

THE
NATURAL HISTORY

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TRANSLATED,
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BY THE LATE
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CONTENTS.

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BOOK XI.

THE VARIOUS KINDS OF INSECTS.

CHAP.		Page
1.	The extreme smallness of insects	1
2.	Whether insects respire, and whether they have blood	3
3.	The bodies of insects	4
4.	Bees	5
5.	The order displayed in the works of bees	6
6.	The meaning of the terms commosis, pissoceros, and propolis	7
7.	The meaning of erithace, sandaraca, or cerinthos	<i>ib.</i>
8.	What flowers are used by the bees in their work	8
9.	Persons who have made bees their study	<i>ib.</i>
10.	The mode in which bees work	10
11.	Drones	11
12.	The qualities of honey	12
13.	Where the best honey is produced	<i>ib.</i>
14.	The kinds of honey peculiar to various places	14
15.	How honey is tested. Ericæum. Tetrax, or sisirum	16
16.	The reproduction of bees	18
17.	The mode of government of the bees	19
18.	Happy omens sometimes afforded by a swarm of bees	20
19.	The various kinds of bees	21
20.	The diseases of bees	22
21.	Things that are noxious to bees	23
22.	How to keep bees to the hive	<i>ib.</i>
23.	Methods of renewing the swarm	24
24.	Wasps and hornets: animals which appropriate what belongs to others	25
25.	The bombyx of Assyria	<i>ib.</i>
26.	The larvæ of the silk-worm—who first invented silk cloths	26
27.	The silk-worm of Cos—how the Coan vestments are made	27
28.	Spiders; the kinds that make webs; the materials used by them in so doing	

CHAP.	Page
29. The generation of spiders	29
30. Scorpions	<i>ib.</i>
31. The stellio	31
32. The grasshopper: that it has neither mouth nor outlet for food	<i>ib.</i>
33. The wings of insects	33
34. The beetle. The glow-worm. Other kinds of beetles	33
35. Locusts	35
36. Ants	37
37. The chrysalis	39
38. Animals which breed in wood	40
39. Insects that are parasites of man. Which is the smallest of animals? Animals found in wax even	<i>ib.</i>
40. An animal which has no passage for the evacuations	<i>ib.</i>
41. Moths, cantharides, gnats—an insect which breeds in the snow..	41
42. An animal found in fire—the pyralis, or pyrausta	42
43. The animal called hemerobion	<i>ib.</i>
44. The nature and characteristics of all animals considered limb by limb. Those which have tufts and crests	43
45. The various kinds of horns. Animals in which they are moveable	44
46. The heads of animals. Those which have none	46
47. The hair	<i>ib.</i>
48. The bones of the head	47
49. The brain	<i>ib.</i>
50. The ears. Animals which hear without ears or apertures	48
51. The face, the forehead, and the eye-brows	49
52. The eyes—animals which have no eyes, or have only one eye ..	<i>ib.</i>
53. The diversity of the colour of the eyes	50
54. The theory of sight—persons who can see by night	<i>ib.</i>
55. The nature of the pupil—eyes which do not shut	52
56. The hair of the eye-lids; what animals are without them. Animals which can see on one side only	54
57. Animals which have no eye-lids	55
58. The cheeks	<i>ib.</i>
59. The nostrils	<i>ib.</i>
60. The mouth; the lips; the chin; and the jaw-bone	56
61. The teeth; the various kinds of teeth; in what animals they are not on both sides of the mouth: animals which have hollow teeth	<i>ib.</i>
62. The teeth of serpents; their poison. A bird which has teeth ..	57
63. Wonderful circumstances connected with the teeth	59
64. How an estimate is formed of the age of animals from their teeth	60
65. The tongue; animals which have no tongue. The noise made by frogs. The palate	61
66. The tonsils; the uvula; the epiglossis; the tracheal artery; the gullet	62
67. The neck; the throat; the dorsal spine	63
68. The throat; the gullet; the stomach	64
69. The heart; the blood; the vital spirit	<i>ib.</i>
70. Those animals which have the largest heart, and those which have the smallest. What animals have two hearts	65
71. When the custom was first adopted of examining the heart in the inspection of the entrails	66

CONTENTS.

v

CHAP.	Page
72. The lungs : in what animals they are the largest, and in what the smallest. Animals which have nothing but lungs in the interior of the body. Causes which produce extraordinary swiftness in animals	67
73. The liver ; in what animals, and in what part there are two livers found	<i>ib.</i>
74. The gall ; where situate, and in what animals it is double. Animals which have no gall, and others in which it is not situate in the liver	68
75. The properties of the gall	69
76. In what animals the liver increases and decreases with the moon. Observations on the aruspices relative thereto, and remarkable prodigies	70
77. The diaphragm. The nature of laughter	<i>ib.</i>
78. The belly : animals which have no belly. Which are the only animals that vomit	71
79. The small guts, the front intestines, the anus, the colon. The causes of the insatiate voracity of certain animals	<i>ib.</i>
80. The omentum : the spleen ; animals which are without it	73
81. The kidneys : animals which have four kidneys. Animals which have none	<i>ib.</i>
82. The breast : the ribs	74
83. The bladder : animals which have no bladder	<i>ib.</i>
84. The womb : the womb of the sow : the teats	75
85. Animals which have suet : animals which do not grow fat	<i>ib.</i>
86. The marrow : animals which have no marrow	76
87. Bones and fish-bones : animals which have neither. Cartilages	77
88. The nerves : animals which have none	<i>ib.</i>
89. The arteries ; the veins : animals without arteries or veins. The blood and the sweat	78
90. Animals, the blood of which coagulates with the greatest rapidity : other animals, the blood of which does not coagulate. Animals which have the thickest blood : those the blood of which is the thinnest : animals which have no blood	<i>ib.</i>
91. Animals which are without blood at certain periods of the year	79
92. Whether the blood is the principle of life	80
93. The hide of animals	<i>ib.</i>
94. The hair and the covering of the skin	81
95. The paps : birds which have paps. Remarkable facts connected with the dugs of animals	82
96. The milk : the biestings. Cheese : of what milk cheese cannot be made. Rennet ; the various kinds of aliment in milk	83
97. Various kinds of cheese	85
98. Differences of the members of man from those of other animals	86
99. The fingers, the arms	<i>ib.</i>
100. Resemblance of the ape to man	<i>ib.</i>
101. The nails	87
102. The knees and the hams	<i>ib.</i>
103. Parts of the human body to which certain religious ideas are attached	88

