

Notes by the Rev. Dr. Morris.

THE AILANTHUS SILK-WORM OF CHINA.

(BOMBYX CYNTHIA.)

HISTORY OF THE INSECT.

It is well known that for ages past the Chinese have employed a coarser species of silk than that furnished by the Mulberry worm for the clothing of the poorer class of people and for other fabrics, and that it is of so durable a character that the same garments manufactured of it are often worn by the second generation.

This worm has been recently introduced into France, where it has excited an extraordinary interest among the higher classes of society, and even secured the favorable attention of the Emperor himself. It is considered by competent judges to be a new source of wealth to the manufacturing industry of the country and of economy to the people. More than three hundred persons, most of whom are members of the Imperial Society of Acclimation, and numbers of others, are now successfully engaged in rearing the worm. The Emperor himself has granted the use of some parts of his several farms for the cultivation of the Ailanthus, on which this insect feeds. The experiments of acclimation have every where succeeded, and the produce of silk has been abundant and of a very excellent quality. The cultivators are greatly encouraged to prosecute the work on a still larger scale, and it will not be long before thousands of persons in France and Algeria will be engaged in this profitable and useful business.

It was only toward the middle of the 18th century, that is, about 120 years ago, that we find the subject of this silk-worm first mentioned in the writings of missionaries. Father d'Incarville seems to be the first who mentioned it in a memoir on wild silk-worms, written about the year 1770, in answer to questions which the French Government and several learned men had addressed to him.

In 1760 or 1765 d'Ailbentore the younger, in a work entitled *Planches d'histoire nat. elumines*, vol. x., pl. 42, Ins., gave a tolerably correct figure of this Bombyx, which he called *Le Croissant*, from the transparent arcerated lunules in the form of a cross on the wings.

But it was only in 1773 that it was designated by the scientific name of *Bombyx Cynthia*, which should be retained, and which was first given to it by Drury, in *Illustrations of Natural History*, vol. ii., p. 10, pl. vi., fig. 2.