

COPY

Ahaclare,
Broadford,
Co. Clare.

25th January, 1922.

Dear Sir:-

In compliance with your request I beg to give you some particulars of the destruction of my dwelling house and farm produce by English soldiers, armed and disguised, on the night of January 20th, 1921.

At 3 p.m. on January 20th the "Glenwood" ambush took place, when six R.I.C. were killed, 1 seriously wounded, and three escaped uninjured. As Glenwood is two miles from this place I had hopes that I would not have to suffer in the subsequent reprisals that invariably followed an ambush. But I was soon to be sadly undeceived.

Two parties of English soldiers, armed, masked, and half drunk, assisted by local R.I.C., one starting from Killaloe and the other from Tulla, set out on that eventful night to wreak vengeance on a peaceful countryside. Their trail is readily distinguishable by fire and blood. Beginning at the Co-operative Creamery at Bridgetown at 10 p.m. they finish their ignoble work of destruction at 4 a.m., having during that time destroyed a Creamery and 20 farmer's houses and furniture, and all their farm produce.

At midnight the crashing of glass and smashing of doors of my dwelling house was the signal for me that a reprisal was on. Having entered the house through the broken doors and windows, the English soldiers, armed and disguised, ordered me and my wife and two daughters out. My two sons were not there, being "on the run" for some time.

With savage cruelty and scanty attire we were driven, on that cold bleak night, at the point of bayonet and revolver from that dear home that had taken a generation's loving toil and care to erect and neatly maintain on the sunny slopes of Ahaclare. While one party of soldiers kept guard over us, another party was completing

the work of destruction. Having saturated floors, ceilings and furniture with petrol, they set fire to the dwellinghouse. Nothing was allowed to be saved from it. My hay and oats were also burned. We were the unwilling witnesses of our home on fire all that long night. What a pitiful picture do the gaunt ruins present next morning, still smouldering, with an occasional flicker. What prayers are wafted to Heaven that these may be symbolic of the expiring kicks of the arch-enemy of our race in his 750 years' grip of our native land.

Hurriedly scanning the country around I soon detected 9 or 10 other farm houses on fire. A great night's work for England surely! That was her method of stifling the aspirations of Irishmen. But no, that fire would fan to flames any dormant spark of patriotism in a slave. But always passionately loving my country, I was now a rebel. Can you blame me? Without boots to our feet, and half-naked, I and all that were dear to me were now homeless on the roadside. Where, of where shall we turn for shelter? But Irish hearts are full of kindness, sympathy and generosity; and the worst being over, the work of converting a barn into a living room, where we have through the rigours of two winters dwelt, now begins.

Through this great disaster and the activities of the enemy in general, I have suffered much. My eldest son was a prisoner in Wormwood Scrubbs for 5 months. A moderate estimate of his loss to me through money and parcels sent him while in prison, and employing a man to work on the farm during his imprisonment and for six months subsequent to his release as he was unable to work after undergoing a hunger strike for 21 days, would be £100.

The Military fired 6 shots at my second son, early in January. He was "on the run" for 6 months; the elder for a year. Work on the farm was practically, if not wholly, suspended, as sniping at farm labourers was a favorite pastime for the soldiers and R.I.C. Owing to my hay being destroyed my cattle deteriorated in value to the amount of £100.

From the Reconstruction Commission of the Irish White Cross I received £25, previous to the £300 loan for reconstruction purposes. My house is roofed and slated again, and flowing majestically in the breeze are two flags - the "Stars & Stripes" and the "Green, White & Gold", - our Infant Republic sending greetings of gratitude to the Great Republic of the West for her loyalty, sympathy and generosity in our hour of trial.

Our deepest gratitude is due and hereby tendered to our American sympathizers who have helped in a substantial manner to alleviate our sufferings by their munificent financial assistance.

I am,

Yours very gratefully,

JOHN DILLON.