

and exactitude, 28 of them to the square inch, smoothed and polished like yellow marble.

Strange Ambrosia.

Some of the wax-makers carried their gift to another part of the city, farthest from all dangers, warmest against every invading chill, where, downward hung from the comb like sharpened gold thimbles, new queen cells were being shaped by a group of master builders.

All cells were alike, their curved unbuttressed walls smooth as satin, carved on their outer sides were mystic lines, like black Ephesian letters on mosques of gold.

Within the shining walls of these inch-tall temples the queen will place an egg no different from those already encased in a thousand little worker cells. Take this egg out and put it in the worker cell and in 22 days a little sterile female would emerge. Here, guarded by the climbing walls and runic charms of the queen cell, only 16 days will be needed to produce a sexed goddess, with almost everlasting life judging by bee time, and capable of producing from her own slight body more than a million children.

Before the temple is sealed it is anointed with the strangest of all the wild ambrosias of the bee world. Royal jelly defies all attempts at analysis. No one knows from what it is made or how it is prepared. Fed to the new inhabitant of this cell, or to any ordinary worker larva not more than three days old, this magic substance transmutes the little neuter queen but only if it be placed within a proper queen cell with the weird cabalistic marks upon the walls. When a tiny quantity is mixed with the food of sterile rats in a laboratory, they become potent and normal breeders; one day we may learn how to borrow from the bee something which will drive the gray curse of sterility from human homes.

Royal Wedding.

The time at last had come for the old queen to break the spell that had held her here in this city, generation after generation. The city was over full. In the golden dimness of each sealed temple the miracle of growth was now taking place; within hours there would be another queen. One half the population, perhaps 70,000 bees, must flee with her to a new home.

As she passed slowly along the streets of the old city for the last time, unfolding the wings which had been meekly crossed for years, the wax-makers suddenly leapt from their places to lead the swarm through the city gates. Not a single wax-maker was left behind. Some old wisdom guided them. Before any other step could be taken in the new city, these must plot and mark out the lines for the walls, houses, cradles and food stores.

They must work as they had never worked before, completing perhaps six or eight whole new combs within a single week.

Half an hour after the swarm had emerged there was no sign that an exodus had taken place; only an awareness among the remaining inhabitants that the old queen was gone.

That same night in the old city in the oak, something stirred within the oldest temple; and suddenly above the steady drone of the night fanners rose a new sound, shrill and insistent, as if the blowing of a fairy horn. Instantly every other sound died, and the bees waited motionless in the milky glimmer of moonlight. Then, cut in a perfect circle, the lid that had closed the golden temple slowly rose, with its seals burst; presently there emerged a shining goddess, full grown and perfect, her shimmering wings folded behind her.

A moment later she vanished among the combs, plunging her head into a honey cell as if to steel herself for the deed she was about to perform. Then not ten minutes after she had emerged, she ran swiftly and suddenly up one of the golden streets. Uttering again that shrill and challenging piping, she stood before the next royal temple and, ruthlessly

cutting away the seal, reached within and tore off her living sister's head.

At each temple in turn a similar deed was repeated, for now that she by her very birth had proved her claim to queenship no other princess could be allowed to live to dispute her rule. As soon as she had opened a temple and done her ghastly regicide, workers moved in to finish the work, hastily cutting down the splendid walls, casting away the pieces, removing the body and levelling the temple site.

Before dawn, but for six barely perceptible scars, there was no trace of what had been.

The day passed, and the night, and another and another. Hour after hour, unsleeping, the new princess moved about the city, exploring its farthest confines; but the crowds in the golden streets, as if waiting some profound event, withheld their homage. None offered her food; as she approached all shrank back to open the way.

At last with an eagerness that signalled to all that her hour had come, she turned towards the city gates, then, with a sudden rush that filled her trachea, she passed like a sunbeam into the sunlight. Dipping in a great arc, she sailed over the heads of a group of transfixed drones stationed outside the gates. The wings rose on the drones' shoulders; a moment later she sped upward with the drones in wild pursuit.

Up they went, faster and faster, a mile above the earth; the pace never slackened; but first one and then another of the pursuers broke his heart, turned over and plummeted to earth. One hundred had set out; now there were ten, five—one—the only one to be granted the right to perpetuate life, though at the cost of his own.

As brother and goddess sister hurtled earthward at last, she cast away his lifeless form, then sped unerringly to the platform outside the city gates.

Now, for the first time, the sentries at the gates stiffened and raised their antennae in the royal salute. At that sign a great rejoicing burst out like a song through the city, none knowing why. All work was stopped, and through the streets the myriad citizens swayed like clamouring crowds on holiday, dancing here and there and everywhere.

Workers and nurses near the gates poured suddenly out and surrounding their new divinity, raised her with infinite gentleness to their shoulders and bore her triumphantly into the city.

Henceforth she could control the future. Now, by the movement of a muscle, she could bring forth more than a million workers, bear drones at will, or, if she chose, hundreds upon hundreds of goddesses like herself.

A. R. BUNCH.

Book Review.

Materia Medica and Pharmacology for Nurses.

By J. S. Peel, M.P.S.

STILL ANOTHER EXCELLENT Text Book from New Zealand!

A wealth of up-to-date information, it may be a little advanced for the average nurse to digest in its entirety, but excellent for reference; good advice in the need of care, accuracy and observation in the administration of Drugs.

The Author does not overlook the importance of Nursing Technique in this field, always bearing in mind idiosyncrasy and allergy, and pointing out the part that practical psychology plays, hand in hand in the action of the Drug.

For the Specialist in Medical Nursing or the Sister Tutor a veritable treasure!

D. B.

Published by N. M. Peryer, Ltd., 145-147, Worcester Street, Christchurch C.1, New Zealand.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)