

## The Strawberry.

BY MRS. C. S. NOURSE.

**T**HE fragrance of flowers, the golden sunshine of June, and all the delicate tints of roses are blended into harmony in the first fruit of summer. Every sense is charmed at the same moment, and the pleasure of taste is carried to its highest point by the beauty and fragrance of the living ru-

bies that are heaped together as though to show the painter what possibilities of gradation lie in a single color. Ruskin says there is never a bit of color in Nature that is not graded, and perhaps no more perfect example could be found than the strawberry. It is a study in red. From the moment it shows the first flush of rose, with which it acknowledges the caresses of the sunshine, to the bright scarlet or dark crimson of perfect ripeness, it plays and dallies with the delicate shades of color as though in very coquetry or caprice, and at the point of complete maturity, no ruby flaming in a royal diadem displays a more resplendent hue. And yet this perfect fruit is not nurtured by a tropical sun, but

thrives and flourishes in perfection as far north as the borders of the Arctic Zone. Indeed, it is from the plants of the north that the finest varieties have been obtained—the Alpine strawberry growing upon the border line of perpetual snow, and which is found in Lapland in greater abundance than anywhere else in the world. The wood strawberry of England is familiar to all readers of English books, and plays no inconspicuous part in many an old ballad through which it breathes its own sweetness. Where it chooses its own habitat, it establishes a colony by some quiet brook, and, putting on its seven-league boots, travels all over the adjoining meadow, and mingles in its starry white blossoms with the May buttercups, but takes very good care to make no sign when the precious fruit is ripening; but

hides it away under broad leaves, where it remains secure

“Till its fragrance betrayeth its hiding place.”

But the strawberry could not remain undisturbed in its native meadows. It was soon claimed by cultivation, and transplanted within the bounds of the garden. In *Richard III.*, Gloster says to the Bishop of Ely :

“My Lord of Ely, when I was last in Holborn, I saw good strawberries in your garden there.”

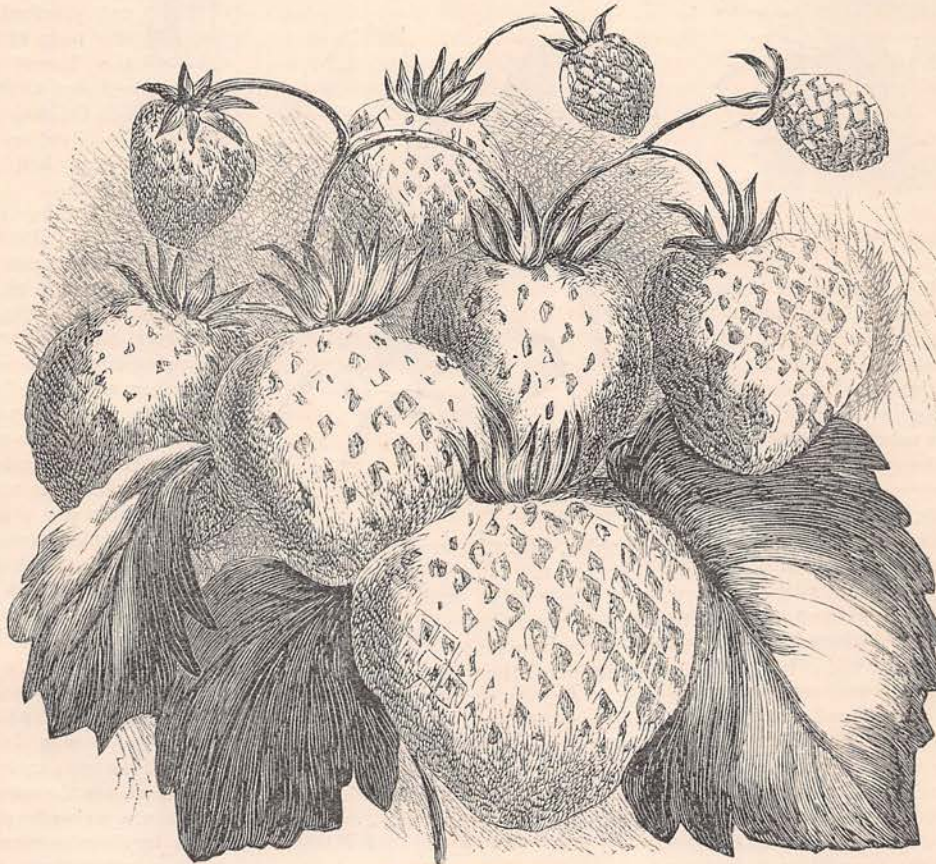
And in *Henry V.*, the same reverend bishop says :

“The strawberry grows underneath the nettle,  
And wholesome berries thrive and ripen best  
Neighbored by fruit of baser quality.”

