

The Savings Bank Tragedy, Newcastle.



FEW people who now pass by the front of the Royal Arcade, Newcastle, are aware of the dreadful story of crime with which the building on the right hand side of the entrance was connected half-a-century ago. That building was then the Savings Bank; the victim of the crime was Joseph Millie, a clerk in the bank; and the murderer, or supposed murderer, was Archibald Bolam, who held the important position of actuary.

The mystery in which the foul deed was enshrouded at the time was but imperfectly dispelled at the trial of Bolam; but shortly afterwards circumstances transpired which cleared up the most serious of the difficulties that judge and jury had had to contend with. It is now known that Bolam was one of that dangerous class of capable men that live a double life. To all outward seeming, he was a trustworthy and straightforward man, a professor of religious opinions, and a citizen who enjoyed the distinguished honour of having, by sheer force of ability and integrity, raised himself from a humble position to one of great responsibility and liberal emolument. In reality, he was a morbid and self-tormenting sensualist, a hypocrite of a peculiarly vile kind, and one who at least held communion with filthy and depraved characters. Joseph Millie was about as different a person as can well be imagined. An unfortunate business career had shown him to be honourable and just to others, whilst he was severe towards himself: and his nature was so amiable and his manners so genial and pleasant as to lead persons not thoroughly acquainted with him to infer a lack of firmness in his nature which really did not exist.

Millie was born in North Shields, where he succeeded his father in an old-established ironmongery business, which he failed to carry on successfully. In order to pay his creditors in full, he reduced himself to his last penny, and for years afterwards he pursued a wandering and uniformly unfortunate business career, until, at fifty-six years of age, he found himself occupied as an occasional clerk in the Newcastle Savings Bank.

Archibald Bolam was born at Harbottle, Coquetdale, in 1797, and was thus forty-one at the time of the murder. Early in life he was a schoolmaster at Holystone. Before he reached the age of twenty years, he drifted to Newcastle. There for some time he held a position as usher in the Percy Street Academy, then kept by Mr. Bruce, father of the venerable and respected Dr. Bruce; he became a member of the Presbyterian body, and kept up for years a correspondence with his old pastor at Harbottle; and finally he secured the appointment of actuary to the Savings Bank. Prosperity appears to have had a bad effect upon him, for soon after he had floated into easy circumstances he quarrelled with his Presby-

terian friends, and ceased his correspondence with the pastor of the Harbottle congregation.

This was the state of affairs with him in the eventful year 1838. His residence at the time was No. 2, Sedgewick Place, Union Lane, Gateshead, his house being kept by a woman named Mary Ann Walker, about whom, afterwards, people had a great deal to say. The first step in the path that led directly to the commission of a great crime seems to have been taken early in the year named. Mr. George Ridley, a gentleman highly esteemed in the town, had been appointed assistant clerk to the actuary of the Savings Bank. For a short time matters went smoothly enough between them; but suddenly Bolam turned round upon his subordinate, and used every endeavour in his power to procure his dismissal from the post. Still it was not till the first days of December that he eventually succeeded in his efforts. The fact was, that he was clearing Ridley out of the way in order to secure the office for Millie, whose employment as an occasional clerk at the bank had dated from the month of March preceding. Bolam had taken a strong fancy to Millie, and had chosen the means referred to for bringing the poor man nearer to him. On the 5th of December, Millie entered upon the duties of his new appointment, and two days afterwards he was murdered under circumstances of revolting brutality.

About two o'clock on the morning of the 7th December, 1838, a servant in the employment of Mr. Robson, lace merchant, whose shop closely adjoined the Savings Bank, discovered that the premises occupied by that institution were on fire. Smoke was found to be pouring out of the windows in volumes, and the police and the fire brigades of the period were quickly summoned to the spot. The engines arrived promptly—their quarters were only about two hundred yards distant—and the fire, which was found to be but a small affair, was soon extinguished. When the firemen entered the premises, they passed into the waiting-room, and proceeded through to a door which gave access to an apartment usually occupied by the actuary and his assistant. One of the firemen attempted to open this door, but found that it was held almost close, apparently by the pressure of some one behind it. The man desisted for a moment in order to summon assistance; but when he tried the door again he found that it opened without any difficulty. Groping their way into the inner room, the firemen stumbled over something lying on the floor. The glimmering light of their lanterns was brought to bear upon the object and its surroundings, when a hideous sight was revealed.

