

THE LEVELLER.

How far the term "Leveller," is provincial or confined to the Borders, I am not certain, for before I had left them to become as a pilgrim on earth, the phrase had fallen into disuse, and the events, or rather the cause which brought it into existence, had passed away. But, twenty five or even twenty years ago, in these parts, there was no epithet more familiar to the lips of every school boy, than that of a Leveller. The Juvenile lovers of mirth and mischief displayed their loyalty, by "saweking" the houses, or burning the effigies of the Levellers; and he was a good subject, and a perfect gentleman, who, out of his liberality and patriotism, contributed a shilling to purchase powder to make the head of the effigy go off in a rocket, and its fingers start away in squibs. Levellers were persecuted by the young, and suspected by the old. Every town and village in the kingdom had its coterie of Levellers. They did not congregate together; for, as being suspected individuals, their so doing would have been attended with danger; but there was a sympathy, and a sort of brotherhood amongst those in the same place, and they met in twos and threes, at the corners of the streets, in the fields, or the workshop, and not unfrequently at the operating rooms of the barber, as though there had been a secret understanding in the growth of their ears. Some of them were generally seen waiting the arrival of the mail, and running cross the street, or the highway, as the case might be, eagerly inquiring of the guard—"What news?" But if, on the approach of the vehicle, they perceived it decorated with ranches, or a flag displayed from it, away turned the Levellers from the unwelcome symbols or national rejoicing, and consoled one with another, in their own place of retirement. They were seldom, or never, found amongst rosy faced country gentlemen, who walked in the midst of their fellow mortals, as if measuring their acres. Occasionally they might be found amongst tradesmen, but they were most frequently met with at the loom, or amongst those who had learned the art and mystery of a cordwainer. The leveller, however, was generally a peaceful and a moral man, and always a man of much reading, and extensive information. Many looked upon the Leveller as the enemy of his country, and as wishing the destruction of its institutions: I always regarded them with a more favourable eye. Most of them I

have met with were sincerely attached to liberty. they frequently took strange methods of shewing it. They were opposed to the war with France, and they were enthusiastic admirers, almost worshippers, of Napoleon and his glories. They could describe the scene of all his victories, they could repeat his speeches and his bulletins by heart. But the old Jacobins of the last century, the Levellers of the beginning of this, are a race rapidly becoming extinct.

I shall give the history of one of them, who was called James Nicholson, and who resided in the village of T——. James was by trade a weaver—a walking history of the wars, and altogether one of the most remarkable men I ever met with. He had an impressive and ready utterance; few could stand before him in an argument, and of him it might have been truly said—

"In reasoning, too, the parson owned his skill,
And, though defeatell, he could argue still."

He possessed also a bold imagination, and a masculine understanding, and both had been improved by extensive reading. With such qualifications, it is not a matter of wonder that he was looked up to as the oracle, the head, or king, of the Levellers in T—— (if, indeed, they admitted the idea of a king.) For miles around, he was familiarly known by the designation of Jemmy the Leveller; for though there were others of the name of James who held the similar sentiments in the village and neighborhood, he was Jemmy par excellence. But in order that the reader may have a correct representation of James before him, I shall describe it as I saw him, about five and twenty years ago. He then appeared a man approaching to sixty years of age. His shoulders were rather bent, his height about five feet eleven, and he walked with his eyes fixed upon the ground. His arms were generally crossed upon his breast and he stalked, with a long and slow step, like a shepherd toiling up a hill. His forehead was one that Spurzheim would have travelled a hundred miles to finger—it was both broad and lofty; his eye brows were thick, of a deep brown colour, and met together; his eyes were large, and of a dark greyish hue, his nose appertained to the Roman; his mouth was rather large, and his hair was mixed with grey. His figure was spare and thin. He wore a very low crowned, and a very broad brimmed hat, a short brown coat, a dark striped waistcoat, with a double breast, corduroy breeches, which buckled at