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READ ANYWHERE, ANYTIME

The Story Of The Strawberry

Mrs. William Starr Dana

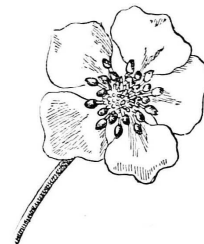
In the wood which edges the meadow is a hollow where it is almost sure to be cool and shady. Let us find our way there this morning, and see how we can amuse ourselves.

At first we want only to enjoy the wind which is coming through the trees, or to lie back on the grass and spy out the bird which is singing overhead, or else to laugh at the red squirrel which is scolding away at a great rate above us.

Suddenly our eyes fall on a cluster of ripe, shining wild strawberries. Bird and squirrel are forgotten, for no fruit of all the year is prettier to look at than the wild strawberry; and, what is more important, no other fruit has such a delicious flavor of the woods and fields.

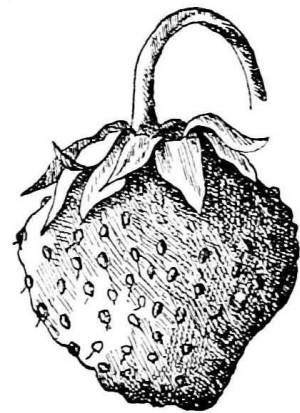
Soon we have eaten all the berries within reach. The creeping vines lead us out into the meadow, where we push aside the long grasses and pick one ripe mouthful after another. At last we are satisfied to go back to our shady nook.

The little white blossoms that a few weeks ago were so plentiful have nearly all disappeared. Who among you can tell me how these juicy berries have managed to take the place of the blossoms?

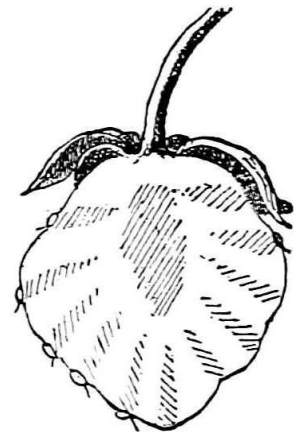




Why, ever so many of you can tell me much of the story, at any rate. It is very nearly that of the apple and cherry and plum and pear. The nectar-hunting bee carried the pollen of its many stamens from one strawberry blossom to another, leaving some of it on the flat tips of its numerous pistils. Down the pistils' stalks went the tiny life bearing tubes which pushed their way into the little seeds below.

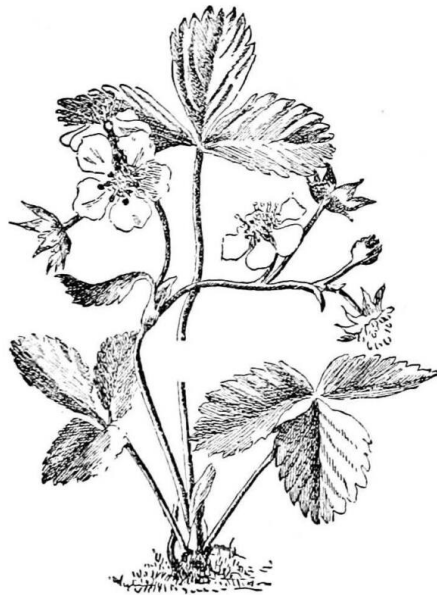


So far, the story of the strawberry is not new to us; but just here it begins to differ from the stories of the apple and pear, of the plum and peach and cherry. The flowers of all these trees had but one seedbox. But each of the many little strawberry pistils has a separate seedbox; and when the little seeds within get their touch of new life, the flat, cushionlike object which bears these many pistils begins to act in a most surprising manner.



This flat flower cushion swells upward and outward, growing big and juicy and sweet, bearing its pistils with it.

And so in the strawberry blossom it is the flat cushion hidden out of sight which grows into the delicious fruit.



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