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The Story Of The Bee

Mrs. William Starr Dana

This is what happened. And it is a true story.

One morning last May a bee set out among the flowers on a honey hunt.

Perhaps it would be more true to say that the bee set out to hunt for the sweet stuff of which honey is made; for while this sweet stuff is still in the flower cup it is not honey, any more than the wheat growing in the field is bread. The wheat becomes bread later, after it has been cut and gathered and threshed and ground, and brought into the kitchen and there changed into bread; and the sweet stuff becomes honey only after the bees have carried it home and worked it.

As the bee left home this particular morning, it made up its mind that it would devote itself to the apple blossoms; for did you know that when a bee goes flower visiting, usually it gives all its attention to one kind of flower till it has finished that special round of visits?



So off the bee flew; and in a few moments it saw hundreds of little pink and white handkerchiefs waving at it from the apple orchard.

What do you suppose these were, these gay little handkerchiefs? They were the flower leaves of the apple blossoms. I call them handkerchiefs, because, just as boys and girls sometimes wave their handkerchiefs when they wish to signal other boys and girls, so the apple tree uses its gay flower leaves to attract the attention of the bee, and persuade it to visit the flowers. Of course, really, they are not handkerchiefs at all. They would hardly be large enough for any but fairy noses, would they?

When the bee saw so many bright handkerchiefs waving it welcome, along it hurried; for it knew this was a signal that material for honey making was at hand. Another minute, and it had settled upon a freshly opened flower, and was eagerly stealing the precious sweet.

You children know, that, when you are given permission to go to the closet for a piece of candy or cake, you are not apt to set about it very gently. You are in too

much of a hurry for that. Often you come very near knocking everything over, in your haste to get hold of what you want.

And bees are quite as greedy as any boy or girl could be. So our friend dived right into the pretty flower, brushing rudely against the little dust boxes. These, being full to overflowing with golden dust, spilled their contents, and powdered the bee quite yellow.

Having made sure that nothing more was to be found just there, off flew the dusty bee to the next blossom. Into this it pushed its way, and in so doing struck those pins which have no dust boxes; and upon their broad, flat tips fell some of the yellow dust grains with which its body was powdered.

Now there began to happen a strange thing.

But before I tell you more, I must stop one moment to remind you that these pins without dust boxes are joined below into one piece, and that this piece is set deep into the green cup which holds the rest of the flower; and I must tell you, that, if you should cut open this cup, you would find a number of little round objects looking like tiny green eggs.

The strange thing that began to happen was this:—

Soon after the yellow dust from the bee fell upon the flat tips of the pins without dust boxes, the little green objects deep within the green cup became full of life, and began to get larger. And not only this: the green cup also seemed to feel this new life; for it too grew bigger and bigger, and juicier and juicier, until it became the fine juicy apple we have before us this morning.

So now you understand a little of what happened to make the great apple take the place of the delicate blossom.



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