

cricket, or golf, or football, that seldom came to a close until the evening grew too dark for longer play. In spring-time we would sally forth into the country to some well-remembered bank, where the primroses and violets bloomed earliest, and return at dusk, bringing many a bunch for those at home. The summer afternoons often found us loitering, rod in hand, along the margin of a shady streamlet, in whose deeper pools the silvery trout-let loved to feed. And it fed, truly, with little danger from us. The writhing worm (we never soared to the use of the fly), though ever so skilfully and unfeelingly twined round the hook, failed to allure the scaly brood, which we could see darting up and down the current without so much as a nibble at our tempting bait. Not so, however, with another member of that tribe, the little stickleback, or "beardie," as we called it, to which we had the most determined and unreasonable antipathy. The cry of "*A beardie! a beardie!*" from one of our party was the sign for every rod and stick to be thrown down on the bank, and a general rush to the spot where the enemy of the trout had been seen. Off went stockings and shoes, and in plunged the wearer, straight to the large stone in mid-channel under which the foe was supposed to be lurking. Cautiously were the fingers passed into the crevices and round the base of the stone, and the little victim, fairly caught at last in his den, was thrown in triumph to the bank, where many a stone was at hand to end his torments and his life.

Autumn brought round the cornfields, and the hedgerows rich in hip, and haw, and bramble; and then, dear to the heart of schoolboy, came winter with its sliding, skating, and snowballing, and its long, merry evenings, with their rounds of festivity and plumcake.