

sons, masons and stone-cutters. On this occasion he was honoured with a pair of brogues and a bonnet. The apprentice-fee paid to the Macphersons, who were esteemed excellent in their profession, was 50*l.* Scotch; that is, 4*l.* 3*s.* 4*d.* sterling. He was bound for seven years. His own family was to furnish him clothes: the Macphersons with bed and board in their own house. He was an apt and diligent apprentice, learned his trade with great facility, and pleased his masters well. Both here, and when he was at the school of Bracadill, his spare hours, like those of other boys, were wholly employed in training up himself, by cudgel-playing, to the use and management of the broad-sword and target.

The only article of food that he had, either here or in his grand-father's house, in abundance, was milk and fish. Bread was dealt out with a very sparing hand; the porridge, or other water-gruel, was greatly too thin; and as to the soup-meagre, made of oatmeal and a small handful of greens, (which, with a little barley-bread, was his most common dinner), it did not deserve the name of soup, or broth, so much as that of water tinged with those ingredients. With regard to fish, although even the common people were, on many occasions, plentifully supplied with this delicate food, it was neither found palatable for any great length of time, nor yet nutritious, unless duly seasoned with salt, and mixed, in using it, with something of the mealy or farinaceous kind; articles of provision in which the northern counties of Scotland were, at that time, miserably deficient. So that, on the whole, our hero confesses, that he very seldom had a full and satisfactory meal; or rose from table without a degree of appetite—if he sheathed his sword, it was for lack of argument. He is convinced that, by this penury of living, his stomach was contracted, at least not dilated to the usual size of men's brought up in the midst of plenty. For at no period of his life did he ever desire or use near so much food, of any kind, as the bulk of those around him in any country. At this moment he eats sparingly, and next to nothing at all, tho' he takes a chearful and even plentiful glass without the smallest inconveniency. A gentleman just turned of forty, after drinking a hearty glass with Macleod to an hour much later than usual, and who felt the effects thereof next morning, was happy to be called up from bed, in London, by the arrival of Mr. Macleod, in good spirits and health, from Chelsea.

While Macleod remained in his grandfather's family in the Isle of Skye, scantiness of more solid provision was, in some measure, compensated by liberal supplies of milk: and, now and then, on holidays, they were treated with an egg. But, with the stone-cutters he found not one egg, and of milk very little. He felt the pinching pain of want. His situation became insupportable. Extreme hunger induced him to harbour thoughts of breaking loose from his master, and try to satisfy the cravings of nature in some other part of the kingdom.

If all this pressure of hunger and want should appear extraordinary, the surprise of the reader will wholly vanish, when he recollects, that the first years of Macleod's apprenticeship fell within the period of that deplorable famine which afflicted Scotland, not yet taught to provide against scarcity of grain by means of navigation, for the last seven years of the seventeenth century, which was long remembered under the name of the *dear years*; and of which tradition has yet preserved in the minds of men a melancholy recollection. It was this dreadful famine that occasioned the noted proposal of Mr. Fletcher of Saltoun, to redeem the begging poor of his country from the fangs of want, by binding them in the chains of slavery. This idea appears shocking to a modern ear. Mr. Fletcher's mind was tutored in the Grecian and Roman School; nor was it much more than a hundred years since the Parliament of Scotland had passed an act, by which the children of beggars should be taken away from their unhappy parents, and be brought up in slavery for a certain term of years. And it was a hundred precisely since the Scottish Parliament, in 1597, extended that limited term to life. Mr. Fletcher tells us, that, in the year 1698, there were, besides a great many poor families pining in secret want, others very meanly provided for out of the church boxes, and others who had fallen into various diseases by