shining leaves, and globe-shaped fruit are well known as far west as the Rocky Mountains; and where it grows upon the open prairie, as it was wont to do, in great abundance, before the iron track was laid across the verdant sweeps of those vast plains, it reaches up through the long grass, and hangs its crimson berries out where they may freely drink the sunshine. The traveler would sometimes see between him and the sinking sun, a line of glowing red, like a flush of scarlet flowers, and coming up to it, would find, to his surprise, a feast of delicious strawberries, his astonishment increasing, as he examined the tall, erect stem, from which the fruit was hung, often four to fourteen inches long, and stretching up to this height without a curve, a strange instance of adaptation of the habit

of growth to the habitat, since the same species in an eastern meadow would show no more ambitious aspirations than a field violet.

All strawberries belong to the order *Rosacea* (genus *Fragaria*), and, though the number of species is extremely limited, the varieties are endless, as any one may easily satisfy himself by looking over any horticultural catalogue. They are the result of hybridizing and crossing, and are mostly artificially produced. - The cultivation of the strawberry has assumed an important place in horticulture, and promises to occupy one still more prominent. The fruit growers are continually trying to introduce new varieties, but only now and then one is found to



THE HOVEY SEEDLING.

We doubt if the experience of our fruit-growers would indorse the bishop's sentiment, since modern science teaches a very different doctrine. Indeed it has been proven true among vegetables, as well as men, that “evil communications corrupt good manners;” and the gardener who would secure a fine kind of fruit must take care that they are *not* neighbored by that of baser quality.

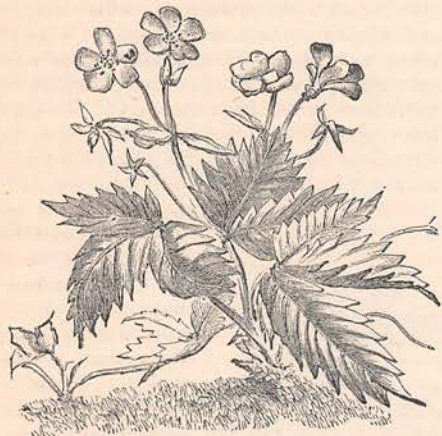
The *Fragaria vesca* (see cut), or Alpine strawberry, is common throughout Europe, and is found in the northern part of Asia and America. Botanists tell us that of strawberries, there are few species; some say not more than three or four, which are well defined. Of these, the United States claims two. The *Fragaria Virginiana* is found throughout the length and breadth of North America. Its

be of real value, or to have sufficient merit to dispute the palm with those already in the market.

The leading variety of the United States is the Hovey seedling, of which we give an accurate family portrait. It is of a brilliant scarlet in color, and one of the most tempting berries in appearance, as well as excellent in flavor. The “akenes” or seed in this kind are sunk below the surface, in pits symmetrically arranged, but in many the seeds are erect upon the surface. These akenes are the true fruit, technically speaking; the beautiful crimson pulp being only the convex receptacle which is the seat upon which the ovaries rest; as these advance toward ripeness, the substance of the receptacle changes and enlarges, and finally becomes what is popularly regarded

as the fruit, the ovaries (akenes or seeds), being carried to its outer surface, and scattered over it as they are seen in the matured strawberry.

Most of the order are hardy and evergreen, and until within the last fifty years it was considered that they required little care save to scatter the ground with straw to protect the early fruit, and also when ripe to keep it



ALPINE STRAWBERRY.

unsoiled—a custom which gave it its name. But the advance and practical application of science to horticulture has brought in a very different system of culture, and under the best approved methods, strawberry beds are as neatly arranged and thoroughly worked, as any other crop, and the tangled appearance of an old-fashioned strawberry bed would shock all modern ideas. By systematic and intelligent treatment, strawberries may be made to bear during seven months of the year. By pinching off the flowers of the early blooming varieties, the blossoms of the following spring may be induced to appear in autumn, and the naturally early bearer, may be kept back by a shaded northern exposure, while others may be hastened by one sunny and warm, and seeds raised in pots may be forced into fruitage during the months of November and December. Thus, by the judicious use of various methods the table may be supplied with this delicious fruit through nearly all the year. In New York, fresh strawberries may be had, by those who are willing to pay for them, from February to October, but, of course, the market out of the "season," which generally begins in the latter part of May and lasts until the first of July, is very limited.

