

## HORRIBLE DISCLOSURES.

(FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.)

ANDOVER, AUGUST 12.

The shocking and disgraceful occurrences which have taken place in connexion with the management of this union have, as far as they have been disclosed, caused great disgust and indignation amongst the inhabitants of the town and its vicinity.

It appears that, notwithstanding Sir J. Graham's modest doubts of the accuracy of the statements made by Mr. Wakley, and his opinion that they were too horrible to be true, they turn out to be perfectly true and horrible too.

For some time past rumours had got afloat that the paupers who were employed in the disagreeable and unwholesome process of bone-crushing were in the habit of gnawing them like dogs to appease their hunger; and when it was recollected that those bones were the bones of horses, as well as of other animals, not excepting some from churchyards occasionally, the story did certainly seem to be too revolting to be believed, and on that ground the incredulity of the Home Secretary, whether assumed or real, might be excused. But as he ordered an immediate investigation to be instituted, and as Mr. Assistant-Commissioner Parker came down here on Monday, the 4th inst., examined witnesses, and returned with his report on the next day, the evidence taken by him being fully confirmatory of the rumours abroad, Sir J. Graham must have had sufficient time between that day and the prorogation of Parliament, on Saturday afternoon, to have given a full and satisfactory answer to the question put to him by the hon. member for Finsbury, and to have proved the sincerity of the sentiments he expressed upon that occasion. But "a still tongue makes a wise head," says the proverb.

The poor, and the friends of the poor, and I may add the lovers of truth and justice, are indebted to the manly spirit of Mr. Hugh Munday, one of the guardians and a borough magistrate, residing near Andover, for the public notice which was taken of this matter in the House of Commons and for the important consequences which have resulted, and must result, from that proceeding. Mr. Munday having received information upon which he thought he could place full reliance corroborative of the rumours above alluded to, went to the unionhouse, which is about a mile from the town, taking with him Mr. Payne, who is a surgeon. He then desired Macdougall, the master of the house, to accompany him and Mr. Payne into the yard, and to call out ten of the male paupers indiscriminately. That being done, Mr. Munday, addressing them, said he was about to ask them some questions respecting statements which had got abroad, and which, if true, would bring great discredit upon the union. He desired them to speak the truth, and they would be protected; but should they state anything that was false they would be dealt with as they deserved. He then asked them,—

"Are you in the habit of crushing bones in this house?" The answer was,—*"We are."*

"Can you tell anything," they were then asked, "concerning the report which is going about the town, that the paupers engaged in bone-crushing have been in the habit of eating what portions of flesh or gristle and marrow that might be found on or in them?"

"Oh, yes," was the general reply; 8 out of the 10 men admitted that they had frequently partaken of the nauseous substances, because their hunger was so keen that they could not keep from doing so. The two other men denied having done so, but said they had seen their companions eating what they had described, and that their statements were quite true.

"Are you anxious to get these bones?" was the next question.

"We are ready to fight over them," they replied.

"Did you ever fight over them?"

"No, we never did, exactly; we manage in another sort of a way. As soon as one sees a good bone which is unobserved by the rest, he contrives to steal it away and hide it till he gets an opportunity to eat it."

Being asked if they had any bones hidden then, some of the men answered in the affirmative, and went to the "ashy," a place in which ashes are deposited, whence they took two bones, which Mr. Munday examined and found that they stank dreadfully, directing the attention of the master to the fact.

At the next meeting of the board of guardians Mr. Munday gave notice of a motion on the subject for the following meeting, when he proposed a resolution to the effect, that the Poor Law Commissioners should be made acquainted with these circumstances, and that their advice should be solicited as to what steps ought to be taken by the guardians. This resolution, however, was negatived on a division of the members of the board of guardians.

When Mr. Munday found his purpose, straightforward and honourable as it was, thus foiled, he and his friends who thought and acted with him got up a petition to the House of Commons stating the facts, and praying the attention of the house to the case. The petition was forwarded to Mr. Etwall, M.P. for the borough of Andover, and copies also to Mr. Wakley and Mr. Duncombe, the members for Finsbury, with a request that they would support its prayer. As the railway business at that time so much interfered with the attendance of hon. members at the hour appropriated to the presentation of petitions, it was thought advisable not to present this one until a favourable opportunity of gaining general attention to it should arrive. The session rapidly drew to a close; and therefore Mr. Wakley, taking what he thought the best mode under the circumstances of bringing the matter before the Government and the public, asked Sir J. Graham if he knew anything about it. What took place upon that discussion in the house has been already before the public.

