
The November 5th Condemned Cell Letter

November 5, 1880

His Excellency the Marquis of Normanby,

I take the liberty of bringing under your notice a statement of facts of the Glenrowan affair.

The first thing I waited for was the last passenger train to pass at nine o'clock. I then bailed up a lot of men in tents around the stationmaster's house as I suspected there were detectives amongst them. I then bailed up Mrs Jones' Hotel, then Mr Stanistreet the stationmaster, and asked him if he could stop a special train with police and black trackers on. He could said he could stop a passenger train, but would not guarantee to stop a special train with police and blacktrackers exactly where I wanted it.

So then I bailed up the platelayers and overseer and ordered them to pull up the line a quarter of a mile past the station, so as the train could not go any further. My intention was to have the stationmaster to flash the danger light on the platform so as the stop the train, and he was to tell the police to leave their firearms and horses in the train and walk out with their hands over their heads, and their lives would be spared. Also to inform them that it was useless them fighting as me and my companions were in full armour and we could take the train and everyone in it; that the line was pulled up in front of them and I had a tin of powder behind them. So that if they attempted to return I would have blown the line up there as well.

This was my first intention, so as to capture the leaders of the police and take them into the bush and allow the superintendent to write to the head department and inform them if they sent any more Police after me or try to rescue him, I would shoot him, and that I intended to keep them prisoners till the release of my mother, Skillion and Williamson. But subsequently I varied my plans.

What I did do is bail up every person that came that way and place them in Jones' hotel, and on Sunday night I stuck up the police barracks a mile further away, there being only one policeman there, Constable Bracken, who came to the door with a double-barreled gun in his hand, loaded and full cock, but dropped it when I told him to do so. I took him, his wife and child in bed, and told her if any police came there not to let them know. Then I let a man go to stop the train about a mile below the railway station and opposite the police barracks and to tell them that they were in the barracks.

He had a double-barrel fowling piece and cartridges to fire as a signal for me if the police got out and surrounded the barracks, which I expected they would do as it was a most likely place for me to be, as it was a strong brick building and they would only send a few men on the platform to look after the horses as they could not take them out without going to the station.

It was my intention then to take possession of the train, horses and everything and return along the line, leaving the police surrounding the barracks and Glenrowan, while I had the train and robbed the bank along the line, for I had it ready beforehand that the horses I had taken to Jones' Hotel the minute I left by the train were to be driven into the hills, as the police would have no chance of following me. The reason I differed from the first plan is I wanted the man that stopped the train to have the reward, as I heard it was to be done away with in three days.

So you can see by the above that it was not my intention of upsetting the train for the purpose of killing the police. If I had wanted to do so, I need not have gone to Glenrowan at all, but could have set the powder in between the sleepers and waited until the train was coming at full speed over it and blowed the line up and nothing could have saved it. Although by stating the true facts of the case makes me appear worse, but will show it was not for to take life.

But the police did not do as I expected (that is to say). They did not surround the police barracks but came right onto the railway station and was informed there by Constable Bracken that the Kellys were in the backyard of Jones' Hotel getting their horses, and to surround it immediately or they would make their escape. Also that upon his (Bracken's) escaping from the hotel he locked forty-two men, women and children, they being held prisoners by the Kellys and that they were then there.

Instead of surrounding the hotel they came in a body and commenced firing into the house amongst the peaceable inhabitants. It was reported that they did not know who were in the hotel and that there was four shots fired from verandah of the hotel first. This is false. We never fired a shot and can be proved by all the people in the hotel. It was also said that Inspector Hare, upon hearing the screams of the females ordered his men to cease firing, but the fact was he received a wound in the wrist and as soon as he had it bandaged, he returned and fired four shots into the hotel himself.

That will show any person that in place of him being desirous to stop the firing amongst the people held by me as prisoners, he was but too anxious for the firing to continue he setting the example by firing four shots into the unfortunate people whom he was supposed to protect.

When the train stopped at the station I was opposite on horseback. I jumped off in a hurry to take possession of the train when a bolt broke in my armour which necessitated need to repair it. This gave the police time to get in front of the hotel and fire into the people.

When I heard the screams of the females I thought they had one of my companions in the gatekeeper's house, as I took it to be Mrs. Stanistreet that was screaming so instead of taking possession of the train, as I had intended, I went to their assistance.

As I got about halfway between Jones' Hotel and the gatekeeper's I received a wound in the foot and immediately afterward another one in the arm. Then I fired four shots out of my rifle, which is a five-chamber revolving rifle, which was recovered afterward with only one charge in it. When I did fire, it was at random and only at the flashes made by the police firing. I fired two shots in front and two at the left side of me. This is how I account for Superintendent Hare being shot, but neither me nor my companions fired a single shot until after I was wounded, which was the third volley from the police, which can be proved by 40 witnesses in the hotel.

After I fired, I looked back at Jones' Hotel and I could see the people running to and fro past the lighted windows in the house. I went back and cried to put out the lights and to lay down. I then went around to the yard at the back of the hotel and there met Byrne, who informed me that Constable Bracken had escaped. I then sent my brother and Hart into the house, as I did not want the people to know I was wounded. They pulled up the counter and partitions and barricaded the sides of the house to save the people within, which were then lying down- the police all the time keeping up a continuous fire on the house.

Senior Constable Kelly took charge of the police after Superintendent Hare was wounded. Instead of him ordering the men to cease firing as he states he did, I can prove by members of the police force that he ordered them after riddling the sides to fire into the roof. He also swore that he found my rifle, but Constable Arthur found both my rifle and skull cap which can be easily proved by Constable Arthur's statement in the paper, and that Constable Kelly was firing out of a shot gun at the time the rifle was found.

As he had fired all his cartridges, he sent down to the train for God's sake for to send him up more ammunition, and he was brought up a supply of Martini Henry cartridges, and as the gun would not fire them he had to send for a Martini Henry rifle. This he continued to use until after I was taken, therefore my wound was received not from Constable Kelly.

Constable Kelly also swore he searched me and took my watch. Sergeant Steele also swore he took my watch, so one must be swearing false and what Sergeant Steele to Mrs Jones show what the police were capable of doing. He said to Mrs Jones, 'if you will swear Ned Kelly shot Cherry I will forward your application for compensation for destruction of your house, ' and she has sworn an affidavit to that effect. As for the police challenging me, and telling me to go back in the morning, it is ridiculous. The police in the position they were, surrounding the house, to order anyone to go back, it must be a friend or foe and either way it is not likely he would order him to go back.

I think by showing a few facts of the case, it will show the contradictory statements put forward by the police. I don't wish to trouble you any further with my case, but if it was looked into in a proper manner, if witnesses were examined, and, which many of the police force at Glenrowan at the time could prove, what I say is correct.

I should have made a statement of my whole career, but my time is so short on earth that I have to make the best of it and prepare myself for the other world.

Yours obediently, Edward Kelly, His X mark.

Witness: G.W. Evans, warder, H.M. Gaol, Melbourne.