CHAP.	Page
104. Varicose veins	88
105. The gait, the feet, the legs	89
106. Hoofs	<i>ib.</i>
107. The feet of birds	90
108. The feet of animals, from those having two feet to those with a hundred.—Dwarfs	91
109. The sexual parts.—Hermaphrodites	<i>ib.</i>
110. The testes.—The three classes of eunuchs	92
111. The tails of animals	<i>ib.</i>
112. The different voices of animals	93
113. Superfluous limbs	95
114. Signs of vitality and of the moral disposition of man, from the limbs	96
115. Respiration and nutriment	97
116. Animals which when fed upon poison do not die, and the flesh of which is poisonous	98
117. Reasons for indigestion. Remedies for crudity	<i>ib.</i>
118. From what causes corpulence arises; how it may be reduced	<i>ib.</i>
119. What things, by merely tasting of them, allay hunger and thirst	99

BOOK XII.

THE NATURAL HISTORY OF TREES.

1. The honourable place occupied by trees in the system of nature	101
2. The early history of trees	102
3. Exotic trees. When the plane-tree first appeared in Italy, and whence it came	103
4. The nature of the plane-tree	104
5. Remarkable facts connected with the plane-tree	<i>ib.</i>
6. The chamaeplatanus. Who was the first to clip green shrubs	106
7. How the citron is planted	<i>ib.</i>
8. The trees of India	107
9. When ebony was first seen at Rome. The various kinds of ebony	109
10. The Indian thorn	<i>ib.</i>
11. The Indian fig	<i>ib.</i>
12. The pala: the fruit called ariena	110
13. Indian trees, the names of which are unknown. Indian trees which bear flax	111
14. The pepper-tree.—The various kinds of pepper—bregma—zimpirebi	<i>ib.</i>
15. Caryophyllon, lycion, and the Chironian pyxacanthus	113
16. Macir	114
17. Sugar	<i>ib.</i>
18. Trees of Ariana, Gedrosia, and Hyrcania	115
19. Trees of Bactriana, bdellium, or brochon, otherwise malacha, or maldacon, scordastum. Adulterations used in all spices and aromatics; the various tests of them and their respective values	<i>ib.</i>
20. Trees of Persis	1.
21. Trees of the islands of the Persian Sea. The cotton tree	15

CONTENTS.

vii

CHAP.		Page
22.	The tree called cyna. Trees from which fabrics for clothing are made in the east	118
23.	A country where the trees never lose their leaves	<i>ib.</i>
24.	The various useful products of trees	119
25.	Costus.	<i>ib.</i>
26.	Nard. The twelve varieties of the plant	<i>ib.</i>
27.	Asarum, or foal-foot	121
28.	Amomum.—Amomis	122
29.	Cardamomum	123
30.	The country of frankincense.	<i>ib.</i>
31.	The trees which bear frankincense	125
32.	Various kinds of frankincense	126
33.	Myrrh	129
34.	The trees which produce myrrh	130
35.	The nature and various kinds of myrrh	<i>ib.</i>
36.	Mastich	132
37.	Ladanum and stobolon	<i>ib.</i>
38.	Enhæmon	134
39.	The tree called bratus	135
40.	The tree called stobrum	<i>ib.</i>
41.	Why Arabia was called "Happy"	136
42.	Cinnamomum. Xylocinnamum	137
43.	Cassia	140
44.	Cancamum and tarum	141
45.	Serichatum and gabalium	142
46.	Myrobalanum	<i>ib.</i>
47.	Phœnicobalanus	143
48.	The sweet-scented calamus; the sweet-scented rush	144
49.	Hammoniæcum	<i>ib.</i>
50.	Sphagnos	145
51.	Cypros	146
52.	Aspalathos, or erysiceptrum	<i>ib.</i>
53.	Maron	147
54.	Balsamum; opobalsamum; and xylobalsamum	<i>ib.</i>
55.	Storax	151
56.	Galbanum	152
57.	Panax	<i>ib.</i>
58.	Spondylium	153
59.	Malobathrum	<i>ib.</i>
60.	Omphacium	<i>ib.</i>
61.	Bryon, œnanthe, and massaris	154
62.	Elate or spathe	155
63.	Cinnamon or comacum	<i>ib.</i>

BOOK XIII.

THE NATURAL HISTORY OF EXOTIC TREES, AND AN ACCOUNT OF UNGUENTS.

1.	Unguents—at what period they were first introduced	159
2.	The various kinds of unguents—twelve principal compositions	160

CHAP.	Page
3. Diapasma, magma; the mode of testing unguents	166
4. The excesses to which luxury has run in unguents	167
5. When unguents were first used by the Romans	168
6. The palm-tree	169
7. The nature of the palm-tree	170
8. How the palm-tree is planted	172
9. The different varieties of palm-trees, and their characteristics ..	173
10. The trees of Syria: the pistacia, the cottana, the damascena, and the myxa	178
11. The cedar. Trees which have on them the fruit of three years at once	<i>ib.</i>
12. The terebinth	179
13. The sumach-tree	<i>ib.</i>
14. The trees of Egypt. The fig-tree of Alexandria	180
15. The fig-tree of Cyprus	181
16. The carob-tree	<i>ib.</i>
17. The Persian tree. In what trees the fruits germinate the one below the other	182
18. The cucus	183
19. The Egyptian thorn	<i>ib.</i>
20. Nine kinds of gum. The sarcocolla	184
21. The papyrus: the use of paper: when it was first invented ..	185
22. The mode of making paper	186
23. The nine different kinds of paper	187
24. The mode of testing the goodness of paper	189
25. The peculiar defects in paper	190
26. The paste used in the preparation of paper	191
27. The books of Numa	<i>ib.</i>
28. The trees of Æthiopia	193
29. The trees of Mount Atlas. The citrus, and the tables made of the wood thereof	194
30. The points that are desirable or otherwise in these tables	195
31. The citron-tree	198
32. The lotus	<i>ib.</i>
33. The trees of Cyrenaica. The paliurus	200
34. Nine varieties of the Punic apple. Balaustium	<i>ib.</i>
35. The trees of Asia and Greece; the epipactis, the erica, the Cnidian grain or thymelæa, pyrosachne, cnestron, or cneoron ..	201
36. The tragion: tragacanth	<i>ib.</i>
37. The tragos or scorpio; the myrica or brya; the ostrys	202
38. The euonymos	203
39. The tree called eon	<i>ib.</i>
40. The andrachle	204
41. The coccygia; the apharce	<i>ib.</i>
42. The ferula	<i>ib.</i>
43. The thapsia	205
44. The capparis or cynosbaton, otherwise ophiostaphyle	206
45. The saripha	207
46. The royal thorn	<i>ib.</i>
47. The cytisis	208

CHAP.	Page
48. The trees and shrubs of the Mediterranean. The phykos, prason, or zoster	209
49. The sea bryon	210
50. Plants of the Red Sea	211
51. Plants of the Indian Sea	<i>ib.</i>
52. The plants of the Troglodytic Sea; the hair of Isis: the Charitoblepharon	212

BOOK XIV.