The result was that Mr. Assistant-Commissioner Parker was sent down, as I mentioned before, to institute an inquiry into the facts. The course which he took is admirably illustrative of the present Poor Law system. He collected part of his evidence by abruptly visiting gentlemen at their private residences, and other parts from paupers who were examined under restraint with closed doors. This statement may appear too strange to be true. It is a fact, however, that Mr. Parker, after taking up his quarters at the Star Hotel, proceeded in a gig to the residence of Mr. Munday, whom he began to question, writing down his statements, respecting the bone-crushing business. Having done this, he demanded who were the informants of Mr. Munday. It so happened that one of them, a man who had been in the unionhouse for some time, was then at work upon Mr. Munday's farm. He was sent for, and in answer to questions put by the assistant-commissioner, confirmed the whole story. With regard to the examinations which took place in the union-house, I am informed that they were conducted in a very irregular way, the master being present, and several of the paupers being brought in together, he suggesting both questions and answers. Had they been examined separately, as in a fair investigation they would have been, in the absence of the master, it is thought that evidence of a very extraordinary nature would have been elicited. As it was, there was adduced more than sufficient proof of the truth of the reports in circulation; and the men declared, their declaration being uncontradicted, that the integuments attached to the bones and the marrow were green, stinking, and rotten; but that they did not mind that so that they could get something to eat.

The disgusting disclosures upon this subject have led to an inquiry into the truth or falsehood of another report for a long time rife in the neighbourhood—that the inmates

of the unionhouse have been cheated of their proper allowances by the master. The board of guardians on Friday and Saturday investigated this charge against the master, and though by reason of their following the example of the assistant-commissioner, they conducted their proceedings in secret, the evidence given before them has been of so serious a nature that they have thought proper to make a special report to the Poor Law Commissioners at Somerset-house, and suggest that the master is a person in whom they can no longer place confidence. What "the three kings" may do is difficult to divine, but it is supposed that Mr. Assistant-Commissioner Parker must speedily take another trip to this place, and institute another inquiry, but some of the guardians and the inhabitants are determined, if possible, that it shall not be conducted in secret. The guardians, for the purgation of their own character, ought to insist upon a public investigation.

I am not in a condition to furnish full and minute particulars, but I have good authority for stating, that on Saturday last between 20 and 30 charges against the master were gone into, and that they were of a very serious nature.

For instance, it is alleged some of the able-bodied paupers have been mulcted of their rations without cause, the full charge being made in the accounts. Women, in their confinement, for whom the medical man (Dr. Westlake) had ordered meat, porter, tea, arrowroot, &c., as the case might be, are said to have received none, although all were charged in the master's accounts. In one case, a poor creature in extreme exhaustion showed the medical officer a piece of what was called "bread and butter," but which proved, on examination, to be nothing but bread and coarse dripping, which, in her delicate state, she could not take. This circumstance led the doctor to ask whether she had received the allowance of meat and porter which, during the month of her convalescence, he had ordered for her. Surprised at the question, the poor creature stated that she had not once tasted meat or beer; but that one day a piece of bacon was sent up to her, which was so musty that she could not touch it. On another day, some stale gruel was brought to her; she refused it, but was told that she should have it to-morrow; and on the morrow, sure enough, it was sent to her, with a notice that she must take that or none.

In another case a woman, with a dropsical complaint, was ordered a certain quantity of gin per week. Not a drop, it is said, did she get, but it was put down in the bill.

Dr. Westlake frequently heard the sick inmates ask for beer and meat after he had ordered it for them; and when he replied that he had done so, the master would interfere with an off-hand—"Oh, yes, it is all right, Sir?" And although the Doctor heard various rumours from time to time, he did not suspect the master of cheating the poor, more especially the sick, out of their proper allowances, but supposed that they originated in a discontented spirit.

To the aged a small quantity of beer is allowed; but it is stated that one man got his allowance only two months out of ten; yet it was charged in the accounts as if served to him. There were too many similar cases to enumerate. There are various other accusations, such as cutting the fat from the meat to feed the pigs, keeping back potatoes for the same purpose, having shoes made and washing done at the expense of the ratepayers, intercepting tea, butter, milk, and other indulgences to the infirm and aged, a full sote of all which has been taken by Mr. Lamb, the clerk to the guardians, whose whole report was forwarded to the commissioners last night.

The inhabitants feel that both themselves and the poor have been shamefully robbed, and if the Poor Law Commissioners and the guardians do not act justly in this business they are determined to call a public meeting, and at that meeting to adopt such decisive measures as the case may require.