

A Faithful Account of the
GREAT MEETING
 AND
PROCESSION
 OF THE
TRADES' UNION,

**To present a PETITION TO THE KING,
 ON BEHALF OF THE DORCHESTER LABOURERS.**

The thunder of Heaven roll in the voice of a united people.

LORD BROUGHAM.

" Silent they move, a well-appointed throng,
 " Chief follows chief, and men move men along !"

HOMER'S ILIAD.

SCARCELY had the day dawned this morning (Monday, April 21, 1834) before the metropolis in all its principal streets began to denote the busy note of preparation for the impending great Meeting in Copenhagen Fields, and procession thence to Whitehall, as an escort to the five deputies appointed to convey the Petition on behalf of the Dorchester Labourers to Lord Melbourne, for his lordship to lay before the King.

At nine o'clock, the whole of the Unions were on the ground, and arranged in admirable order. Neither police or soldiers were to be seen in any direction. None but Unionists were allowed to join the ranks. Shortly after, a body of 3000 Weavers from Spitalfields arrived, and took their prescribed station.

At a quarter to ten the Car was brought out, and was hailed with loud cheering: it was in form an oblong square, broader at the top than the bottom, the body formed of blue calico quilted, and at the top festoons of red calico. The petition was on a wooden roller, supported on an iron frame, it was on parchment about two feet broad, and three in length; the signatures attached to it were all on sheets of paper of similar breadth. It was borne on the shoulders of twelve men. The following is a correct copy of the petition:—

" TO THE KING'S MOST EXCELLENT MAJESTY.

" The humble petition of the Members of the Trades' Union of Great Britain and Ireland.

" Humbly sheweth,—That Your Petitioners deem it a most sacred duty they owe to themselves and to posterity, and also to Your Majesty, thus to declare to Your Majesty, the intense interest and anxiety with which they contemplate a decision which has lately been pronounced in one of Your Majesty's Courts of judicature at Dorchester, against six agricultural labourers, who had been then and there convicted of having administered to other agricultural labourers, a certain oath not required and sanctioned by law, and who have been in consequence sentenced to a punishment of seven years' transportation.

" Your Petitioners considering this sentence to be both extremely cruel and oppressive, and viewing the proceeding as they are obliged to do, in the light of an unjustifiable attack upon the rights of humanity, do hereby humbly supplicate Your Majesty's interference to prevent its execution; and that Your Majesty will be graciously pleased to order a strict investigation to be made into the whole of the circumstances connected with the affair, which Your Petitioners verily believe involves circumstances of the highest magnitude and importance; and also that Your Majesty will be pleased to appoint a Special Commission to inquire into the real causes of the great distress which prevails among the working population of Your Majesty's empire, and from which, if not speedily averted, Your Petitioners apprehend the most deplorable results.

" And Your Petitioners as in duty bound will ever pray."

Within a minute after the arrival of the Car, the signal rocket was fired off, amid shouts of applause, when the mighty mass of people began to move, accompanied all the way by vast multitudes of spectators. The Rev. Dr. Wade, in canonicals as chaplain to the Council, walked with Mr. Owen, immediately after the petition. Not the slightest obstruction was offered during its progress to Whitehall; the silence of the moving mass being as remarkable as its numbers, which was computed at upwards of 300,000 persons. At 12 o'clock, the petition was taken into the Home Office, when the procession extended from Parliament Street to the place from whence it set out: the Unionists walking six a-breast. The close of the Procession passed the Home Office at two o'clock, being more than four hours from the commencement of the rout to Copenhagen Fields. The procession then moved on to Kennington Common, where Mr. Brown, Secretary to the Unions, made the following communication to the Members:—

" BROTHERS,—Lord Melbourne's answer to our petition is, that he would not receive it in the way it had been presented; but his Lordship has condescended to say, if the petition is presented with proper decorum, he will himself deliver it to his Majesty. And now, Brothers, it is the order of the Council, that you do retire peaceably and in good order to your several Lodges, there to discuss our future proceedings."

