

flooded in wet weather by the overflowings of the neighboring swamps, and through whose roofs I could tell the hour at night, by marking from my bed the stars that were passing over the openings along the ridge: I have resided in other dwellings of rather higher pretensions, in which I have been awakened during every heavier night-shower, by the rain drops splashing upon my face where I lay a-bed. I remember that Uncle James, in urging me not to become a mason, told me that a neighboring laird, when asked why he left a crazy old building standing beside a group of neat modern offices, informed the querist that it was not altogether through bad taste the hovel was spared, but from the circumstance that he found it of great convenience every time his speculations brought a *drove of pigs* or a *squad of masons* the way. And my after experience showed me that the story might not be in the least apocryphal, and that masons had reason at times for not touching their hats to gentlemen.

In these barracks the food is of the plainest and coarsest description: oatmeal forms its staple, with milk, when milk can be had, which is not always; and as the men have to cook by turns, with only half an hour or so given them in which to light a fire, and prepare the meal for a dozen or twenty associates, the cooking is invariably an exceedingly rough and simple affair. I have known mason-parties engaged in the central Highlands in building bridges, not unfrequently reduced, by a tract of wet weather, that soaked their only fuel the turf, and rendered it incombustible, to the extremity of eating their oatmeal raw, and merely moistened by a little water, scooped by the hand from a neighboring brook. I have oftener than once seen our own supply of salt fail us; and after relief had been afforded by a Highland smuggler—for there was much smuggling in salt in those days, ere the repeal of the duties—I have heard a complaint from a young fellow regarding the hardness of our fare, at once checked by a comrade's asking him whether he was not an ungrateful dog to grumble in that way, seeing that, after living on fresh poultices for a week, we had actually that morn-