THE NATURAL HISTORY OF THE FRUIT-TREES.

1 and 2. The nature of the vine. Its mode of fructification	215
3. The nature of the grape, and the cultivation of the vine	218
4. Ninety-one varieties of the vine	222
5. Remarkable facts connected with the culture of the vine	233
6. The most ancient wines	236
7. The nature of wines	238
8. Fifty kinds of generous wines	239
9. Thirty-eight varieties of foreign wine	245
10. Seven kinds of salted wines	247
11. Eighteen varieties of sweet wine. Raisin-wine and hepsema	248
12. Three varieties of second-rate wine	251
13. At what period generous wines were first commonly made in Italy	251
14. The inspection of wine ordered by King Romulus	252
15. Wines drunk by the ancient Romans	253
16. Some remarkable facts connected with wine-lofts. The Opimian wine	254
17. At what period four kinds of wine were first served at table	<i>ib.</i>
18. The uses of the wild vine. What juices are naturally the coldest of all	255
19. Sixty-six varieties of artificial wine.	256
20. Hydromeli, or melicraton	261
21. Oxymeli	<i>ib.</i>
22. Twelve kinds of wine with miraculous properties	262
23. What wines it is not lawful to use in the sacred rites	263
24. How mustis usually prepared	<i>ib.</i>
25. Pitch and resin	264
26. Vinegar—lees of wine	268
27. Wine-vessels—wine-cellar	<i>ib.</i>
28. Drunkenness	270
29. Liquors with the strength of wine made from water and corn	274

BOOK XV.

THE NATURAL HISTORY OF THE FRUIT-TREES.

1. The olive.—How long it existed in Greece only.—At what period it was first introduced into Italy, Spain, and Africa	277
2. The nature of the olive, and of new olive oil	278

CHAP.	Page
3. Olive oil: the countries in which it is produced, and its various qualities	279
4. Fifteen varieties of the olive	281
5. The nature of olive oil.	284
6. The culture of the olive: its mode of preservation. The method of making olive oil	285
7. Forty-eight varieties of artificial oils. The cicus-tree or croton, or sili, or sesamum	286
8. Amurca	291
9. The various kinds of fruit-trees and their natures. Four varieties of pine-nuts	292
10. The quince. Four kinds of cydonia, and four varieties of the struthæa	<i>ib.</i>
11. Six varieties of the peach	293
12. Twelve kinds of plums	294
13. The peach	296
14. Thirty different kinds of pomes. At what period foreign fruits were first introduced into Italy, and whence	297
15. The fruits that have been most recently introduced	<i>ib.</i>
16. Forty-one varieties of the pear	300
17. Various methods of grafting trees. Expiations for lightning	302
18. The mode of keeping various fruits and grapes	303
19. Twenty-nine varieties of the fig	307
20. Historical anecdotes connected with the fig	309
21. Caprification	311
22. Three varieties of the medlar.	314
23. Four varieties of the sorb	<i>ib.</i>
24. Nine varieties of the nut	315
25. Eighteen varieties of the chesnut	318
26. The carob	319
27. The fleshy fruits. The mulberry.	<i>ib.</i>
28. The fruit of the arbutus	320
29. The relative natures of berry fruits	321
30. Nine varieties of the cherry	322
31. The cornel. The lentisk	323
32. Thirteen different flavours of juices	<i>ib.</i>
33. The colour and smell of juices	325
34. The various natures of fruit	326
35. The myrtle	328
36. Historical anecdotes relative to the myrtle	328
37. Eleven varieties of the myrtle	330
38. The myrtle used at Rome in ovations	331
39. The laurel; thirteen varieties of it	332
40. Historical anecdotes connected with the laurel	334

BOOK XVI.

THE NATURAL HISTORY OF THE FOREST TREES.

1. Countries that have no trees.	339
2. Wonders connected with trees in the nothern regions	340

CHAP.	Page
3. The acorn oak. The civic crown	341
4. The origin of the presentation of crowns	342
5. Persons presented with a crown of leaves	343
6. Thirteen varieties of the acorn	345
7. The beech	346
8. The other acorns—wood for fuel	<i>ib.</i>
9. The gall-nut	350
10. Other productions on these trees besides the acorn	<i>ib.</i>
11. Cachrys	351
12. The kermes berry	353
13. Agaric	<i>ib.</i>
14. Trees of which the bark is used	354
15. Shingles	355
16. The pine	<i>ib.</i>
17. The pinaster	356
18. The pitch-tree: the fir	<i>ib.</i>
19. The larch: the torch-tree	357
20. The yew	360
21. Methods of making tar—how cedrium is made	361
22. Methods by which thick pitch is prepared	<i>ib.</i>
23. How the resin called zopissa is prepared	363
24. Trees the wood of which is highly valued. Four varieties of the ash	365
25. Two varieties of the linden-tree	366
26. Ten varieties of the maple	367
27. Bruscum: molluscum; the staphylodendron	368
28. Three varieties of the box-tree	<i>ib.</i>
29. Four varieties of the elm	370
30. The natures of the various trees according to their localities: the mountain trees, and the trees of the plain	<i>ib.</i>
31. Trees which grow on a dry soil: those which are found in wet localities: those which are found in both indifferently	372
32. Division of trees into various species	373
33. Trees which do not lose their foliage. The rhododendron. Trees which do not lose the whole of their foliage. Places in which there are no trees	<i>ib.</i>
34. The nature of the leaves which wither and fall	374
35. Trees which have leaves of various colours; trees with leaves of various shapes. Three varieties of the poplar	375
36. Leaves which turn round every year	376
37. The care bestowed on the leaves of the palm, and the uses to which they are applied	377
38. Remarkable facts connected with leaves	<i>ib.</i>
39. The natural order of the production of plants	379
40. Trees which never blossom. The juniper	380
41. The fecundation of trees. Germination: the appearance of the fruit	381
42. In what order the trees blossom	383
43. At what period each tree bears fruit. The cornel	384
44. Trees which bear the whole year. Trees which have on them the fruit of three years	385

