

The productions of Myatt, Turner, and others, are admirable in their way, and for the especial estimation for which they are grown—viz., for the tables of Belgravia, and of the richer class; but for the million, and for those great preserver-makers, Crosse & Blackwell, Batty & Co., and others, who supply millions of families with strawberry jam and jelly, in small and very sick-bottomed pots, their modes of culture are wholly unsuitable, and the supply furnished is totally inadequate to the demand.

Let us now examine into the causes of all this, and let us see if science will not aid us in bringing about a very different state of things. Botanists have been too much in the habit of promulgating the doctrine that in the strawberry the male and female organs exist in a perfect state; whereas generally speaking, this by no means the case, for the sexual difference is peculiarly well marked in almost all varieties of the strawberries.

Let us sow the seed of a strawberry, and we will find, on a careful examination of the seedlings, that we have obtained Staminate, Pistillate, and Hermaphrodites; that is to say, Staminate or male plants; Pistillates or female plants—neither of which, by itself, will bear a fruit—berry—and hermaphrodites, or plants in which the male organs are perfect, and the female organs are more or less imperfect. It is well known and has been particularly insisted on in respect to certain varieties (especially amongst white kinds), that some of these hermaphrodites possess both the male and female organs in perfection; but, although entertaining a great doubt upon that point ourselves, we are nevertheless quite aware that, in particular instances, they do possess female organs very nearly perfect, sufficiently so, indeed, to lead to common belief. On the other hand, we find that, in the great majority of cases, the imperfect are these female organs in these hermaphrodites that they seldom produce other than a very scanty crop of inferior and imperfect berries.

The most vigorous of all are the staminate, or males, abounding in large flowers, and putting out a profusion of runners; the pistillate flower very abundantly, but have small runners, and very few runners; the hermaphrodites bear a medium sized flower and put out numerous strong runners.

For the purpose of the high-priced strawberry, the better kinds of hermaphrodites may be answered admirably well, seeing that their object is to obtain only a very few large-sized berries on each plant; but place these plants in an open field, deprive them of their finely prepared mould and their hand-glasses, their artificial impregnation, and the unremitting care and attentiveness of their human attendants, and the failures would soon become apparent; they would be quite unsuitable. In a word, for a general crop

About the year 1809, the celebrated horticulturist, Keen, from amongst his seedlings, picked out all those which had borne a heavy crop of fruit, and planted them in a bed by themselves, quite apart from those that had proved sterile, or had borne but lightly. Spring came, and with it his pet seedlings put forth a profusion of bloom, but his surprise was intense when he saw that there was no swelling whatever for fruit. His intelligent mind prompted a critical examination of the flowers, and then he discovered that the pistils, or female organs, were perfect, but that there was no stamens, or male organs; consequently, that his famous fruit-bearers were pistillates, or pure females. Having thus stumbled upon a very important discovery, his next step was to examine his other seedlings, and finding that they possessed male organs in perfection, he plucked a number of their flowers, and placed them in phials of water, and suspended them in different directions immediately over his bed of pistillates. His experiment was eminently successful; the pistillates began immediately to swell for fruit, and every blossom produced its berry.

These celebrated plants were known under the name of "Keen's seedling," but it is doubtful if they are in existence at this day, the variety so called now being a very favorite hermaphrodite, and not a pistillate. The reason for this is not difficult of explanation. Fine bearing pistillate plants are carefully removed from all others, and planted by themselves, perhaps, in some gentleman's garden, being regarded as a great treasure; the next season, abundance of blossom, but no fruit. This first miscarriage may be attributed to late frosts, slugs, &c.; so another season is awaited, but the same result disgusts both master and gardener, and the poor unmated females are declared worthless, and are cast on the dung-heap. In this manner profuse bearers are thrown away, and the partial hermaphrodite takes their place, and gives rise to the universal complaint, "How badly my strawberries bear! I had a fine show of bloom, very fine, but somehow or other I have had scarcely any fruit. It is provoking!" Yes, so it is—very provoking indeed; and, knowing and feeling this, we are now endeavoring to diffuse a little information on the subject, hoping that our readers will circulate this information, as well as take advantage of it in their own practice.

After Keen, a Mons. Duchesne arrived at a similar knowledge of the sexual differences in the strawberry plant; but as far as the practice is and has been concerned, it really seems as if the discovery made and published by Keen had been entirely lost sight of. We have conversed with our largest and most eminent nurserymen and seedsmen, and have even ventured in our innocence to speak on the subject of staminate, pistillates, and hermaphrodites to the fruit sellers in Covent Garden market and in the city.