

CHAPTER V

THE PLANT BODY

The Parts of a Plant. — Our familiar plants are made up of several distinct parts. The most prominent of these parts are *root, stem, leaf, flower, fruit, and seed*. *Familiar plants differ wonderfully in size and shape*, — from fragile mushrooms, delicate waterweeds and pond-scums, to floating leaves, soft grasses, coarse weeds, tall bushes, slender climbers, gigantic trees, and hanging moss.

The Stem Part. — In most plants there is a *main central part or shaft* on which the other or *secondary parts* are borne. This main part is the **plant axis**. Above ground, in most plants, the main plant axis bears the *branches, leaves, and flowers*; below ground, it bears the *roots*.

The rigid part of the plant, which persists over winter and which is left after leaves and flowers are fallen, is the **framework** of the plant. The framework is composed of both root and stem. When the plant is dead, the framework remains for a time, but it slowly decays. The dry winter stems of weeds are the framework, or skeleton of the plant (Figs. 11 and 12). The framework of trees is the most conspicuous part of the plant.

The Root Part. — The root bears the stem at its apex, but otherwise it normally *bears only root-branches*. The stem, however, *bears leaves, flowers, and fruits*. Those living surfaces of the plant which are most exposed to light are *green or highly colored*. The root tends to grow *downward*, but the stem tends to grow *upward toward light*