CHAP.	Page
45. Trees which bear no fruit: trees looked upon as ill-omened	385
46. Trees which lose their fruit or flowers most readily	386
47. Trees which are unproductive in certain places	387
48. The mode in which trees bear	<i>ib.</i>
49. Trees in which the fruit appears before the leaves	<i>ib.</i>
50. Trees which bear two crops in a year. Trees which bear three crops	388
51. Which trees become old with the greatest rapidity, and which most slowly	389
52. Trees which bear various products. Cratægum	390
53. Differences in trees in respect of the trunks and branches	391
54. The branches of trees	392
55. The bark of trees	393
56. The roots of trees	<i>ib.</i>
57. Trees which have grown spontaneously from the ground	394
58. How trees grow spontaneously—diversities in their nature, the same trees not growing everywhere	395
59. Plants that will not grow in certain places	396
60. The cypress	397
61. That the earth often bears productions which it has never borne before	399
62. The ivy—twenty varieties of it	<i>ib.</i>
63. The smilax	402
64. Water plants: the rush: twenty-eight varieties of the reed	403
65. Reeds used for arrows, and for the purpose of writing	404
66. Flute reeds: the reed of Orchomenus; reeds used for fowling and fishing	405
67. The vine-dresser's reed	408
68. The willow: eight varieties of it	409
69. Trees, in addition to the willow, which are of use in making withes	410
70. Rushes: candle-rushes: rushes for thatching	411
71. The elder: the bramble	<i>ib.</i>
72. The juices of trees	412
73. The veins and fibres of trees	413
74. The felling of trees	415
75. The opinion of Cato on the felling of timber	416
76. The size of trees: the nature of wood: the sappinus	417
77. Methods of obtaining fire from wood	421
78. Trees which are proof against decay: trees which never split	422
79. Historical facts connected with the durability of wood	423
80. Varieties of the teredo	425
81. The woods used in building	426
82. Carpenters' woods	427
83. Woods united with glue	<i>ib.</i>
84. Veneering	428
85. The age of trees. A tree that was planted by the first Scipio Africanus. A tree at Rome five hundred years old	429
86. Trees as old as the City	430
87. Trees in the suburban districts older than the City	<i>ib.</i>

CHAP.	Page
88. Trees planted by Agamemnon the first year of the Trojan war : other trees which date from the time that the place was called Ilium, anterior to the Trojan war	431
89. Trees planted at Argos by Hercules : others planted by Apollo. A tree more ancient than Athens itself	<i>ib.</i>
90. Trees which are the most short-lived	432
91. Trees which have been rendered famous by remarkable events ..	<i>ib.</i>
92. Plants which have no peculiar spot for their growth : others that grow upon trees, and will not grow in the ground. Nine va- rieties of them : cadytas, polypodion, phaulias, hippophæston	433
93. Three varieties of mistletoe. The nature of mistletoe and similar plants	434
94. The method of making birdlime	435
95. Historical facts connected with the mistletoe	435

BOOK XVII.

THE NATURAL HISTORY OF THE CULTIVATED TREES.

1. Trees which have been sold at enormous prices	438
2. The influence of weather upon trees : what is the proper situation for the vine	441
3. What soils are to be considered the best	446
4. The eight kinds of earth boasted of by the Gauls and Greeks ..	452
5. The employment of ashes	455
6. Manure	456
7. Crops which tend to improve the land : crops which exhaust it ..	459
8. The proper mode of using manure	<i>ib.</i>
9. The modes in which trees bear	460
10. Plants which are propagated by seed	<i>ib.</i>
11. Trees which never degenerate	461
12. Propagation by suckers	463
13. Propagation by slips and cuttings	464
14. Seed-plots	<i>ib.</i>
15. The mode of propagating the elm	467
16. The holes for transplanting	468
17. The intervals to be left between trees	472
18. The nature of the shadow thrown by trees	473
19. The droppings of water from the leaves	474
20. Trees which grow but slowly : those which grow with rapidity ..	475
21. Trees propagated from layers	<i>ib.</i>
22. Grafting : the first discovery of it	477
23. Inoculation or budding	<i>ib.</i>
24. The various kinds of grafting	<i>ib.</i>
25. Grafting the vine	482
26. Grafting by scutcheons	483
27. Plants which grow from a branch	485
28. Trees which grow from cuttings : the mode of planting them ..	486
29. The cultivation of the olive	<i>ib.</i>

CHAP.	Page
30. Transplanting operations as distributed throughout the various seasons of the year	487
31. The cleaning and baring of the roots, and moulding them	491
32. Willow-beds	492
33. Reed-beds:	493
34. Other plants that are cut for poles and stakes	494
35. The culture of the vine and the various shrubs which support it	495
36. How grapes are protected from the ravages of insects	517
37. The diseases of trees	<i>ib.</i>
38. Prodigies connected with trees	526
39. Treatment of the diseases of trees	528
40. Methods of irrigation	529
41. Remarkable facts connected with irrigation	<i>ib.</i>
42. Incisions made in trees	530
43. Other remedies for the diseases of trees.. .. .	<i>ib.</i>
44. Caprifigation, and particulars connected with the fig	531
45. Errors that may be committed in pruning	<i>ib.</i>
46. The proper mode of manuring trees	532
47. Medicaments for trees	<i>ib.</i>

GREEK AND ROMAN MONEY, WEIGHTS, AND MEASURES MENTIONED BY PLINY.

