

Kilkenny People May 27th 1916

Martial Law in Kilkenny.

To the Editor "Kilkenny People." Kilkenny, May 16.

Sir—Kindly allow me some portion of your valuable space to thank you for the fearless and honest articles which appeared in your issue of last week. Yours has certainly been a creditable stand in such a trying period, and it would be well if the demands which you made were responded to by the authorities.

You ask for an inquiry into the lamentable death of our popular young citizen Mr John Kealy. There is only one word in the English language to describe that occurrence, but the operation of martial law might perhaps injuriously affect you if, in common language, I called a spade a spade. The circumstances as recounted by you are perfectly accurate, and the public emphatically demands that the responsibility be fixed in the proper quarters. You also refer to the arrest of numbers of our citizens days before the expiration of the proclamation issued by the military dictator in Ireland. An explanation as to the reason for such a course would indeed be very welcome. Sinister suggestions are being made in this regard. If men were in possession of arms, surely they had a right to be given an opportunity of surrendering them before they were dragged from their homes and lodged in a prison cell.

But perhaps this is an example typifying "the bravery of the forces of the Crown at Kilkenny in the face of great danger," referred to by Lord Desart in his bitter anti-Irish tirade in the House of Lords last week. His speech was not such as to throw oil on troubled waters. It was the old, old story. If I mistake not he made a similar speech against Home Rule. History repeats itself. Why, I ask, do men of his standing grasp at every opportunity of maligning their fellow-countrymen. Thank God, all men of his class are not made alike! In this county we have had one very notable exception in the Desart family. I refer to the late lamented Captain the Hon. Otway Cuffe, of happy memory. He knew the people and the people knew him, and I venture to think that his verdict would scarcely be in agreement with that of the present representative of the house of Desart.

Earl Desart's address in the House of Lords, made presumably for English consumption, is a cruel and shocking libel on Kilkenny. Side by side, in your columns—was it a coincidence?—are statements directly in contradistinction. You, sir, living in the city of Kilkenny, with your knowledge as a professional journalist state that "Kilkenny was as peaceful as a Sabbath evening in midsummer—no word was spoken, no act committed at which even the most vigilant agent of the law could take umbrage"; and again; "There was absolutely no disturbance of any kind—not a ripple on the surface." This was only the bare and naked statement of the truth. And yet we find Lord Desart giving a "vivid story" of his personal experiences in Ireland, and referring to "hidden volcanic forces covered over by a very thin crust." And then he goes on to refer to "the bravery of the forces of the Crown at Kilkenny in face of great danger"! What, sir, was the "great danger" which the Crown Forces were asked to face?

Some rumours, as wild as they were foolish and unintelligible were undoubtedly going the rounds, and the effect as far as I know was to put the Crown Forces in a state of panic—as witness the warning of a responsible officer of the Crown to parties in the city not to visit a certain place of amusement on Easter Monday evening.

But enough, sir. We in Kilkenny, with knowledge of local circumstances, know full well that Lord Desart's words must be taken cum grano salis : but is it fair that a peaceful city like ours, where one shot was not fired or an angry word spoken, should be so described by an absentee landlord who has never lost an opportunity of vilifying his fellow-countrymen, or that numbers of our decent citizens taken from the bosom of their homes and dragged through the streets like common criminals without any charge being made against them?

We are asked to give our sons to crush German militarism — "the curse of the civilised world." Can it be any worse than the examples of British militarism we witnessed in the streets of our city during the past fortnight? I fear not. Charity begins at home, and methinks they should first put their own house in order.

In conclusion I may say that Mr. L. Ginnell has epitomised the feelings of all of us when last week in the House he said as reported in Saturday's "Daily Mail": You want our men to remember German atrocities. They prefer to remember yours in our country. You want every young man to remember Belgium. They prefer to remember Ireland. They remember how time and again in the past you have desolated Ireland by fire and sword." Verb sap.

Yours,

A Disgusted Kilkennywoman.