The body of the grey-headed old man, Millie, was seen to be lying face downwards on the hearth-rug, with traces of a terrific death struggle surrounding it. There were no less than twenty wounds on the victim's skull, which had been smashed to pieces; his left jaw and cheek bone were broken; the hearth-rug was literally saturated with blood; and blood,

brains, and hair bespattered the chairs, walls, and wainscoting nearest to the spot. By the side of the dead man lay the poker, which had evidently been the instrument used by the murderer, for it was covered with blood and hair. Close to the victim's feet were the tongs belonging to the set of fire irons. They lay as if they had dropped from the murdered man's hands, after being used in an ineffectual attempt at self-defence. A cursory examination of the body led to the belief that the firing of the premises had been accomplished for the purpose of *hiding* the evidence of murder, as the poor man's pockets were found to have been stuffed with coals and paper. After noting these details, the firemen continued their search round the room, in a corner of which they found a man lying, apparently, in a state of insensibility. The man was Archibald Bolam, who appeared to be suffering partly from the effects of the smoke, which still almost filled the room, and partly from a slight wound in his throat. No blood was on the floor where he lay. When he was discovered, he opened his eyes intelligently, and then shut them without any reasonable cause for so doing, creating an impression amongst the firemen that he was shamming. There was a small quantity of blood on a desk near the spot, together with a blood-stained desk-knife, with which it seemed that the scratch wound on his throat had been inflicted.

Bolam was conveyed to the house of Mr. Glenton, chemist, close at hand, where he was attended by Dr. Nesham and Dr. Walker, who found nothing serious the matter with him. Here he was waited upon by two magistrates, Mr. Alderman Dunn and Mr. Woods, to whom he gave his version of the occurrence. The purpose of Bolam's story was to fix the commission of the crime upon some mysterious and unknown person, from whom he declared he had received threatening letters as recently as the previous day. In consequence of this, he stated that he quitted the bank on the previous evening, leaving no one on the premises, and proceeded to his home in Gateshead. When he came back, he found the bank door as he had left it; but, upon entering the inner room, he saw Millie lying on the hearth-rug. Believing that Millie was asleep, he proceeded to his desk, but had no sooner opened the lid than a man with a blackened face struck him a blow on the right temple. Bolam ran shouting to the windows, which looked out upon one of the most frequented thoroughfares of the town; but the man threatened to kill him as he had done Millie, and ultimately knocked him down and attempted to cut his throat. Such was Bolam's story.

The inquest on the body of Millie was opened the same afternoon—just twelve hours after the discovery of the murder—at an old-fashioned hostelry, the Blue Posts, Pilgrim Street. News of the tragedy had by that time spread all over the town, and the street in front of the old inn was densely packed by excited crowds. Before the coroner, Bolam repeated substantially the same story

that he had told the justices in the morning; but at the adjournment of the inquest, three hours afterwards, he was given into custody. Ultimately a verdict of "Wilful murder against Archibald Bolam" was returned, and the prisoner was remitted for trial to the Spring Assizes, due to be held in the month of March succeeding.

Meanwhile, a strong feeling against Bolam had developed in the town. Metaphorically, he was arraigned at the bar of public opinion, convicted of murder and crimes yet more horrible, and sentenced to undergo the extreme penalty of the law. Then an uneasy suspicion gained possession of the public mind that Bolam was powerfully befriended, and that in his case the ends of justice would be defeated. Thus it became necessary to take strict precautions for his protection from the summary vengeance of an infuriated mob when he journeyed between the gaol and the courts.

A true bill was in due course found against him at the March Assizes for the town; but applications to postpone the trial until the succeeding Midsummer Assizes, and to transfer it to the court for the county of Northumberland, were successfully made. The case was eventually heard before Mr. Justice Maule, on July 30th, 1839. The evidence for the prosecution showed that the bank porter left Bolam and Millie sitting together "like brothers" at half-past three o'clock on the afternoon of the murder. Millie, who lived with his wife in the Croft Stairs, never reached his home again. Bolam, however, was known to have visited his house in Gateshead later in the day, and, from the evidence of a neighbour, who heard a breaking of glass, it is supposed that he had entered by a window from the rear. The evidence of his housekeeper, Mary Ann Walker, furnished confirmation of this visit; but her deposition was of such an unsatisfactory character that it was under consideration for a time to place her in the dock as an accessory, after the fact, to the crime. She admitted that she had sponged the sleeve of the coat Bolam was wearing, where a close examination afterwards disclosed bloodstains and smears. The theory of the prosecution was that a sudden quarrel had arisen between Bolam and Millie; that the former had furiously assailed the unfortunate clerk, and had beaten out his brains; that the murderer had then gone home, where the marks left upon him by the struggle had been, with the aid of Walker, as far as possible, obliterated; and that on his return to the bank he had resolved on firing the place, hoping that he might escape whilst the body was consumed, or desperately electing to take his chance with the story of a disguised murderer. The prosecution stopped short at a theory of motive for the murder, and no reference to the horrible stories current outside was made in court. The prisoner's defence was conducted by Mr. Dundas, who adhered pretty closely to the narrative first given by Bolam. The jury accepted the theory of a quarrel and probable affray, as propounded by the prosecution, and Mr. Justice Maule, who was accused by

the excited people of summing up favourably for the prisoner, sentenced Bolam to transportation for life.