Acetabulum. R	...	...	...	...$\frac{1}{8}$ of a Sextarius, .1238 pint.
Actus. R	...	...	...	...120 Pedes or Roman feet.
Amphora. R	...	...	...	...48 Sextarii, 5 gall. 7.577 pints.
As. R	...	...	...	...$2\frac{1}{8}$ farthings. Copper.
As. R [weight]	...	...	...	...See "Libra."
Concha, Smaller, G and R	...	...	...	...0.412 pint.
Concha, Larger, G and R	...	...	...	...1.238 pint.
Congius. R	...	...	...	...5.9471 pints.
Cubitus. G	...	...	...	...1 foot 6.2016 inches.
Cubitus. R	...	...	...	...1 foot 5.4744 inches.
Culeus. R	...	...	...	...20 Amphoræ, 118 gall. 7.546 pints.
Cyathus. G and R	...	...	...	...$\frac{1}{12}$ of a Sextarius, .0825 pint.
Denarius. R	...	...	...	...16 Asses, $8\frac{1}{2}$ pence. Silver.
Denarius. R. [weight]	...	...	...	...52.5 to 60 grains.
Digitus, or Finger. R.	...	...	...	...$\frac{1}{16}$ of a Pes, .7281 inch.
Drachma. G	...	...	...	...63 grains.
Hemina. R	...	...	...	...See "Semisextarius."
Jugerum. R	...	...	...	...240 Pedes or Roman feet by 120.
Libra, or Pound. R.	...	...	...	...$11\frac{3}{4}$ ounces 60.45 grains, avoird.
Mina.* G	...	...	...	...15 ounces 83.75 grains, avoird.
Modius. R. [dry measure]	...	...	...	...$\frac{1}{3}$ of an Amphora, 1 gall. 7.8576
Obolus. G	...	...	...	...$1\frac{1}{2}$ pence. Silver. [pints.
Obolus. G. [weight]	...	...	...	...10.5 grains.
Palmus, or Handbreadth. R	...	...	...	...2.9214 inches.
Passus, or Pace.† R	...	...	...	...5 Roman feet, 4 ft. 10.248 inches.

* In B. xii. c. 32—it is supposed by some that it is the Roman Libra that is meant, under the name of "Mina," as containing eighty-four Denarii. If so, it must be the old Roman Libra, as it is more generally thought that the Libra of Pliny's time contained ninety-six Denarii, of sixty grains, within a fraction.

† One thousand Paces made a Roman "Mille Passuum," or Mile, 1618 yards English.

GREEK AND ROMAN MONEY, WEIGHTS, AND MEASURES.

Pes, or Foot. R	...	...	12 Unciæ, 11.6496 inches.
Pollex, or Thumb. R	...	...	See "Uncia" [lineal measure].
Quadrans. R	...	...	53,125 farthing. Copper.
Quadrans. R [weight]	...	...	3 Unciæ, $2\frac{3}{4}$ ounces 97.21 grs.
Quadrantal. R	...	...	See "Amphora."
Quartarius. R	...	...	$\frac{1}{4}$ of a Sextarius, .2477 pint.
Quinarius. R	...	...	$\frac{1}{2}$ of a Denarius.
Scripulum, or Scruple. R	...	...	$\frac{1}{24}$ of an Uncia, 18.06 grains.
Semisextarius. R	...	...	$\frac{1}{2}$ of a Sextarius.
Sestertius. R	...	...	$\frac{1}{4}$ of a Denarius. Brass or Silver.
Sestertium. R	...	...	1000 Sestertii, £7 16s 3d.
Sextarius. R	...	...	$\frac{1}{6}$ of a Congius, .9911 pint.
Spithama, or Span. G	...	...	9.1008 inches.
Stadium. G and R	...	...	$\frac{1}{8}$ of a Roman mile, 606 feet 9 in.
Teruncius. R	...	...	See "Quadrans" [weight & money].
Ulna, or Ell. R	...	...	6 feet, 81 inch.
Uncia, or Inch. R	...	...	$\frac{1}{12}$ of a Pes, .9708 inch.
Uncia, or Ounce. R	...	...	$\frac{1}{12}$ of a Libra. 433.666 grs.
Urna. R	...	...	$\frac{1}{2}$ of an Amphora.
Victoriatus. R	...	...	See "Quinarius."

The Schoenus, an Egyptian and Persian lineal measure, varied considerably ; being sometimes thirty, and sometimes forty Stadia. See B. v. c. 11, B. vi. c. 30, and B. xii. c. 30.

The Attic Talent, as a weight, was equal to 56lb. $15\frac{1}{4}$ oz. 100.32 grains. The Commercial Talent was 85lb. $2\frac{1}{2}$ oz. 70.7 grs. The Silver Attic, or Great Talent, was in value £343 15s. or, according to Pollux, £406 5s. The Gold, or Sicilian Talent, was equal in weight to six Attic Drachmæ, or about $\frac{3}{4}$ oz. and 71 grs. The Egyptian Talent, as a measure of weight, was equal to about twice the Attic Talent.

2 WEEKS' BOOK

NATURAL HISTORY OF PLINY.

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BOOK XI.

THE VARIOUS KINDS OF INSECTS.

CHAP. 1. (1.)—THE EXTREME SMALLNESS OF INSECTS.

WE shall now proceed to a description of the insects, a subject replete with endless difficulties;¹ for, in fact, there are some authors who have maintained that they do not respire, and that they are destitute of blood. The insects are numerous, and form many species, and their mode of life is like that of the terrestrial animals and the birds. Some of them are furnished with wings, bees for instance; others are divided into those kinds which have wings, and those which are without them, such as ants; while others, again, are destitute of both wings and feet. All these animals have been very properly called "insects,"² from the incisures or divisions which separate the body, sometimes at the neck, and sometimes at the corselet, and so divide it into members or segments, only united to each other by a slender tube. In some insects, however, this division is not complete, as it is surrounded by wrinkled folds; and thus the flexible vertebræ of the creature, whether situate at the abdomen, or whether only at the upper part of the body, are protected by layers, overlapping each other; indeed, in no one of her works has Nature more fully displayed her exhaustless ingenuity.

(2.) In large animals, on the other hand, or, at all events,

¹ "Immensæ subtilitatis." As Cuvier remarks, the ancients have committed more errors in reference to the insects, than to any other portion of the animal world. The discovery of the microscope has served more than anything to correct these erroneous notions.

