**FREDERIC COUDERT AND JOHN QUINN CORRESPONDENCE ON CASEMENT DIARIES**

**NYPL QUINN COLLECTION**

**AUGUST 1916**

COUDERT BROTHERS

COUNSELLORS AT LAW

New York

August 15th, 1916

Mr. John Quinn,

31 Nassau Street,

New York, N.Y.

My dear Brother Quinn:-

Just a line of felicitations on your very admirable article in last Sunday's Times. It really deserves something better than ephemeral newspaper publication. I am not dealing in mere polite phrase when I say it is one of the very best articles that I have read since the opening of the war. Calm, temperate and logical, it explains a point of view very little understood, even by those who try to think intelligently and fairly about Ireland.

I cannot, however, assent to all your reasoning. It does seem to me that the situation in the time of Wolfe Tone was very different and that the years that have elapsed, charged as they are with history, greatly weaken the parallel. After all is said and done, a revolutionist whose intellectual processes are so feeble that he brings infinite trouble and discredit upon his country and countrymen at a critical time is not entitled to great contemporaneous sympathy. Nor do I believe that such a man will live in history as a great martyr. Nor do I think that your admirable article, so fair in many respects, is quite just to the English difficulty regarding Ulster. We speak of Ireland as a unit, but that is only true geographically. There appear to be two antagonistic peoples in Ireland and the antagonism is based upon differences of race and creed accentuated by centuries of strife. Consequently and logically, the English statesmen must give to Ulster the same measure of Home Rule as to Nationalist Ireland. Otherwise he is sacrificing the minority race and religion in the same way as in the past he sacrificed the majority race and religion. Anyhow, it is a difficult situation and I do not feel that you have given Mr. Redmond and the English liberals full credit. However, you know far more of it than I, and your article was stimulating and interesting to the very highest degree. Certainly the execution of Casement was a political blunder. I believe it to have been just, but very unwise, and I greatly regret it.

Believe me, with best regards,

Faithfully yours,

Frederick B. Coudert.

August 22, 1916

Personal

My dear Coudert:

I received yours of the 21st.

I have heard of the diaries. I never thought that the great British Government would sink so low as to attempt to fight a man dead, or all but dead, with such foul weapons as they are using. They say they had the diary months ago. Why did they not use it then when it would have done some good. Then is when it would have kept him in Germany, alienated Irish opinions, literally made him a man without a country. But not until he was arrested, in their power, dead or all but dead, did they attack him, when he could not reply or fight back or defend himself or bring an action. If he were guilty of all that they insinuate that he was, fifty times over, it would not have made me change my article one word. As I wrote to Spring-Rice, there is no just relation between private acts and his public life. It is a sad commentary on how the bitterness of war lead men of fine instincts to not only throw dirt but to befoul themselves by reaching down into the sewer or the water-closet for the material to besmirch a man whom they have killed.

I have practically served notice that if there is any more of this quasi-official Scotland Yard business, there will be a second battery opened. I will rehearse for the American people the whole Piggot-Times forgeries, and wonder whether England didn't then get her bellyful of forgeries. I will denounce the diary as a forgery. I will call attention to the fact that it was not used when Casement could fight back. I will print the facsimile of Casement's letter in which Casement charged he had the evidence that Finley, the British Ambassador at Christiana, had offered money to have Casement kidnapped or knocked on the head. I will print the facsimiles of Casement's letters to Gray. And I will leave the American people to draw the conclusion from the facts which I give that Casement was to be put out of the way not because he was a rebel, but because he knew too much, and that these loathsome vile insinuations are being made now to blacken his memory because he had caught Finley in the act of attempting to have him assassinated. I have got the material. If they stop, I will stop. But if there is any more semi or quasi-official publication of these innuendoes, I will open up again. And the next time the article will be more personal. Shaw gave a fairly good answer in London when he said that he had no doubt that Casement would be perfectly willing to have every act of his life aired and made public, including the diary, if Asquith and Lloyd George and Kitchener would be willing to have their lives made equally public. A 13th century Florentine would not fight in that loathsome way. It is a particularly Prussian, a particularly Germanic, a particularly Potsdamian kind of weapon to use, this insinuation of degeneracy. I am certain that Spring-Rice himself would not use it. If he is passing it on, it is because there are orders from London to do so.