What became of Bolam after he was transported does not seem to have been generally known till 1889, when a question on the subject in the *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle* elicited some curious information. Mr. James Patterson, residing in Tasmania, made inquiries which established the fact that one Archibald Bolam presented a sun dial to the Botanical Gardens, Sydney, New South Wales, and that this Archibald Bolam was identical with the person who was transported in 1839. A Sydney gentleman, Mr. Reynolds, sifted the matter thoroughly, and in the course of a letter to Mr. Patterson stated:—

An old lady who was a neighbour told me that, two hours before Mr. Bolam died, he said he had something to say to her that was much disturbing his mind, as he felt his death was near. He then said, as nearly as she can remember:—"Mrs. R——, both your family and yourself have treated me for years as a friend and a good neighbour, as if I had never been a lag, and have hidden all the pains and sorrows that are generally attached to such a name. Now, as I am about to go before my God, I declare to you I am innocent of the crime for which I was sent out here. I never committed the offence, and, if I had been inclined to do such a deed, I never had any cause to do so." He then asked her to hand him a small brooch, with a gold wreath rim and crystal centre, covering a lock of very fair hair. This he kissed tenderly, and handed it back to her, saying, "That is all that remains of the only woman in this world whom I ever loved." He also told her that, some time previously, he had saved up over £200, and invested that sum in the purchase of an annuity, the first instalment of which would be due in a few days or weeks, but that he feared he should not live to enjoy much of it.

The following is a copy of the inscription on a tombstone in the graveyard of St. Stephen's Church, Sydney:—

Sacred
to the memory of
ARCHIBALD BOLAM,
who died 25th December, 1862,
aged 67 years.

This modest stone, what few vain marbles can,
May truly say, "Here lies an honest man."

A. B. 70,793. 1862.

Bolam, however, must not be assumed to have been innocent. Speaking of the motive of the crime as revealed to him by a Newcastle resident of Sydney, Mr. Reynolds says:—"It was a terrible story; if not the worst I have heard, certainly the worst for many years, and sufficiently sickening to bury."

The Story of Dr. Cradock, an Ill-Fated Churchman.



SOCIETY in the Northern Counties of England was scandalised during the reign of James the First by serious allegations against a clergyman who held high office in the diocese of Durham. The dignitary whose fame was so roughly handled was John Cradock, D.D., and he occupied the exalted position of spiritual chancellor and Vicar-General of the diocese. The narrative is not very

pleasant reading, but it is a bit of local history that cannot properly be omitted from any representative collection of North-Country episode and incident.

Surtees ("History of Durham," vol. iv.) prints a pedigree of the Cradock family, from which it appears that Dr. Cradock was a son of John Cradock, of Newhouses, in Baldersdale. Appointed vicar of Gainford, "the Queen of Durham villages," in 1594, he acquired property in the parish, and erected the mansion house of Gainford Hall, a picturesque many-gabled building, over the north door of which his name and arms, with the date of erection (1600), may still be seen. His promotion in the Church was rapid, and his preferments numerous and valuable. Upon the death or removal of Michael Colman, B.A., he obtained the living of Woodhorn, in Northumberland, another rural retreat, combining views of great beauty over both sea and land. Bishop Neile, in 1619, made him Archdeacon of Northumberland, but this appointment he resigned a few months afterwards to become the bishop's spiritual chancellor and Vicar-General. To heighten his dignity he was collated prebendary of the fifth stall in Durham Cathedral, and made a Justice of the Peace; to increase his emoluments he was presented to the living of Northallerton.

Soon after Dr. Cradock's elevation to the spiritual chancellorship charges of a serious nature began to circulate in the diocese respecting the administration of his office. There were reports against him of extortion and abuse, if not of peculation and fraud. On the 28th of May, 1621, his conduct, and that of a similar offender, Dr. Lambe, were brought before the House of Commons. The proceedings dragged on till May, 1624, when Sir Henry Anderson, one of the members for Newcastle, tendered another petition against him. Under date the 22nd of that month the Journals of the House contain a portentous report, from which we learn the nature of the offences with which Dr. Cradock was charged. Written in the jerky style which the long-hand chronicler of the proceedings usually adopted, the report reads as follows:—

Mr. Lenthall reporteth from the Committee for Cradocke.—That his [he is] a High Commissioner for Durham, a Justice of Peace, and a Chancellor: Found to be a great Offender in all these: Confoundeth these several Jurisdictions, making the one to help the other.—1. A Sequestration of one Ashen's Goods, worth 1000*l*. which very ordinary there. A Sequestration granted to Two Strangers. They ransacked the House, seized upon divers bags: This was done at the Funeral-sermon. The Will being found, and Hawden Executor of it, could not get the will proved. A second Sequestration granted. Cradocke, breaking open the House, as a Justice of Peace, ransacked it: Offered an Oath, *ex-officio*, to the Executor; and, upon that, asked him what he had done with the Bags of Money. New Sequestrators again appointed, his man Sompner, &c. These ate up all the Provisions of the House: Took Hawden, and sent him to the Gaol, for a Force: Could not be released till 20 Pieces given; and then fined him 50*l*. to the Bishop of Durham. This done out of any Sessions. 6*l*. Fees paid. No Act of Sequestration in all this Time made.—Thus also did in Rand's case.—A forged Excommunication, as Mr.