² "Insecta," "articulated."

in the very largest among them, she found her task easy and her materials ready and pliable; but in these minute creatures, so nearly akin as they are to non-entity, how surpassing the intelligence, how vast the resources, and how ineffable the perfection which she has displayed. Where is it that she has united so many senses as in the gnat?—not to speak of creatures that might be mentioned of still smaller size—Where, I say, has she found room to place in it the organs of sight? Where has she centred the sense of taste? Where has she inserted the power of smell? And where, too, has she implanted that sharp shrill voice of the creature, so utterly disproportioned to the smallness of its body? With what astonishing subtlety has she united the wings to the trunk, elongated the joints of the legs, framed that long, craving concavity for a belly, and then inflamed the animal with an insatiate thirst for blood, that of man more especially! What ingenuity has she displayed in providing it with a sting,³ so well adapted for piercing the skin! And then too, just as though she had had the most extensive field for the exercise of her skill, although the weapon is so minute that it can hardly be seen, she has formed it with a twofold mechanism, providing it with a point for the purpose of piercing, and at the same moment making it hollow, to adapt it for suction.

What teeth, too, has she inserted in the teredo,⁴ to adapt it for piercing oak even with a sound which fully attests their destructive power! while at the same time she has made wood its principal nutriment. We give all our admiration to the shoulders of the elephant as it supports the turret, to the stalwart neck of the bull, and the might with which it hurls aloft whatever comes in its way, to the onslaught of the tiger, or to the mane of the lion; while, at the same time, Nature is nowhere to be seen to greater perfection than in the very smallest of her works. For this reason then, I must beg of my readers, notwithstanding the contempt they feel for many of these objects, not to feel a similar disdain for the information I am about to give relative thereto, seeing that, in the

³ The trunk of the gnat, Cuvier says, contains five silken and pointed threads, which together have the effect of a sting.

⁴ The *Teredo navalis* of Linnæus, not an insect, but one of the mollusks. This is the same creature that is mentioned in B. xvi. c. 80; but that spoken of in B. viii. c. 74, must have been a land insect.

study of Nature, there are none of her works that are unworthy of our consideration.

CHAP. 2. (3.)—WHETHER INSECTS RESPIRE, AND WHETHER THEY HAVE BLOOD.

Many authors deny that insects respire,⁵ and make the assertion upon the ground, that in their viscera there is no respiratory organ to be found. On this ground, they assert that insects have the same kind of life as plants and trees, there being a very great difference between respiring and merely having life. On similar grounds also, they assert that insects have no blood, a thing which cannot exist, they say, in any animal that is destitute of heart and liver; just as, according to them, those creatures cannot breathe which have no lungs. Upon these points, however, a vast number of questions will naturally arise; for the same writers do not hesitate to deny that these creatures are destitute also of voice,⁶ and this, notwithstanding the humming of bees, the chirping of grasshoppers, and the sounds emitted by numerous other insects which will be considered in their respective places. For my part, whenever I have considered the subject, I have ever felt persuaded that there is nothing impossible to Nature, nor do I see why creatures should be less able to live and yet not inhale, than to respire without being possessed of viscera, a doctrine which I have already maintained, when speaking⁷ of the marine animals; and that, notwithstanding the density and the vast depth of the water which would appear to impede all breathing. But what person could very easily believe that there can be any creatures that fly to and fro, and live in the very midst of the element of respiration, while, at the same time, they themselves are devoid of that respiration; that they can be possessed of the requisite instincts for nourishment, generation, working, and making provision even for time to come, in the enjoyment too (although, certainly, they are not possessed of the organs which act, as it were, as the receptacles

⁵ They respire by orifices in the sides of the body, known to naturalists as *stigmata*. The whole body, Cuvier says, forms, in a measure, a system of lungs.

⁶ Cuvier remarks that the various noises made by insects are in reality not the voice, as they are not produced by air passing through a larynx.

⁷ B. ix. c. 6.

of those senses) of the powers of hearing, smelling, and tasting, as well as those other precious gifts of Nature, address, courage, and skilfulness? That these creatures have no blood⁸ I am ready to admit, just as all the terrestrial animals are not possessed of it; but then, they have something similar, by way of equivalent. Just as in the sea, the *sæpia*⁹ has a black liquid in place of blood, and the various kinds of purples, those juices which we use for the purposes of dyeing; so, too, is every insect possessed of its own vital humour, which, whatever it is, is blood to it. While I leave it to others to form what opinion they please on this subject, it is my purpose to set forth the operations of Nature in the clearest possible light, and not to enter upon the discussion of points that are replete with doubt.

CHAP. 3. (4.)—THE BODIES OF INSECTS.

Insects, so far as I find myself able to ascertain, seem to have neither sinews,¹⁰ bones, spines, cartilages, fat, nor flesh; nor yet so much as a frail shell, like some of the marine animals, nor even anything that can with any propriety be termed skin; but they have a body which is of a kind of intermediate nature between all these, of an arid substance, softer than muscle, and in other respects of a nature that may, in strictness, be rather pronounced yielding,¹¹ than hard. Such, then, is all that they are, and nothing more:¹² in the inside of their bodies there is nothing, except in some few, which have an intestine arranged in folds. Hence it is, that even when cut asunder, they are remarkable for their tenacity of life, and the palpitations which are to be seen in each of their parts. For every portion of them is possessed of its own vital principle, which is centred in no limb in particular, but

⁸ Cuvier remarks, that they have a nourishing fluid, which is of a white colour, and acts in place of blood.

⁹ The dye of *sæpia*, Cuvier remarks, is not blood, nor does it act as such, being an excrementitious liquid. It has in addition a bluish, transparent, blood. The same also with the juices of the purple.

¹⁰ "Nervos." Cuvier says that all insects have a brain, a sort of spinal marrow, and nerves.

¹¹ "Tutius."

¹² Insects have no fat, Cuvier says, except when in the chrysalis state; but they have a fibrous flesh of a whitish colour. They have also viscera, trachea, nerves, and a most complicated organization.

in every part of the body; least of all, however, in the head, which alone is subject to no movements unless torn off together with the corselet. No kind of animal has more feet than the insects have, and those among them which have the most, live the longest when cut asunder, as we see in the case of the scolopendra. They have eyes, and the senses as well of touch and taste; some of them have also the sense of smelling, and some few that of hearing.

CHAP. 4. (5.)—BEES.