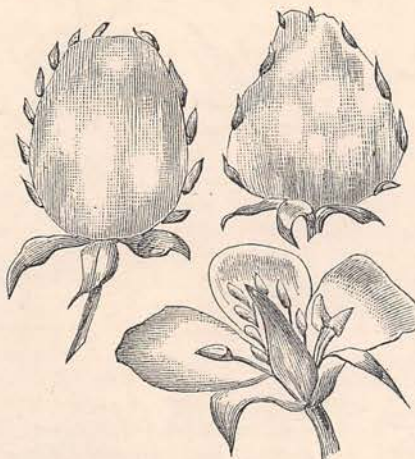
A very remarkable variety is the Chilian berry, found only upon the Pacific coast, with creamy-white flowers and rose-colored fruit, which is said to be sometimes as large as a hen's egg.

The Indian species is the one cultivated in our hot-houses for ornament. It is extremely elegant for hanging baskets, and is covered with a scarlet fruit which has not the least taste, and is dry and shining like wax.

There are only two species of the genus *Fragaria* which have colored flowers, one is red and the other yellow, and there is one which is apetalous, all others have white blossoms.

The "Hautboy," which is well known in this country, grows wild in England, but is not indigenous. All strawberries are propagated by runners, but new varieties are produced by seed from flowers carefully cross fertilized. Some American varieties are pistillate only, and when this is the case it is necessary to plant them near those with perfect flowers.

The strawberry needs a rich and light soil, abundant moisture, and careful cultivation; but it will always amply reward the gardener's toil. Ladies may find a most agreeable occupation, as well as add to the luxury of their tables, by devoting a portion of their time to the study of the best methods of its scientific culture. It is, indeed, surprising to us that so many possessed of means and appliances, do not oftener find pleasure in the lighter labors



FRAGARIA VESCA, ALPINE STRAWBERRY.

of the garden. Hawthorne says that there are no pleasures that so recreate the mind as those of the garden, and, indeed, if fruit raising be pursued scientifically, and regard be had at the same time to the study of beauty, it may give much the same gratification as the pursuit of art. It seems, indeed, a sort of creation in which nature aids the artist with the perfect colors of her palette.

### A Wonderful Walking-Stick.

WE have received (says *Nature*) from Messrs. Eberstein of Dresden, a specimen of an interesting "walking-stick for naturalists or tourists." The stick is a perfect *multum in parvo*, and contains quite a museum of scientific instruments. The handle alone contains a compass, a double magnifying glass or pocket microscope, and a whistle. Below it there are a thermometer on one side of the stick and a sandglass on the other. The body of the stick is partly hollow, and its interior holds a small bottle, which is intended to contain chloroform or ether for killing insects. Along the outside of the body there is a half-meter measure, showing decimeters and centimeters. Near the end of the stick a knife-blade may be opened, which serves for cutting off objects which cannot be reached by hand. At the extreme end a screw may hold in turn a spade (for botanists), a hammer (for geologists), a hatchet, or a strong spike, which would be of great use on glaciers. The whole is neatly finished in black polished wood.

### Talks with Girls.

BY JENNIE JUNE.

#### WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT.

IN a conversation with a young lady a short time since, who is a vocalist by profession, and earns a moderate livelihood by her profession, I was struck by the cheerful, practical, common-sense view she took of her own affairs, and the honest independence which characterized her methods. If this was the way in which the majority looked at life, and accepted the situation, I thought, we should not have so many helpless women and girls to be taken care of.

There is nothing advantageous in this young woman's individuality, or belongings. She is not handsome, nor very young; her voice is not remarkable, and such cultivation as it has received has been won by herself with great difficulty, and under the most discouraging circumstances. She has no father or mother, and her relatives ignore her existence altogether, or are only an obstacle to her advancement, as her pride makes her avoid them rather than ask for their countenance in any way. She does not know, from week to week, or even day to day, what she can rely upon; for her engagements are brief and spasmodic, and her pupils (for music lessons) few and far between. Yet her body, though not plump, is in fair condition, and always neatly clothed, and her mind apparently serene.

"Do you not feel anxious and worried about the future?" a friend asked of her. "No," she replied, "why should I? I take every chance I can get; such people as I, who are not proud, are always wanted, and if I could not earn a living by singing and teaching, I could by chamber-work and waiting. I love to do chamber-work, and I love to wait on table, and I can do both very nicely." "Would you not feel that you were lowering yourself by doing such work?" was asked. "Well, I don't know," she responded thoughtfully. "I think not. You see, all I care about is to get my living honestly, be free from debt, and able to be among clean people. The one dread I have of poverty is dirt, and I think, vermin, such as mice and roaches. I assure you," she remarked, laughingly, "since my aunt died, and I have been obliged to stay in boarding-houses (not first-class), I have studied up the subject very carefully, and now consider myself an authority on the getting rid of such pests and nuisances." "But do you not long for a home of your own, and freedom from petty wearing anxieties?" was the next question, rather cruelly put; but it was in the interest of hundreds of young