

Appendix IV.

SERICULTURE.

There are two breeds of silk-worms known in Eastern Turkestan, one producing a white and the other a yellow silk: these appear to me to be the *Bombyx Mori* (Lin) and *Bombyx Testor* (Hutton), which are referred to in the Appendix of Mr. Geogheghan's report on sericulture in Bengal.

There is but one mulberry tree which grows to a considerable height and from which the leaves are gathered three times: this is, so far as I could ascertain, the *Morus Serratta* of Dr. Roxborough. The tree apparently receives but little attention; it is grown along the side of the road and in small private holdings: it is pruned largely, however, and cuttings are made from it in the early spring before the leaves push. These trees produce leaves for several years as food for the silk-worms.

The worms are annuals. The eggs are hatched between the 15th April and the 1st May: previous to hatching they are carried upon the persons of men and women, in the kummurbund of the men, or in the arms-pits of the women, being hatched between the 5th and 7th day by means of the heat thus afforded.

The culture of the worms, silk-reeling, weaving, and dyeing, are all carried on in the house. Whilst the worms are being tended, they are usually confided to one of the elder women of the family, and are kept apart in a room set aside for the purpose, only one individual being allowed to visit them. A pregnant woman or a girl in her courses is on no account allowed to approach them, and during the time that the eggs are being carried about the person previous to hatching, husband and wife keep apart.

The greatest cleanliness is demanded from the different members of the family during the period of education; tobacco, snuff, onions, and garlic are strictly prohibited.

During the first 10 days of feeding, the leaves are chopped into small pieces when given as food; on the 10th day the first stupor comes on, and they leave off eating for 3 days; after this period the leaves are given whole, and the worms eat for another 10 days, when their second stupor occurs. It is after the 3rd period and near the 40th day that they begin spinning. During no period of their existence is any stint placed upon their feeding, but the leaves are not too frequently renewed.

Reeling is usually carried out during the month of July: the process is exceedingly primitive, and there is great want of uniformity in the thread, owing to no attempt being made at selection in bringing the cocoons together, or in regulating the number of threads brought at one time to the reel. The work is usually done by women and children, either in the house or in the court-yard, which is a part of the humblest residences in the country.

The cocoons are placed in a large iron vessel which is filled with water: this rests on a tripod, and a fire is placed underneath it; when the temperature of the water is such as barely to allow of the fingers being dipped in it, the silk from a number of cocoons, floating on the surface of the water, is drawn together through a small iron eye which is placed immediately in front of the reel, from which the silk runs to a roller upon which it is wound by means of a fly-wheel.

The whole apparatus for reeling is of rough construction.

Previous to reeling, a prayer is offered up to the prophet Job, the patron Saint of all silk-worms, which are supposed to have had their origin in his suffering body.

I have elsewhere alluded to the introduction of silk-worms and mulberry trees having been originally made from China.

The management of the worms, &c., seems to be very similar to that adopted in China.