

July 1895 **The Terrible Crime.**

Helmsley has indeed been brought into unenviable notoriety by a terrible and most deliberately planned double murder. Some little time since a man named Robert Hudson came to lodge in Bondgate with Mr. and Mrs. Holmes, bringing with him his wife and child, to see the country. This man, it seems, lived as a lad for some years on the moors with his grand-parents, the Hesselaines, whose daughter Mrs. Hudson was, and went to the little School then just started under Mr. Norris. Hudson is reported to have served his time in Darlington as apprentice to a cabinet maker, and since that time to have been working with a firm of furniture dealers at Nottingham. He appears to have lost his situation a few weeks ago, and to have come to this country before trying to get another place. He seems to have had plenty of money, having recently sold his furniture, for he drove about a good deal to various places; he also took his wife long and somewhat lonely walks. He is reported to have at one time had a revolver for the purpose, as he said, of shooting small birds, but apparently he chose other methods to attain the object towards which he was moving.

On Saturday, the 8th, he seems to have left the Holmes' early — at 9 am it is said — and to have gone up Baxtons Rig. The Messrs. Robson, of Carlton, met him and his wife and baby, which was about a year old, beyond Mr. Herbert Kirby's. They seem to have gone on towards Ropa through the gate leading on to the moor, and then he seems to have taken her, when clear of the plantation, to a grave which he had already dug beneath a cluster of trees, and where probably he had concealed the carving knife, and there to have murdered her and the baby. The poor woman seems to have struggled, for her dress was much torn and her hands cut. Both their throats were cut. The carving knife was laid on her breast, and then the murderer had heaped soil and heather and bracken, and had thrown stones over the bodies. There has rarely been a more deliberately planned murder, for the shallow grave was seen on the Thursday previous by Mr. Tyerman, who was mending roads, and was said to have taken his dinner under the trees, and wondered what farmer was going to bury a sheep there; but so soon as on Saturday, the 15th, the suspicion of murder got out, he wondered if it were possible the grave had anything to do with it, and so went with others straight to this grave, and there the bodies were found, early on Sunday morning. Hudson appears to have been seen by Messrs Robson somewhere about 12; he was back at Helmsley at 2, and said he had sent his wife to her friends at Hovingham, where he was going to join her. He, however, took train to York. He wrote to the Holmes' in the name of his wife, telling them to send his wife's things to his father at Darlington, and wrote to his sister-in-law with quite another story, viz., that his wife had taken off with some other man. This letter pretended to be written from Nottingham, but had the Derby post mark.

These are all the facts at present known. What has induced the wretched creature to commit these cold-blooded crimes every one is at a loss to conceive. Apparently they had lived on friendly terms, without quarrels; yet the long, lonely walks in this lonely country, the revolver, the prepared grave, all point to a deliberately planned crime. Writing as we do only the day utter the

discovery of the poor slaughtered things, it is quite possible that more may be known before this is in our readers' hands. All Helmsley will feel a deep distress that such a thing should have been done in our Parish, and those who were at Church at the Eucharist and at Evensong will have joined heartily in the act of humiliation and sorrow then made before God for the crime in our midst.

Whilst we cannot but hope that such crimes should not go unpunished, yet we may well pray God that the poor wretch may be brought to a sense of his awful sin, and seek mercy from One who will on true repentance pardon even the blackest crimes. Is it not a warning to all to what we may come unless we seek to hold fast to God by every means that lies in our power. We trust we have not said more than the circumstances in every way justify. There is no wish to condemn an untried man; but the facts are, alas, all too clear to allow of doubt.

August 1895 **Robert Hudson.**

The sad tragedy enacted on Roppa Moor (the papers have all spelled it Roper, but we believe the spelling we have given is the correct one) has now been brought to a close. A Coroners inquest found Hudson guilty of murder: he was brought before the magistrates at Helmsley and committed to the assizes: after some stay in York Castle he was tried, condemned, and was eventually hanged in York Castle. So far as the public are concerned the motives of the crime have not been made known: but there can be little doubt from expressions that the poor man dropped what were the causes. His Counsel who defended him at the assizes tried to make the plea of insanity, but, though no doubt Hudson's character was a very strange and peculiar one, there were no real tokens of insanity from beginning to end of the business. Though so young, and so to all appearances unlikely to do, and apparently incapable of doing the awful deeds he did, yet he had a tremendous power of will and determination in his character. How few could have gone through the scenes in the Magistrates' Court and the scenes at the final trial, so utterly unmoved as he was: who could have looked upon the dress of his victims and the weapons as he did without signs or tokens of distress, who could have heard his father's sobbing testimony and yet remained as though he heard it not. Yet we believe that this was not callousness, but a tremendous power of will and determination and self-control that enabled him to remain wholly unmoved. And yet the man felt and felt deeply.

The writer paid two visits to him in York Castle, one before and one after the final trial, and on both occasions but especially at the first visit all that cold exterior vanished, and the man cried bitterly over his sin. It must be an extremely difficult thing to obtain a true sorrow for sin, when the awful punishment of death is hanging over a person, for it is so easy to have remorse or sorrow because of the trouble into which we have fallen and the punishment which is coming upon us for it, and hard to get the right sorrow, sorrow for having offended God: but we believe that he did really do his

utmost to seek from God that sorrow, and to obtain that broken and contrite heart which God has promised not to despise. We can only pray that God has heard his prayers, and seen his sorrow, and helped him, and that he has found mercy. He did all he could to humble himself in the Church's appointed ways, and we trust that even his dark sins are washed away through the merits and pleading of the most precious Blood of Christ. He found a true friend and helper in the prison Chaplain who did all he could to help him and bring him back to God.

A Warning to All.

What was the cause, the motive of this awful crime? He had been a quiet inoffensive boy at the Eastmoors, he had sung in the Choir there. He went to Darlington, and on a letter of recommendation from Helmsley he was received into S. James' Choir there. So long he has assured us he remained without falling away from God.

But when he went into the big towns, and was attacked by fresh temptations, and fell into the company of, or rather allowed himself to become friendly with bad men and bad women he gradually fell away. "Bit by bit," "little by little" he lost hold of God and fell into the hands of the devil's agents, bad men and bad women: until evil passions mastered him, and he abandoned himself to evil lusts and impurities. It was no doubt evil desires and lusts unrestrained in the past that led him to weary of his wife and hounded him on to do the awful crime, as he hoped without detection.

Will not this history (which from words that dropped in course of conversation we believe to be the true history of this poor man) cause many amongst us to stop and think. Losing hold on God little by little, bit by bit, was his history. Is not the same history going on in the hearts of many who perhaps have cried out against him, denounced him? Is it safe to neglect God? Is it safe to neglect prayer and not to try to live to please God? If only the same temptations come to us what is to keep us back from doing as he did? Have there not been multitudes of cases where people have sinned as he did and tried to bide their sin by what was practical murder, or attempted murder. Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall: and let us all take it home to ourselves a lesson to be more in earnest, more faithful, to keep a closer hold on God, lest satan who is ever on the watch lead us on also along the downward path.