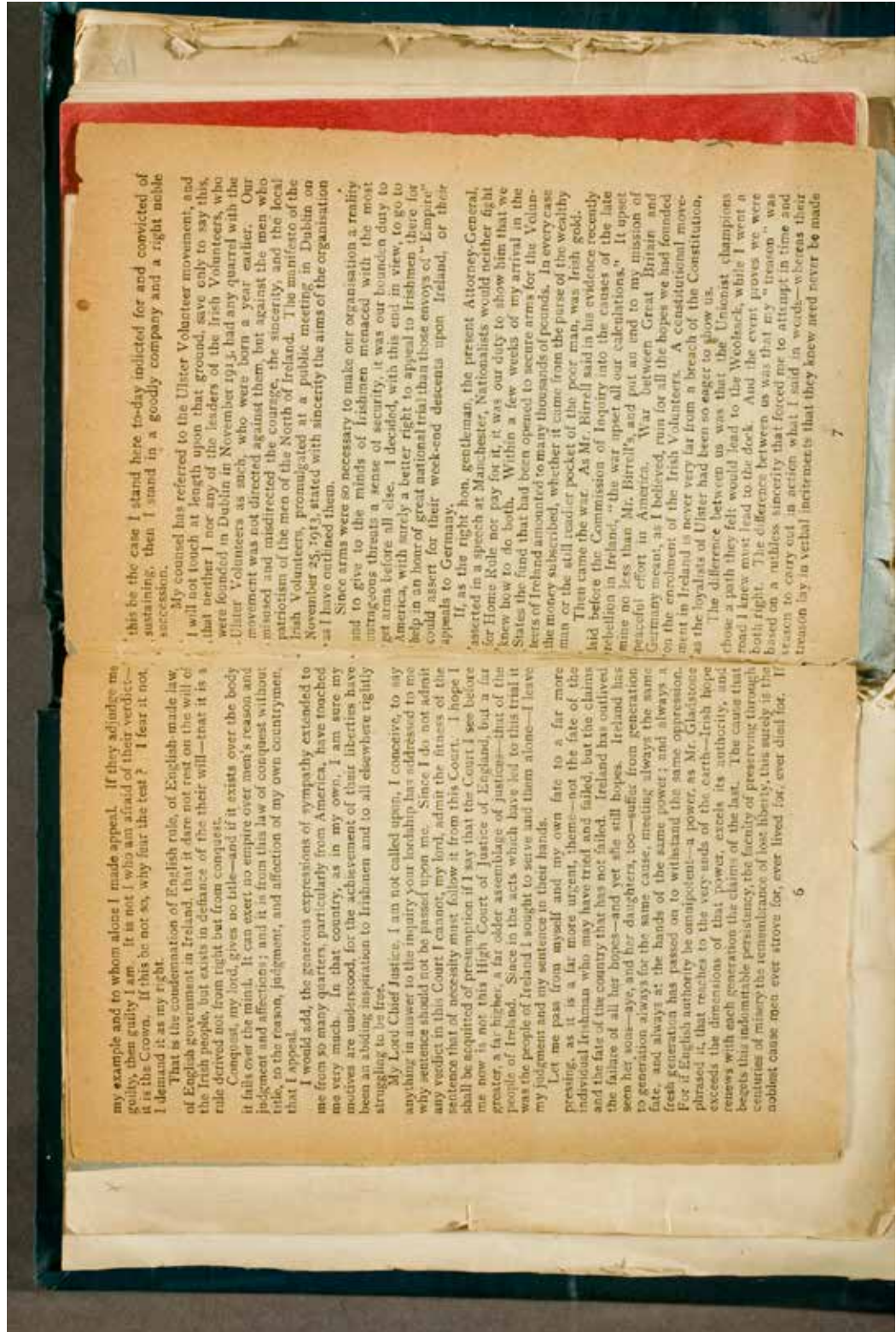
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