

THE WOODS IN SUMMER

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THE spring woods are all spiritual.

They charm us through the senses of eye and ear—delicate tintings and aerial sounds, like a maiden's dreams set to music. But the summer woods make a more sensuous appeal. They know that they have lost the freshness of their first youth, that something is gone for which all their luscious shadows and mellow lightings can never quite atone. So they offer us delectable things to tickle our palates. Who that has eaten strawberries, grass-new, from the sunny corners of summer woods, can ever forget them?

Strawberries are very delicious, even when eaten with cream and sugar, among the haunts of men. But would you know the real flavour of the strawberry in its highest perfection? Then come with me to a certain sunlit dell, along which white birches grow on one side and on the other the still, changeless ranks of the spruces. There are long grasses here at the roots of the trees, combed down by the winds, and wet with morning dew, long into the afternoon. Here we shall find berries, fit for the gods on high Olympus, great ambrosial sweetnesses, hanging like rubies to long, rosy stalks. Lift them by the stalk and eat them from it while they are uncrushed and virgin, tasting each berry by itself, with all its wild fragrance ensphered within. If you try to carry it home that elusive essence escapes, and then it is nothing more than a common berry of the fields and sunshine, very

kitchenly good, indeed, but not as it should be when gathered and eaten in its uncharted haunts until our fingers are stained as pink as Aurora's eyelids.

There are blueberries, too, growing on the sandy hill where we gathered May flowers in the spring. The blueberries are not sung in song or enshrined in romance; but I do not see why they should not be, for they are beautiful to behold; and, if eaten in their native haunts, are delicious enough as well, although, of course, not to be mentioned in the same paragraph as the strawberries. Perhaps it is because they are somewhat too lavish of themselves, in their great, heavily-hanging, plainly-seen clusters. They lack the charm of comparative rarity and exclusiveness; they need not to be eaten one by one, like the strawberries, but may be crunched together in generous mouthfuls. See how pretty they are—the dainty green of the unripe berries, the glossy pinks and scarlets of the half-ripe, the misty blue of the fully matured. To sit on this hill, steeped in languid summer sunshine, rife with odours of fir and of nameless growing things in their golden prime, with the sough of winds in the shaking tree-tops, and eat blueberries, is something that the mighty ones of earth might envy us. The poor inhabitants of palaces, how we can pity them, from this, our hill throne of the wilderness, fronting the gateways of the west! The afternoon is a great, duleet, golden