

A TERRIBLE TRAGEDY.

It was on a Saturday morning when the events which I am about to relate, illustrating such wanton cruelty, that the deeds of Morgan, the pirate, fade away into nothingness by comparison, and resulting in the massacre of my father, mother, and eight brothers and sisters, happened.

I remember that at the time, to be more exact, at 9.15 a.m., Saturday, April 18th, 1918, my mother was sitting in the kitchen facing a window, giving view on the main road, washing and petting my youngest sister, and the rest of us boys and girls were clustered around my father in another corner of the apartment, watching him making a new toy; when, without any preliminary knocking, there entered into the apartment a stranger of such gigantic stature, that for a moment the room seemed to be filled to overflowing, and surprise held us paralysed.

My father was the first to recover from the momentary shock caused by such an apparition, and I could see that he was quite angry by the tone in which he addressed the intruder.

What do you want here?

For a minute or two the stranger never answered a word, and I can still picture him standing in front of us. Of such a size that I can safely say that none of us had ever even imagined anything that could remotely approach him. In his right hand, he was holding a club, terminating in a cross piece at the lower end, of such immense proportions that twelve of us could have barely moved it, and the ease with which he was wielding such a formidable weapon, was, to say the least, terrifying. From his neck, falling to his ankles and drawn in at the waist, was a piece of white cloth, and his long hair fell loosely in ringlets over his forehead.

Then, with a voice that shook the very ground under our feet, came the reply.

What I want is soon told. For months you and your sort have been harassing me, taking pleasure in running about my garden, jumping and sitting on my flowers, stealing half my rations of sugar, and also, you took fiendish delight in pricking me during my sleep, causing me inconvenience in a thousand different ways, so I have decided to rid this world from such pests as you are.

Lies! Lies! All of it, cried my Father, and acting rashly he flew at the monster, and dealt him a terrific blow which landed square between the eyes. Now my father is reputed to be the strongest man in our village of Little Common, but the only effect that the blow had on the inhuman wretch was to cause a sneer so full of malignity that I nearly fainted with terror. Goaded beyond endurance by the sight, and

realising that this was a fight for life, my father attempted to strike again; but, this time, the brute, with one hand, caught him by the waist, and slowly, deliberately, proceeded to crush the life out of him.

I shall never forget the horror of it all. The awful noise caused by the bones cracking, breaking, being reduced to pulp under the terrific pressure, the eyes rolling out of their sockets, the tongue hanging out, and then—Oh! God, how could you permit such a thing... My mother, crazed by the sight, and still holding the baby in her arms, attacked the monster in a vain effort to make him release my father. Her end was more merciful, if not as cruel, for the wretch, with his free hand, brought down his club with all the force of his arm, and literally cleft her in two. One of the baby's feet, severed from the rest of the body by the force of the impact, flew through the air, and struck me on the head. I fell down, stunned, and God be thanked, lost consciousness.

How long I remained unconscious, I do not know, but when I came to, the sun was high in the sky, and I, who in the morning had been a member of a happy family, was now left all alone in the world. Slowly and painfully I dragged myself on my feet. The pain in my head was terrible, and lifting my hand I discovered that the blood was slowly oozing out from a wound over my left eye. I worked my way over to the sink, and plunging my head in cool cool water soon felt relieved. I then laid down and searched in sleep a moment of forgetfulness and rest.

It was late at night when I woke up again, and, feeling greatly restored and much stronger, I reverently carried the bodies of my father, mother, brothers and sisters, to a wood adjoining our house, and there gave them christian burial. It took me all the rest of the night to complete the work, and when at last I laid down my tools and knelt over the grave for a last prayer, and to call God's curse on the perpetrator of such an outrage, the first light of dawn was showing itself in the eastern sky.

I fled from the spot, and though I am an old man to-day, and many years have elapsed since then, I have never been able to summon the courage to pay another visit to the place where I laid for their long sleep all that I held most dear.

Now, dear, gentle, timorous reader, should the foregoing cause an attack of nerves, or, worse still, should your gentle bosom heave a sigh for me, let me quickly reassure you. My family was only one of the many which belong to the WASP variety, and the brute, the monster, the inhuman wretch, was only one of our most charming V.A.D.'s, who, armed with brushes, sweeping, long-handled, complete, was doing a bit of week-end cleaning.

—Sergt. HOSPREP.