

THE NETHERTOWN "WEICHT."

FEW of the present generation will know what the Nethertown "Weicht" really was. It was an old sort of drum, which was only brought out to the light of day, or at night, on very rare and special occasions. It was kept concealed latterly in "Threshie Charlie's" garret. Whenever the "weicht" was brought out it was considered a *caution*. There was something up, and, like the "fiery cross" of old, the news spread like wildfire, and every one spoke with bated breath. The "weicht" belonged, I believe, originally to the "Friends of the People," a secret political society which was founded in Dunfermline about 1794 or 1796. The "Friends," according to Dr. E. Henderson, were all *incog.*, and had periodical meetings, presided over by one whose cognomen was "Cato." It is said that they had the Pittencrieff estate mapped off and allotted amongst their members. There were many similar political societies established throughout the country about this period. It is understood that the publication of Tom Paine's *Rights of Man* and *Age of Reason*, and the contagion spread by the French revolutionists in those days, which afterwards brought to many a French home untold misery, had much to do with the origin of this secret society. The once well-known Sir Francis Burdett was a leading member of it, and he was at one time committed to the Tower of London for his outspokenness. The "weicht" was brought out sometimes at the Nethertown Races, and at great political gatherings, figured at night mobs, and at times when there were strikes in trade. This at least is certain, that on one of the occasions where the dreaded "weicht" figured, a banner was carried which bore the following "strange device"—

"May Tories' hides become drum-heads
To beat republicans to arms!"

There has been much commotion in this country recently regarding the Franchise extension, and many flags, banners, and mottoes were exhibited, but nothing has appeared to match the above.