

Meeting of Labourers at Tory Hill

(From our special Reporter)

In obedience to anonymous notices posted on the chapel gates in the barony of Coshma and surrounding districts, on Sunday last, calling on "the labouring classes and starving population to assemble at Tory Hill on Holy Thursday", for the purpose of devising means to provide food and employment for themselves and families; about 2,000 of the peasantry congregated on the summit of the hill, where a large plaid banner was hoisted on a pole as a rallying point and signal of distress. It was half-past twelve o'clock when our Reporter reached the place, at which hour the roads were covered by country labourers hastening to the meeting. Tory Hill adjoins the residence of Rev. Mr. Harnett, P.P. of Croom, and the Roman Catholic Curates, Rev. Messrs. O'Shea and Meehan watched the movements of the people with intense anxiety.

At one o'clock, the Rev. Mr. Meehan ascended the Hill, and pulled down the banner, at which the multitude seemed much displeased. The Rev. Gentleman immediately addressed them, and exhorted them to disperse, but in vain, upon which he retired, and the signal flag, was again hoisted. The people, however, conducted themselves peaceably, and did not evince any disposition to outrage, their cry being "all we want is work, we can't starve".

The Rev. James O'Shea, who is held in much esteem by the country people, next ascended the Hill, accompanied by Mr. Robert Irwin, and Mr. James Hynes, of Honeypond, respectable farmers. The Rev. Gentleman having taken up a position near the flag, commenced in a playful manner - "Boys, I suppose this is the banner under which I have to fight" (hear) You have, at all times and places, respected your clergy, and I beg to ask now if you still entertain that respect for them and their counsel? (cries of "we do"). Then, I call upon you to prove it, by removing this standard. (The mandate was immediately obeyed, and the banner removed). Now, then, as a friend, I have to protest against your assembling in this manner - it is illegal for you

to do so, and at the present time, most imprudent (cries of "we want work"). I know you do, and that man is not living who feels more for your wretched and destitute condition than I do - (hear). You have, at all times, linked yourselves with the clergy of your church, for your and our interest is one and the same, and I trust, therefore, you will not be guilty of any illegal conduct that would disconnect us from each other (no, no). I know you will not. We have done every thing in our power to procure employment for you. - The resident landed proprietors have done so, and I trust Government will, in ten or twelve days set going the works applied for in this district, and give, you employment - (Cries of, "We will be starved before then"). God forbid. I implore of you to bear your sufferings and privations patiently and quietly until you know the determination of Government - (murmurs) I feel that hunger prompts you, perhaps at this moment, to rash acts. Do not, in God's name, make your condition worse than it is. We have the Indian corn meal now distributing to the poor. It is excellent food, and I recommend it to you - (Cries of "If we eat that, it will poison us"). I assure you, that is an absurd idea - I used it for breakfast myself this morning, and I promise you I will continue to do so, and if there is harm in it, I will be the first victim - (Hear, and cries of "We will use it so"). The Rev. Mr. O'Shea then conjured them to leave the Hill, and return peaceably and quietly to their homes, observing, that if their meeting was legally convened, he would himself preside, and join them in devising means to provide food and employment. In conclusion, he said, he felt confident Government would act with liberality, and, he trusted with promptitude, under the present trying emergency. If Government did not do so, he would himself point out where food was to be procured - (hear).

At the Rev. Gentleman's request, the vast multitude, we are happy to add, then retired without tumult, or the slightest disposition to commit a breach of the peace.

(Limerick Chronicle, 11 April, 1846).



Family huddled outside cabin. Engraving, *Pictorial Times*, 22 August, 1846.