

CHAPTER XI.

THE AILANTHUS SILK-WORM.

Within the past year several notices have appeared in periodicals abroad and at home, relating to the successful introduction into France and Algeria, of a species of silk-worm *new* to Europe, but which has long been nurtured in China for its silk, and fed on the leaves of the Ailanthus tree.

Although this is not within the range of my duties, yet I have felt bound to give it some attention, because I am strongly impressed with the opinion that this insect is destined to prove an important source of agricultural wealth in our State.

It is not to be assimilated with the mulberry silk worm, a *delicate animal*, requiring to be kept and fed with *gathered* leaves in houses and subject to diseases from which great losses fall upon the owners. Besides the cost of buildings and the great amount of labor required must prevent the mulberry worm, or *Bombyx mori*, from being profitably raised with us. Such was my opinion during the *morus multicaulis* excitement twenty-four years ago. I was at that time a farmer, but would have nothing to do with it, and advised parties I met with to avoid it as an impracticable scheme, for the reasons given above.

The Ailanthus silk-worm, or *Bombyx Cynthia*, differs from the *B. Mori* in being very hardy and rustic, and is *raised in the open air*. For this purpose the Ailanthus is planted in rows two meters apart, (about six and a half feet,) and half that distance in the row. They are cut down close to the ground annually, so as to form a hedge of succulent stems and leaves, and the spaces are kept clean with the plow or cultivator.

After hatching, the young worms are placed on small wooden trays, (into which a few leaves are placed,) which are suspended upon the hedges. The worms crawl upon the hedges, and thereafter take care of themselves and spin and attach their cocoons to the twigs, making two crops a season, which are as easily gathered as cotton from its bolls.

My attention was first seriously attracted to the Ailanthus silk-worm by a paper read at the Academy of Science in Philadelphia, last winter, by the learned Secretary, Dr. Stewardson, who exhibited a case containing the following named specimens:

1. The worm and the butterfly of the *Bombyx Cynthia* and also of the *B. Arrindia*.
2. Cocoons of the same.