

# FROM CLONTARF TO BERLIN: NATIONAL STATUS IN SPORT.

By Sir Roger Casement.

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*In the following article Sir Roger Casement, late Consul-General, Rio de Janeiro, who was amongst the first to see the necessity of a National Volunteer movement, refers to the Battle of Clontarf, and pleads for a Volunteer Review on the approaching Centenary. He also points out the necessity of having a National status for Ireland at the Olympic Games.*

There are two things the Irish Volunteers might do, one almost at once, the other within the next two years, that should have an uplifting and enlarging influence on our National life.

The first is to organise a Volunteer review at Clontarf in April next, three months from now, to commemorate one of the really great events in our history of depression.

The 23rd April, 1914, will be the nine hundredth anniversary of the Battle of Clontarf, a conflict not less memorable in European affairs than was the battle of Hastings that followed it half a century later.

In the one great shock of arms, the Irish people hurled the invader from their shores; in the other the Anglo-Saxon people went down before him. In both cases the invading army was drawn from more or less the same stock, but while the English under Harold were hopelessly defeated, and their people accepted that defeat, the Irish under Brian overthrew an equally great invasion, and the civilization of the West proved that heroic valour and great martial achievement were not incompatible with the strictest fidelity to the Christian Faith.

This is one of the lessons Clontarf teaches their descendants of to-day, that to be a good Irishman means also to be a good Christian, and that it is only the strong man armed who keepeth his own house and Church. When one hundred and sixty years later the Irish under Ruari O'Connor laid aside their armed strength and came to greet

Henry II at Dublin, not as Brian did the invader with battle-axe and spear, but with a wondering admiration for the new invaders and the fine garmens and tinsel of a Norman "Court," they had their beards pulled by the courtiers, and their "uncouth garb and strange speech" mocked by the foreigner to whom they offered the allegiance of a peace-seeking people. Brian fought for peace, and he won it; Ruari trafficked for peace and he bought slavery and extinction.

Clontarf, Christian Clontarf, calls Ireland back to manhood; let Irish manhood and boyhood respond to that call. If 20,000, if 10,000 Irish Volunteers assemble in April next on that greatest field of Irish martial achievement, this year of 1914 may take its place beside 1782 and 1014 itself in the annals of European endeavour.

This done – and let it be done – another task, a subsidiary task if you will, but still a task that needs great effort, remains to be attempted.

In 1916 the Olympic Games of the White Races will be held in Berlin. Ireland should then be ranked among the free countries of the world. She will be, at least, as free as Finland, or Alsace-Lorraine. While within the Empire, she will enjoy complete internal autonomy – just as Basutoland, for instance, does in South Africa – and she should enjoy the same right of participating in those games as an individual entity as Finland did in Stockholm in 1912.

Much of the muscle and brawn that today are exploited in international athletics as British products come from Ireland, or from Irishmen in America, why should our own old land be robbed of the fame that is rightly theirs? Why should her vigorous sons, hardy today in body if not in heart as in the days of Brian, bring pride and comfort to every shore but their own.

Let the Irish Volunteers prepare not only for Clontarf in 1914, but for Berlin in 1916.

From the ranks of these young men, if they will but bend their bodies to the task, might be drawn the finest athletic team in Christendom.

Clontarf should unite all Irishmen in an effort to worthily commemorate an event that bound all Ireland together on our own shores. The Olympic Games of 1916 should unite a restored Irish-

chivalry to carry our banner to the shores of a friendly Europe, assembled in peaceful rivalry in celebrate the earliest gathering of unarmed white men in a contest where strength and skill took the place of cupidity and hate.

ROGER CASEMENT.