

KENNYBOROUGH,

BALLINTUBBER,

CO. ROSCOMMON.

C. J. France Esq.,  
Standard Hotel,  
DUBLIN.

Dear Sir:-

In compliance with your request, I give as far as possible a description of the injury done me & my property by British forces during the War in Ireland.

I am a farmer of 20 acres of land, residing at above address. My family is composed of myself, wife, three sons living with me on the farm, and two grandchildren, - one aged 3 years, the other 5 years. These are the children of one of my sons who is an American citizen and living there at present. They were born in America, but on the death of their mother were brought to me to be looked after. My two eldest sons at home have been connected with the Sinn Fein and Volunteer movement since 1916. The British forces seem to have got to know of the fact early in the fight, and were very anxious to ~~gax kx~~ know the movements of the boys. To acquire this knowledge and effect their capture my house was raided on several occasions by the famous Black & Tans and Military. The first of these raids took place in September 1920. This raid was carried out in daylight by forces composed of Military & R.I.C. The next - a midnight raid on the night of November 22nd, 1920, by British Forces wearing masks and fully armed, opened the door and demanded the whereabouts of my sons. On my refusing to give the required information they threatened to burn my house and all it contained, but after a thorough search of the place in which they pulled everything about in a savage manner, and taking possession of whatever money or other articles of value they could find they departed promising to call again in a few days.

The next raid on the morning of January 6th, 1921, carried out again by masked Black & Tans & R.I.C.. On entering they again demanded where my sons were. I denied having seen them since the previous visit. On hearing this the charge hand of the masked gang covered me with a revolver, called me everything but a gentleman, and told me the gruesome story that they had found one of my sons with two others of his comrades in a neighbouring house. They said he and another had escaped but they had done for one. The morning light proved the story true, as the boy, P. Darr, was found dead in a field riddled with bullets.

The next raid took place on May 10th, carried out by British soldiers this time in daylight. They again sought information of my sons whereabouts. I again refused to give any. The usual search again took place. The result was the discovery of two bicycles which they took with them. I was under the impression that I would be left in peace after this visit for at least a few days, but on that same night when all were in bed, the door was burst in, and an order given by one of the masked visitors to clear out of the house in five minutes. This order was accompanied by a number of shots. At first I refused to leave - a revolver was then levelled at my head, paraffin oil sprinkled about the place, and one of the rooms set in flames. I had scarcely time to get my wife and the two little children on the road in their night attire when the whole place went on flames, consuming all the furniture, clothing, etc, which the house contained. The raiders did not seem to have satisfied their thirst for revenge at leaving us homeless. They next turned their attention to the hay-yard, and destroyed between 15 & 20 tons of hay. That day we

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got shelter from a neighbour.

The morning of May 11th saw us homeless, my greatest anxiety was for my wife and the two little American visitors who were left in my care, but when God had saved all our lives I considered I have reason to be ~~am~~ thankful. My next trouble was to find a temporary shelter. One of the cattle sheds which had been saved from the fire by the timely assistance of the neighbours was the only place available. With a good bit of trouble and expense I made it fairly habitable and went to live there with my nerve-shaken family, till my sons, who had been on the run for several months at this time, could come and assist me in repairing the damage.

During all this trouble I could not attend properly to my work on the farm, thereby undergoing heavy losses in various ways. I received as a free Grant from the White Cross in some amount in all to £54. That amount is outside the Loan which was granted for rebuilding purposes. The amount of the Loan granted to me is £300. This money has greatly assisted me in having stones and other materials supplied for the erection of a much needed home.

Trusting this letter shall give you an idea of life here during the reign of terror. I wish to return my sincere thanks to you and all the good friends who have helped me in my troubles - especially to the friends of Ireland in America, who have at all times given their all for the Cause of the Old Land.

With many thanks, and kindest regards,

I am,

Yours very Sincerely,

Patrick Cunnane.