

# Nurney Evictions

## Reference:

<http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/115432988?searchTerm=nurney%20evictions&searchLimits=>

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## The Freeman's Journal, 28 August 1869

### EVICTION IN CARLOW, WESTMEATH AND TIPPERARY.

In accordance with a promise expressed in our last issue, we this week present to the public some further details in reference to what have already gained such an unenviable notoriety under the name of the “**Nurney Evictions**”. Having in recent numbers briefly sketched the main circumstances which up to the time came under our observation, it will be unnecessary to repeat them at present, as they must be fresh in the minds of our readers ; but we append the names of the families, with the number of persons composing each, who have, by a single stroke of what we must call legal despotism, been cast houseless and homeless (if we except the house and home so often resorted to at the expense of the ratepayers of the union) by virtue of a system of land laws which need only be known in order to elicit the reprobation of those who very properly imagine that the land should be used for the mutual benefit of the peer and the peasant, and to the exclusion of neither.

The following are the names of the families alluded to :

— **Patrick Nolan, six in family**; Kate Byrne, no children ; Ellen Kinsella, one son ; John Brien, four in family; Patrick Kinsella, two; John King, four; Daniel M'Lean, three; Patrick Murphy, five; T. Murphy, two; Kate Joyce, Anne Moor; M. Rogers, two; Margaret Storey and son; John Tuite, wife, and daughter; Thomas Walshe, five; John Carey, wife, and two children; Anne Clarke, James Tuite, three; and Gregory Byrne, two.

The entire of the above belong to the labouring or cottier class, and some of their families have occupied for upwards of three generations the same houses from which they have now been driven. One poor woman — the widow Kinsella — had about three acres of land for about four years, but, to use her own words, “ it was always in the

family,” and she is now obliged to accommodate four other families in somewhat similar circumstances.

Some of those with whom we conversed on the subject of those evictions tell us that they took place when Mr. Elliott got possession of the land in consequence of the “lease being out of term”. ' All the houses belonging to these people are now levelled to the earth, although some of them tendered any rent which might be required; and one woman's son, in the army, offered to build a house at his own expense, but would not be permitted, on the principle that no one would be allowed to remain on the lands. The tenants generally were also told that they knew ten years ago what would be done when the leases would drop, and that they should have made some arrangement, but they all gave up peaceable possession. The widow Kinsella's son represented that he had some oats and potatoes on the land, and offered any rent required if allowed to remain, but no conditions would be made by the agent Mr. Newland, who, we are informed, refused even to let a horse in on the lands, and informed the owners that they would “never eat a potato off them”.

The unfortunate beings are now located principally in ditches, sheds, or under covered planks ; and indeed the entire district, so far as the crow bar has as yet succeeded in making its depredations, presents an appearance certainly unprecedented in Carlow, but sometimes read of in the current history of Westmeath or Tipperary. One man in particular spoke to us in language which we supposed (before we had the evidence of our eyes to warrant our reference to those devastations) savoured strongly of prejudice, or exaggeration; but on consideration, we could hardly conceal from him our conviction of the truth of his expressive, though ungrammatical, observation, that the evictions were “the most inhumanest thing that ever occurred in the county Carlow”. The stranger cannot surely look on such pictures without realising the familiar poverty, and, to some extent, consequent discontent, so characteristic of this Green Isle of “flocks and herds!” -- “Carlow Post”

## Reference: The Freeman's Journal, 23 October 1869

Spirit of the Press - AN IRISH EVICTION. \_\_

Mr. J. Langton writes as follows in the London Daily News : -

Yesterday afternoon a deputation, consisting of the Rev. E. Ransford and myself, waited on Mr Bright, to bring to his notice the painful Circumstances attending a heartless case of eviction in the county of Carlow, Ireland, and to beg of him to assist us in getting a petition on the subject presented to the House of Commons. This petition was unanimously voted at a large public meeting, numbering between two and three thousand persons held on the 4th of last month at Bagnalstown, about nine miles from Carlow. Mr. Bright received us with the utmost kindness and urbanity, and listened with great patience to the tale of cruel wrong which we had to tell. We then proceeded to the Irish-office, where Mr. Chichester Fortescue granted us a lengthened interview, expressed repeated and earnest wishes for the welfare of Ireland, and promised that our petition should be presented to the house, and afterwards printed.

