liarities of its structure and the excellent illustrations it offers of the inherent power of variation possessed by the plant and of the success of the gardener in availing himself of this tendency. The genus *Fragama* consists of a small number (three to four, according to Hooker) of species, native of the temperate regions of both hemispheres, as well as of mountain districts in warmer climes. The tufted character of the plant, and its habit of sending out long slender branches (runners) which produce a new bud at the extremity, are well known. The leaves are usually palmately three-parted, but the number of leaflets may be increased to five or reduced to one. While the flower has the typical Rosaceous structure, the so-called fruit is very peculiar, but it may be understood by the contrast it pre­sents with the “ hip ” of the rose. In the last-named plant the top of the flower-stalk expands as it grows into a vase­shaped cavity, the “ hip,” within which are concealed the true fruits or seed-vessels. In the rose the extremity of the floral axis is concave and bears the carpels in its interior. In the strawberry the floral axis, instead of becoming concave, swells out into a fleshy, dome-shaped or flattened mass in which the carpels or true fruits, commonly called pips or seeds, are more or less imbedded but never wholly concealed. A ripe strawberry in fact may be aptly compared to the “fruit” of a rose turned inside out.

The common wild strawberry of Great Britain, which indeed is found throughout Europe and great part of North America, is *F. vesca,* and this was the first species brought under cultivation in the early part of the 17th century. Later on other species were introduced, such as *F. elatior,* a European species, the parent stock of the hautbois strawberries, and especially *F. virginiana* from the United States and *F. chiloensis* from Chiloe. From these species, crossed and recrossed in various manners, have sprung the vast number of different varieties now enumerated in catalogues, whose characteristics are so inextricably blended that the attempt to trace their exact parentage or to follow out their lineage has become impos­sible. It must suffice to say that the varieties at present cultivated vary in the most remarkable degree in size, colour, flavour, shape, degree of fertility, season of ripen­ing, liability to disease, and constitution of plant. Some, as previously stated, vary in foliage, others produce no runners, and some vary materially in the relative develop­ment of their sexual organs, for, while in most cases the flowers are in appearance hermaphrodite, at least in struc­ture, there is a very general tendency towards a separation of the sexes, so that the flowers are males or females only as to function, even although they may be perfect in con­struction. This tendency to diœcism is a common charac­teristic among *Rosaceæ,* and sometimes proves a source of disappointment to the cultivator, who finds his plants barren where he had hoped to gather a crop. This happens in the United States more frequently than in Britain, but when recognized can readily be obviated by planting male varieties in the vicinity of the barren kinds. Darwin, in alluding to the vast amount of variability in the so-called “ fruit,”—a change effected by the art of the horticulturist in less than three centuries,—contrasts with this variability the fixity and permanence of character presented by the true fruits, or pips, which are distributed over the surface of the swollen axis. The will and art of the gardener have been directed to the improvement of the one organ, while he has devoted no attention to the other, which conse­quently remains in the same condition as in the wild plant. Too much stress is not, however, to be laid on this point, for it must be remembered that the foliage, which is not specially an object of the gardener’s “ selection,” neverthe­less varies considerably.

STRAW MANUFACTURES. Straw forms the raw material of some not unimportant industries. It serves for the thatching of roofs, for a paper-making material, for or­namenting small surfaces as a “ straw mosaic,” for plaiting into door and table mats, mattresses, Ac., and for weaving and plaiting into light baskets, artificial flowers, Ac. These applications, however, are insignificant in comparison with the place occupied by straw as a raw material for the straw bonnets and hats worn by both sexes. Of the various materials which go to the fabrication of plaited head-gear the most important is wheaten straw. It is only in certain areas that straw suitable for making plaits is produced. The straw must have a certain length of “ pipe ” between the knots, must possess a clear delicate golden colour, and must not be brittle. The most valuable straw for plaits is grown in Tuscany, and from it the well-known Tuscan plaits and Leghorn hats are made. The straw of Tuscany, specially grown for plaiting, is distinguished into three qualities,—*Pontederas Semone* being the finest, *Mazzuolο* the second quality, from which the bulk of the plaits are made, while from the third quality, *Santa Fioro,* only “ Tuscan pedals ” and braids are plaited. The wheat-seed for these straws is sown very thickly on comparatively elevated and arid land, and it sends up long attenuated stalks. When the grain in the ear is about half developed the straw is pulled up by the roots, dried in the sun, and subsequently spread out for several successive days to be bleached under the influence of alternate sunlight and night-dews. The pipe of the upper joint alone is selected for plaiting, the remainder of the straw being used for other purposes. These pipes are made up in small bundles, bleached in sulphur fumes in a closed chest, assorted into sizes, and so prepared for the plaiters. Straw plaiting is a domestic industry among the women and young children of Tuscany and some parts of Emilia. Tuscan plaits and hats vary enormously in quality and value ; the plait of a hat of good quality may represent the work of four or five days, while hats of the highest quality may each occupy six to nine months in making. The finest work is excessively trying to the eyes of the plaiters, who can at most give to it two or three hours’ labour daily. The exports of plaits and manufactured hats from Leghorn average in value £480,000 annually, about one half of the goods going to America.

The districts around Luton in Bedfordshire and the neighbouring counties have, since the beginning of the 17th century, been the British home of the straw-plait industry. The straw of certain varieties of wheat culti­vated in that region is, in favourable seasons, possessed of a fine bright colour and due tenacity and strength. The straw is cut as in ordinary harvesting, but is allowed to dry in the sun before binding. Subsequently straws are selected from the sheaves, and of these the pipes of the two upper joints are taken for plaiting. The pipes are assorted into sizes by passing them through graduated openings in a grilled wire frame, and those of good colour are bleached by the fumes of sulphur. Spotted and dis­coloured straws are dyed either in pipe or in plait. The plaiters work up the material in a damp state, either into whole straw or split straw plaits. Split straws are pre­pared with the aid of a small instrument having a project­ing point which enters the straw pipe, and from which radiate the number of knife-edged cutters into which the straw is to be split. The plaiting of straw in the Luton district formerly gave employment to many thousands of women and young children ; but now vast quantities of plaits are imported at a very cheap rate from Canton in China. The result is that, while the Luton trade is extending, the number of persons it there gives occupation is greatly diminished. In 1871 about 50,000 persons