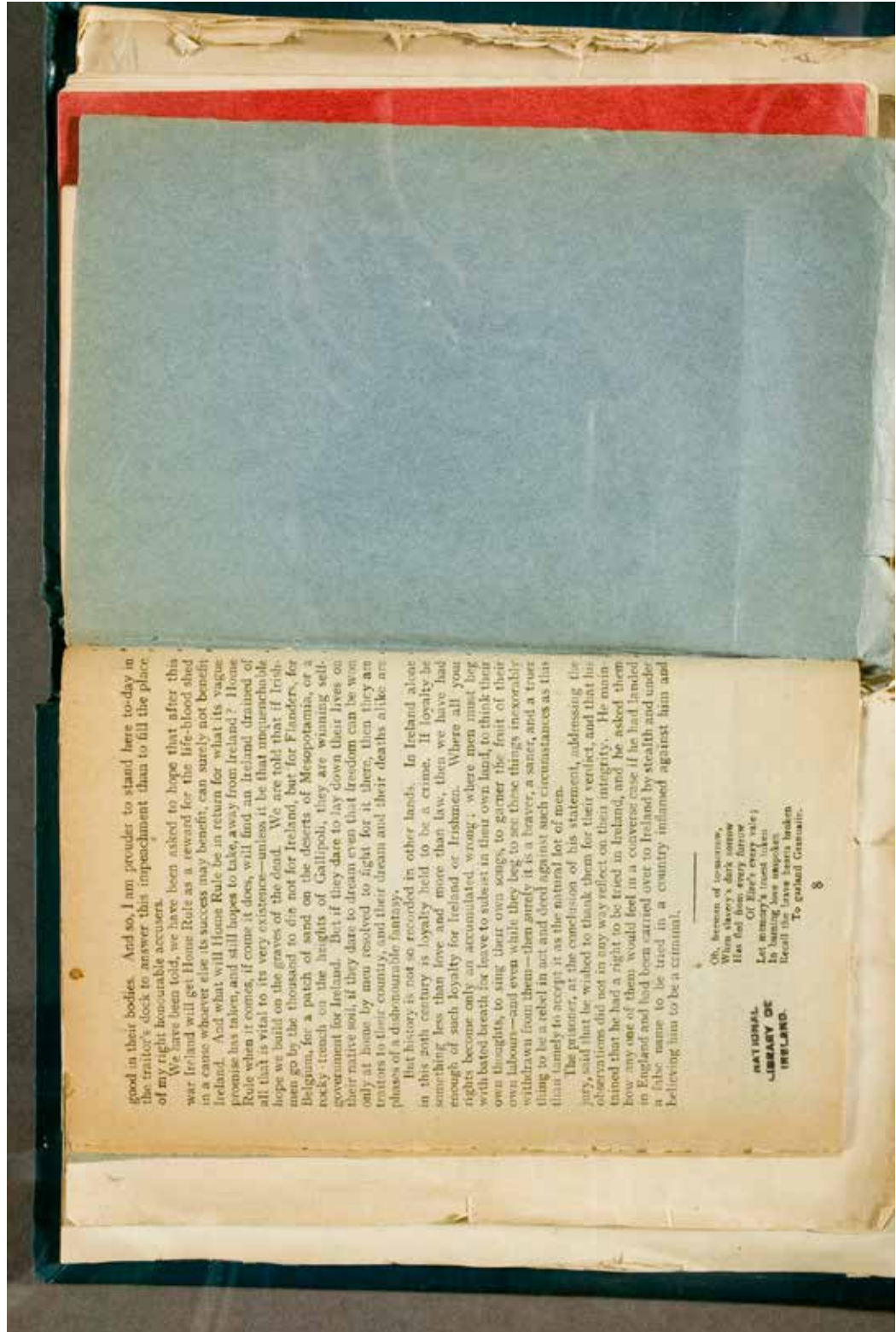
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