At a time like the present, when justice to Ireland has become a deep and settled determination in the minds of all classes, it may not be out of place to give a brief account of the case as stated in the petition, and verified by inquiries made on the spot where the eviction took place. In the county of Carlow, some fifty miles south of Dublin, and not far distant from the beautiful and enchanting scenery of Wexford, stands the hamlet of Nurney, in or near which is a district called the lands of **Cloneen**. On these lands a number of poor cabins were built and inhabited by twenty-two families, numbering upwards of 120 individuals. Many of these families, have been on the land since 1821, and the majority of them held leases from a person who acted as middleman between them and the principal landlord. In these cabins, for which most of them payed a yearly or weekly rental, they appear to have lived industrious, peaceable, and virtuous lives, labouring on their neighbouring farms, paying their rents punctually, owing no man anything, keeping clear of Fenianism, terrorism, the workhouse, and the gaol, and bringing up children to follow in their footsteps And emulate their loyal and praiseworthy example.

But a few months since their leases lapsed on the death of the person on whose life they depended, and then the scene was suddenly changed. The principal landlord had determined that not a soul should be allowed to dwell on the land. Two bailiffs, a sheriff, and eight police, armed with rifle, bayonet, and crowbar, made their appearance one morning about eleven a.m., tore off the roofs of the cabins, and forced ont the unresisting and defenceless inhabitants, without giving bhem time or place to prepare or partake of

dinner. Many poor Creatures were compelled to locate themselves in ditches, sheds, or under covered planks. Several families found, refuge in an old cowshed on a neighbouring gentleman's land, with a roof extemporised from the thatch, of the levelled cabins. In this hovel there harboured every night, for a considerable period, Patrick Nolan, with wife and six children, of both sexes; Ellen Kinsella and son, 21 years old ; Johanna Neale and daughter, 22 years old; Kate Tuite (born on the property), 55 years old, with two children, a boy and a girl, from 11 to 13 years old; and Kitty Byrne, a young woman of marriage able age. There were only one room and one bed; all who could crowded there, the rest lay on doors and wood taken from the dismantled cabins, or on the damp and filthy floor. One poor old man in another wretched hole laid himself down night by night for many weeks in the centre of a miserable bed, with his grown up son on one side of him, and his grown up daughter on the other.

I visited Oloneen on the 3rd of last month, and spent some considerable time on the scene of destruction. The day was bright and clear, the country for miles round was in a fair state of cultivation, while the green trees glistened in the sunlight, and made the heart glad with the promise of approaching harvest. Scarcely a human habitation was visible; but here and there, at wide distances, two or three scattered homesteads repealed the presence of man, and appeared to protest against the plea of a surplus population. But close at hand, on the roadside where I stood, were the dismal ruins, blackened walls, scattered stones, and broken timber, which once helped to make up the scanty dwelling places of the evicted poor. It was a gloomy and painful sight, and the thought was still more painful and gloomy, that the owners of land in this unfortunate country would find better remedy for their real or fancied grievances than to outrage the common feelings of our nature by heartless cruelty and grinding oppression and that the peasantry have no higher resort than the dreary alternatives either to bid farewell to the land of their birth or to die in ditches unpitied and unknown.

I forbear, sir, to enter into a discussion on the various land theories which have been put forward as remedies for the discontent and distress of Ireland. Whatever course may be decided upon — whatever scheme adopted to secure tenant-right without landlord wrong — I cannot but believe that the people of these realms entitled to demand that such scenes as that of **Cloneen** shall not be again enacted— that our fair character in the family of nations shall not be blurred and blotted by such unseemly and unnatural outrages — and that a man who commits them, or authorises their committal, shall be held to have shown by that very act that he is unworthy to be trusted with control over the lives and well-being of his fellow- creatures.