

Thomas Crewdson and Co., 1824-1829

In 1824 a distinctly new bank was started in Manchester, this time by a couple of gentlemen belonging to the Society of Friends. The senior partner and capitalist was Mr. Thomas Crewdson, a very enterprising man, originally a silk manufacturer, with a warehouse in Cannon Street; the junior partner and manager was Mr. John Robinson, previously a cashier at Jones Loyds. Mr. Crewdson was one of the long well-known and greatly-respected family whose name has in Manchester always conveyed the idea of manly worth. It belonged by ancestry to Kendal, and in 1824 was represented by five brothers, the eldest of whom, Dilworth Crewdson, was a banker in his native town. The second was the silk manufacturer who afterwards became banker in Manchester; the third, fourth, and fifth, were Isaac, Joseph, and Wilson. The peculiar description of high-priced calico so long known in commerce as "Crewdson's" was manufactured by the two former. It was Isaac who distinguished himself as the author of the celebrated pamphlet, *A Beacon to the Society of Friends*, issued in 1835, the year before he retired from business, consequent upon the publication of which arose the controversy that led eventually to the secession of Mr. Alderman William Neild, Mr. Fowden, Mr. Benjamin Pearson, Mr. Joseph Crompton, the Ransomes, the Simpsons, and many others, including himself. Isaac Crewdson lived in a large house at the eastern extremity of Ardwick Green, where he died May 8th, 1844, aged sixty-four. He had nothing to do with the bank, but with the name of the family before us it is pleasant to secure the opportunity of paying a little tribute to the memory of one of the most actively benevolent men ever known in Manchester. Thomas Crewdson, the banker, resided at 61, Grosvenor Place, Oxford Road. He married, in June, 1808, Margaret, daughter of Isaac Bragg of Whitehaven, and by her had a family of five sons and three daughters, several of whom are still living.

Fifty to sixty years ago the Manchester residents who hailed from the same distant county were, like the Greeks, the Italians, the Germans, of to-day, yea, even like what Cornishmen are still, all pretty-well known by one another, and, to a certain extent, friends and acquaintance, especially if accustomed to meet on Sundays at church or chapel. The select little company of Friends belonging to Cumberland, included not only Dalton and the Crewdsons, but Mr. John Robinson, the bank cashier. Mr. Crewdson probably kept his account at Jones Loyds, and would thus be an observer of Mr. Robinson's ways and aptitudes. Whether or no, Mr. Robinson resigned what was considered a very hopeful position at the bank to become a partner in the new firm of Thomas Crewdson and Co. The premises taken for it were part of the block just behind the King Street Town Hall, tenanted so long and up to quite recently by the gas and water offices. For a time all went well. But an excellent servant does

not always make the best of masters : it is not every gallant soldier that is competent to lead an army, or every clever mariner that is qualified to be a captain. Mr. Robinson seems to have been more adventurous than discreet, forgetting that the highest wisdom is to learn both how " to labour " and how " to wait." In eighteen months or so, the complexion of the larger accounts, three or four of which were a good deal over-drawn, so alarmed Mr. Crewdson that he insisted on winding-up. It was a pity for there was no actual necessity. Affairs would have got rectified in time, and the proposal was contrary to the wish of many of the bank's best customers. But Mr. Crewdson was inflexible. Nothing availed, and he closed the doors. There was no failure or stoppage, no rumour of anything wrong ; the business was simply discontinued ; every demand was met ; every account discharged in full ; the final dividend of 1s. 8d., making 20s., was paid at Christmas, 1827. Mr. Crewdson, though a serious loser, bore up bravely, and had the sympathy and respect of all who knew him.

After giving up the banking business he devoted much of his time and thoughts to the question of the repeal of the Corn Laws, for which object he was one of the early agitators. A copy of one of his many papers on the subject, *An Enquiry into the Effects of the Corn Laws*, published in 1830, twenty-five pages, No. 5987, is preserved in the Free Library.

Mr. Robinson had entered Jones Loyds in or about 1803, and lived for some time at No. 4, Fishpond Street, the pleasant suburban locality already described as bordering the meadows near Garratt Hall, and now known as Leamington Place. So curiously were his talents compounded that about 1814 he began to exercise himself, after bank hours, as a dentist, and in 1818 settled down in St. John Street as a regular practitioner. Even after joining Mr. Crewdson he still clung to the art of his choice, and perhaps would never have given it up save for an incident one day when going to Liverpool outside the coach. Among the passengers was a young man who had been to Manchester, he said, to see if there was an opening for a dentist. He had looked all round, but in vain, and was returning home disappointed. " Perhaps," said Mr. Robinson, who was pleased with the young man's manner, " I may be able to help thee." On reaching Liverpool all particulars were disclosed and the result was the transfer of the business to Mr. Richard Helsby, founder in Manchester of a reputation of a surname that lasted for little less than fifty years. Mr. Helsby established himself in George Street but towards 1857 fell back upon the old quarters near St. John's.

After the bank and the profession were both out of his hands, Mr. Robinson tried alum making, assisted with capital by his friend Miss Byrom. Succeeding indifferently he changed to accountancy, supported in the most generous manner by Mr. Loyd, and in this at last he prospered.

In their early and happy days Thomas Crewdson and Co. undertook the building of premises such as, architecturally, would have no rival among the Manchester banks. Market Street was at that time in course of construction ; a suitable spot was found just above Brown Street, and here they erected the pillared novelty the basement of which is now

Mr. Henry Barton's shop. They themselves, however, never occupied it, nor does anyone of importance appear to have become tenant till 1829, when it was taken for the celebrated "Bank of Manchester," concerning which we shall discourse anon.

[From *Manchester Banks and Bankers, Historical, Biographical and Anecdotal*, by Leo. H. Grindon, pages 124 to 128, published by Palmer and Howe, 1, 3 and 5, Bond Street, Manchester. Simpkin and Marshall, London. 1877.]

Edward Pease

Extracted from *The Larchfield Diary*, by Francis Newburn, see xxv. 31, 67.

"1857. A meeting of a few friends was held, March 9, at my office and subsequently in the Town Hall, to consider of a memorial to this old friend of mine. He was sounded on the project. It was thought it should be responded to by all the railway companies in the Kingdom; but he declined any other honour than that of an address to him from the town and neighbourhood.

"I remember a violent and costly run upon Skinners' Bank in this town. Edward Pease called at the Bank where he found a number of noteholders and depositors. He went behind the counter and wrote the following in the daybook then lying on the table: 'Edward Pease and Co. keep their accounts at this Bank, and are so satisfied of its solvency that they hereby engage to indemnify creditors of the Bank to the extent of ten thousand pounds.' Not a note was changed or deposit asked for by those who were then in the Bank, and the run immediately ceased."

"1858. Edward Pease was buried this morning (Aug. 5). The shops throughout the town were shut during the whole of the day and there was the largest concourse of people in the funeral procession and in the streets ever witnessed in Darlington. It was a proud testimony to the man who had made South Durham. The preaching at the funeral was not to my taste."

Mr. Newburn also describes the action of Friends, and especially Edward Pease, in the promotion of a bill in 1819, for making a Railway from the collieries to Darlington, which was lost by a majority of six or nine. The bill of 1820 was passed without much opposition.

MOLLY STOKES.—"May 17, 1775. Miss Molly Stokes, the last day of the Quakers yearly meeting, bore a public testimony at Bristol."

"June 23, 1797. Conversed with formerly Miss Molly Stokes, now Mary Dudley, with a large family of grown up children. I had not been in her company during many years before."

From the Diary of William Dyer, of Bristol.