But among them all, the first rank, and our especial admiration, ought, in justice, to be accorded to bees, which alone, of all the insects, have been created for the benefit of man. They extract honey and collect it, a juicy substance remarkable for its extreme sweetness, lightness, and wholesomeness. They form their combs and collect wax, an article that is useful for a thousand purposes of life; they are patient of fatigue, toil at their labours, form themselves into political communities, hold councils together in private, elect chiefs in common, and, a thing that is the most remarkable of all, have their own code of morals. In addition to this, being as they are, neither tame nor wild, so all-powerful is Nature, that, from a creature so minute as to be nothing more hardly than the shadow of an animal, she has created a marvel beyond all comparison. What muscular power, what exertion of strength are we to put in comparison with such vast energy and such industry as theirs? What display of human genius, in a word, shall we compare with the reasoning powers manifested by them?—In this they have, at all events, the advantage of us—they know of nothing but what is for the common benefit of all. Away, then, with all questions whether they respire or no, and let us be ready to agree on the question of their blood; and yet, how little of it can possibly exist in bodies so minute as theirs.—And now let us form some idea of the instinct they display.

CHAP. 5. (6.)—THE ORDER DISPLAYED IN THE WORKS OF BEES.

Bees keep within the hive during the winter—for whence are they to derive the strength requisite to withstand frosts and snows, and the northern blasts? The same, in fact, is done by all insects, but not to so late a period; as those

which conceal themselves in the walls of our houses, are much sooner sensible of the returning warmth. With reference to bees, either seasons and climates have considerably changed, or else former writers have been greatly mistaken. They retire for the winter at the setting of the Vergiliæ, and remain shut up till after the rising of that constellation, and not till only the beginning of spring, as some authors have stated; nor, indeed, does any one in Italy ever think of then opening the hives. They do not come forth to ply their labours until the bean blossoms; and then not a day do they lose in inactivity, while the weather is favourable for their pursuits.

First of all, they set about constructing their combs, and forming the wax, or, in other words, making their dwellings and cells; after this they produce their young, and then make honey and wax from flowers, and extract bee-glue¹² from the tears of those trees which distil glutinous substances, the juices, gums, and resins, namely, of the willow, the elm, and the reed. With these substances, as well as others of a more bitter nature, they first line the whole inside of the hive, as a sort of protection against the greedy propensities of other small insects, as they are well aware that they are about to form that which will prove an object of attraction to them. Having done this, they employ similar substances in narrowing the entrance to the hive, if otherwise too wide.

CHAP. 6. (5.)—THE MEANING OF THE TERMS COMMOSIS, PISSOCEROS, AND PROPOLIS.

The persons who understand this subject, call the substance which forms the first foundation of their combs, *commosis*,¹³ the next, *pissoceros*,¹⁴ and the third *propolis*;¹⁵ which last is placed between the other layers and the wax, and is remarkable for its utility in medicine.¹⁶ The *commosis* forms the first crust or layer, and has a bitter taste; and upon it is laid the *pissoceros*, a kind of thin wax, which acts as a sort of varnish. The *propolis* is produced from the sweet gum of the vine or

¹² "Melligo." For further information on this subject consult Bevan on the Honey Bee.

¹³ Or "conusis," "gummy matter."

¹⁴ Pitch-wax.

¹⁵ A kind of bee-glue; the origin of the name does not seem to be known. Reaumur says that they are all different varieties of bee-glue.

¹⁶ See B. xxii. c. 50.

the poplar, and is of a denser consistency, the juices of flowers being added to it. Still, however, it cannot be properly termed wax, but rather the foundation of the honey-combs; by means of it all inlets are stopped up, which might, otherwise, serve for the admission of cold or other injurious influences; it has also a strong odour, so much so, indeed, that many people use it instead of galbanum.

CHAP. 7.—THE MEANING OF ERITHACE, SANDARACA, OR CERINTHOS.

In addition to this, the bees form collections of *erithace* or bee-bread, which some persons call “sandaraca,”¹⁷ and others “cerinthos.” This is to serve as the food of the bees while they are at work, and is often found stowed away in the cavities of the cells, being of a bitter flavour also. It is produced from the spring dews and the gummy juices of trees, being less abundant while the south-west wind is blowing, and blackened by the prevalence of a south wind. On the other hand, again, it is of a reddish colour and becomes improved by the north-east wind; it is found in the greatest abundance upon the nut trees in Greece. Menecrates says, that it is a flower, which gives indications of the nature of the coming harvest; but no one says so, with the exception of him.

CHAP. 8. (8.) — WHAT FLOWERS ARE USED BY THE BEES IN THEIR WORK.

Bees form wax¹⁸ from the blossoms of all trees and plants, with the sole exception of the *rumex*¹⁹ and the *echinopodes*,²⁰ both being kinds of herbs. It is by mistake, however, that *spartum* is excepted;²¹ for many varieties of honey that come from Spain, and have been made in the plantations of it, have a strong taste of that plant. I am of opinion, also, that it is without any sufficient reason that the olive has been excepted, seeing that it is a well-known fact, that where olives are in the greatest abundance, the swarms of bees are the most numerous. Bees are not injurious to fruit of any kind; they will

¹⁷ Different combinations of the pollen of flowers, on which bees feed.

¹⁸ It is formed from the honey that the bee has digested.

¹⁹ Sorrel, or monk's rhubarb.

²⁰ A kind of broom.

²¹ Spanish broom, the *Stipa tenacissima* of Linnæus. Ropes were made of it. See B. xix. c. 7.

never settle on a dead flower, much less a dead carcase. They pursue their labours within three-score paces of their hives; and when the flowers in their vicinity are exhausted, they send out scouts from time to time, to discover places for forage at a greater distance. When overtaken by night in their expeditions, they watch till the morning, lying on their backs, in order to protect their wings from the action of the dew.

CHAP. 9. (9.)—PERSONS WHO HAVE MADE BEES THEIR STUDY.

It is not surprising that there have been persons who have made bees their exclusive study; Aristomachus of Soli, for instance, who for a period of fifty-eight years did nothing else; Philiscus of Thasos, also, surnamed Agrius,²² who passed his life in desert spots, tending swarms of bees. Both of these have written works on this subject.

CHAP. 10. (10.)—THE MODE IN WHICH BEES WORK.

The manner in which bees carry on their work is as follows. In the day time a guard is stationed at the entrance of the hive, like the sentries in a camp. At night they take their rest until the morning, when one of them awakes the rest with a humming noise, repeated twice or thrice, just as though it were sounding a trumpet. They then take their flight in a body, if the day is likely to turn out fine; for they have the gift of foreknowing wind and rain, and in such case will keep close within their dwellings. On the other hand, when the weather is fine—and this, too, they have the power of foreknowing—the swarm issues forth, and at once applies itself to its work, some loading their legs from the flowers, while others fill their mouths with water, and charge the downy surface of their bodies with drops of liquid. Those among them that are young²³ go forth to their labours, and collect the materials already mentioned, while those that are more aged stay within the hives and work. The bees whose business it is to carry the flowers, with their fore feet load their thighs, which Nature has made rough for the purpose, and with their trunks load

²² Or, the "wild man."