I am going to see the Naval Attaché here in a day or two and shall tell him frankly how I feel about it.

It is easy to make such a charge. I am told that it is a common thief's trick or petty highway thief's dodge, when the thief attempts to hold up a man, and the man starts to call an officer, for the thief to threaten the man with the statement that if he calls an officer the thief will say that the man was attempting some form of degeneracy with him. If there is such a diary I believe it to be a forgery. Casement was with me for weeks. Never by word or act, by tone of the voice, by a gesture or the slightest syllable or letter was there a shadow of a shade of anything of a degenerate about him.

Sincerely yours,

Frederic R. Coudert

2 Rector Street

New York City.

August 24, 1916

Personal

My dear Coudert:

Just a line to say that I had a very pleasant meeting with Captain Gaunt yesterday afternoon. I like him very much. I found him a man of an open and lucid mind. I have for many years felt that there was something about the sea that made naval officers and seamen men of clean and decent mind. I suppose it would take a Joseph Conrad to give the psychology of the sailor clean-mindedness. At any rate the Captain, whether because he was a sailor or because God made him so, has a clean mind. And I respect him for it.

Frankly, I went there candidly to tell him the substance of what I wrote to you, that if these quasi-official insinuations should continue, as they have since Casement's arrest, both in England and in this country, I should be driven to reply. My gratification was the keener, therefore, when he told me that a peremptory cable had been received from Grey yesterday forbidding any publicity or publication of any kind. I told him that was real statesmanship, as well as mere decency.

I would not write this to anyone except to you, for from your letter to me you knew of the Photographic copies in the Embassy. I regret of course that there has been the quasi-official Scotland Yard talk for the last two months.

The Captain showed me the photographic fac-similes, and without being a handwriting expert and without having studied them under the magnifying glass (the handwriting was much smaller than Casement's usual handwriting) I told him frankly that there was a great resemblance and that if I had there and then to give testimony on the subject I should be compelled to admit the genuineness of the handwriting. But I told him that I should like to submit the genuine handwriting that I had and these photographic copies to an expert. That I may do for this reason: in order that I can put the soft-pedal upon certain pro-German Irish and Germans here. I have been threatened right and left by the Germans. And yesterday I got a very nasty threat, accompanied by a snarl, from Kuno Meyer in Chicago. He is going to show me up and do all sorts of things. But with him too I shall reserve my fire.

Sincerely yours,

Frederic R. Coudert

2 Rector Street

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New York

August 24th, 1916

Mr. John Quinn,

31 Nassau Street,

New York, N.Y.

My dear Quinn:-

I only ran into the diary by chance. I agree with you that a great public movement should not be affected by the private morals of its promoters. No sadder instance of narrowness and disregard can be found than poor Parnell's case. Of course, I know nothing of the authenticity of the diary and would be inclined to take your judgment on that if you happen to look into it. My point was merely that if what I have heard is in the diary and the diary is authentic, it would indicate that the man was not sane. Whether such a man can be a great patriot and an admirable individual is a question which, I presume, each one must judge for himself. In any and all events, I think such a record should have been used during his lifetime, but I am merely interested in the matter because your article made me wish to form a fair, and if possible, unbiased opinion regarding him. I am not conscious of any prejudices in the Irish matter, but I have no doubt I possess them, and probably unconscious prejudices are the most dangerous.

In regard to Gilbert Murray, I did not see what he said, but as you summarize it in your letter, was it not practically what he said at the dinner the other evening.

I expect to go to London in a few days and if I can do anything there for you, pray command me.

Believe me,

Faithfully yours,

Frederick B. Coudert.