

Thrice blest are we, who, on the mention of a mystic name, find ourselves ushered silently into the inner chamber of memory to meet there our early playmates, to see again those fresh young faces and once more to laugh over our boisterous sports. It is of these good old times of individual experience I would like to tell; a story very dear to many hearts now far scattered; but then of a charmed brotherhood, led by nature and by nature fed with buoyant spirits, so that life was one prolonged festival, joyous, merry and restless as the babbling brooks of summer or the fairy snowflake circling in the wintry storm. The stickleback darting from its quiet retreat frightened by our net; the minnow nibbling at the bait so treacherously covering the bended pin; the meadow lark, the bobolink, the swallow, these were our toys. Did not the branches of the lofty sweeping elms shape themselves to form our cosy nests, and the passing winds tune the tender twigs, a grand æolian harp to please us. Or if the winter took these from us, 'twas but an exchange; for did we ever tire of moulding his crystals into the rough forms of our childish fancy. How fearlessly would we plunge into the sea of white waves, which gathered round each house and barn and dashed against them till the icy foam half way reached the roof.