
AN ABRIDGED FOUR HUNDRED YEARS HISTORY OF THE
STRAWBERRY.

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Shakspeare informs us that the Bishop of Ely's garden in Holborn was distinguished for the excellent strawberries it produced, even as far back as the reign of Richard the Third (1483). And judging from the remarks of an old writer in 1578, it would appear that the only strawberries known at that time were the Wood strawberry and perhaps the White Alpine. He says, "Strawberries grow in shadowy woods and deep trenches, and banks by highway sides. They be also much planted in gardens. The fruit is green at first, but red when it is ripe. Sometimes also you shall find them verrey white when they be ripe; in taste and *savour* very pleasant." Another old writer in 1597 speaks of the "Red and White Wood and the Green Fruited; the two last not to be found save only in gardens." Johnson, in his edition of the work containing the last statement, published in 1633, does not mention any other variety. Another writer in 1656 mentions the Virginia Scarlet (or Canada) and the Bohemian. This last variety is supposed to be the Hautbois, and he says, "this variety hath been with us but of late days, and is the goodliest and the greatest."

It would seem that up to this time no attempt had been made to grow new varieties from seed or from crossing the different kinds. And no mention is made up to this period, so far as I have been able to read, of strawberries being imperfect in their flowers, except when attempts were made to grow them under glass. Then some gardeners used to complain bitterly of their strawberries "running blind," as they called it.

The first improvement made by growing strawberries from seed was about the year 1660, a variety called at first the Clapperon, and grown by a person by the name of Fressant, a Frenchman. This variety was obtained from the seed of the Wood strawberry.

But little attention seems to have been paid to growing improved varieties by hybridizing until the time of Andrew Knight, about the beginning of the present century. In order to show what confused ideas occupied some men's minds with regard to strawberry blossoms, and to show also what progress has been made the last forty years in