²³ Huber has discovered that there are two kinds of bees of neutral sex, or, as he calls them, unprolific females, the workers, which go out, and the nurses, which are smaller, and stay in the hive to tend the larvæ.

their fore feet: bending beneath their load, they then return to the hive, where there are three or four bees ready to receive them and aid in discharging their burdens. For, within the hive as well, they have their allotted duties to perform: some are engaged in building, others in smoothing, the combs, while others again are occupied in passing on the materials, and others in preparing food²⁴ from the provision which has been brought; that there may be no unequal division, either in their labour, their food, or the distribution of their time, they do not even feed separately.

Commencing at the vaulted roof of the hive, they begin the construction of their cells, and, just as we do in the manufacture of a web, they construct their cells from top to bottom, taking care to leave two passages around each compartment, for the entrance of some and the exit of others. The combs, which are fastened to the hive in the upper part, and in a slight degree also at the sides, adhere to each other, and are thus suspended altogether. They do not touch the floor of the hive, and are either angular or round, according to its shape; sometimes, in fact, they are both angular and round at once, when two swarms are living in unison, but have dissimilar modes of operation. They prop up the combs that are likely to fall, by means of arched pillars, at intervals springing from the floor, so as to leave them a passage for the purpose of effecting repairs. The first three ranks of their cells are generally left empty when constructed, that there may be nothing exposed to view which may invite theft; and it is the last ones, more especially, that are filled with honey: hence it is that the combs are always taken out at the back of the hive.

The bees that are employed in carrying look out for a favourable breeze, and if a gale should happen to spring up, they poise themselves in the air with little stones, by way of ballast; some writers, indeed, say that they place them upon their shoulders. When the wind is contrary, they fly close to the ground, taking care, however, to keep clear of the brambles. It is wonderful what strict watch is kept upon their work: all instances of idleness are carefully remarked, the offenders are

²⁴ From the honey found in the corollæ of flowers. This, after being prepared in the first stomach of the bee, is deposited in the cell which is formed for its reception.

chastised, and on a repetition of the fault, punished with death. Their sense of cleanliness, too, is quite extraordinary; everything is removed that might be in the way, and no filth is allowed to remain in the midst of their work. The ordure even of those that are at work within, that they may not have to retire to any distance, is all collected in one spot, and on stormy days, when they are obliged to cease their ordinary labours, they employ themselves in carrying it out. When it grows towards evening, the buzzing in the hive becomes gradually less and less, until at last one of their number is to be seen flying about the hive with the same loud humming noise with which they were aroused in the morning, thereby giving the signal, as it were, to retire to rest: in this, too, they imitate the usage of the camp. The moment the signal is heard, all is silent.

(11.) They first construct the dwellings of the commonalty, and then those of the king-bee. If they have reason to expect an abundant²⁵ season, they add abodes also for the drones: these are cells of a smaller size, though the drones themselves are larger than the bees.

CHAP. 11.—DRONES.

The drones have no sting,²⁶ and would seem to be a kind of imperfect bee, formed the very last of all; the expiring effort, as it were, of worn-out and exhausted old age, a late and tardy offspring, and doomed, in a measure, to be the slaves of the genuine bees. Hence it is that the bees exercise over them a rigorous authority, compel them to take the foremost rank in their labours, and if they show any sluggishness, punish them²⁷ without mercy. And not only in their labours do the drones give them their assistance, but in the propagation of their species as well, the very multitude of them contributing greatly to the warmth of the hive. At all events, it is a well-known fact, that the greater²⁸ the multitude of the drones, the more

²⁵ Cuvier says that the three kinds of cells are absolutely necessary, and that they do not depend on the greater or less abundance. The *king* of the ancients is what we know as the *queen* bee, which is impregnated by the drones or males.

²⁶ This is the fact, but not so their *imperfect* state.

²⁷ They do not work, but merely impregnate the queen; after which they are driven from the hive, and perish of cold and starvation.

²⁸ It appears, as Cuvier says, that the ancients had *some* notion that the swarm was multiplied by the aid of the drones.

numerous is sure to be the progeny of the swarm. When the honey is beginning to come to maturity, the bees drive away the drones, and setting upon each in great numbers, put them all to death. It is only in the spring that the drones are ever to be seen. If you deprive a drone of its wings, and then replace it in the hive, it will pull off the wings of the other drones.

CHAP. 12.—THE QUALITIES OF HONEY.

In the lower part of the hive they construct for their future sovereign a palatial abode,²⁹ spacious and grand, separated from the rest, and surmounted by a sort of dome: if this prominence should happen to be flattened, all hopes of progeny are lost. All the cells are hexagonal, each foot³⁰ having formed its own side. No part of this work, however, is done at any stated time, as the bees seize every opportunity for the performance of their task when the days are fine; in one or two days, at most, they fill their cells with honey.

(12.) This substance is engendered from the air,³¹ mostly at the rising of the constellations, and more especially when Sirius is shining; never, however, before the rising of the Vergiliæ, and then just before day-break. Hence it is, that at early dawn the leaves of the trees are found covered with a kind of honey-like dew, and those who go into the open air at an early hour in the morning, find their clothes covered, and their hair matted, with a sort of unctuous liquid. Whether it is that this liquid is the sweat of the heavens, or whether a saliva emanating from the stars, or a juice exuding from the air while purifying itself, would that it had been, when it comes to us, pure, limpid, and genuine, as it was, when first it took its downward descent. But as it is, falling from so vast a height, attracting corruption in its passage, and tainted by the exhalations of the earth as it meets them, sucked, too; as it is from off the trees and the herbage of the fields, and accumulated in the stomachs of the bees—for they cast it up

²⁹ Cuvier says that the cell for the future queen is different from the others, and much larger. The bees also supply the queen larva much more abundantly with food, and of more delicate quality.

³⁰ Cuvier says that this coincidence with the number of the legs is quite accidental, as it is with the mouth that the animal constructs the cell.

³¹ The basis of it is really derived from the calix or corolla of flowers.

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