

25. Of Cochenille.

THE *Cochenille*, call'd *Meslich*, is the Seed of a Plant about two or three *Pomet.* Feet high, adorn'd with Leaves two Fingers thick, of a beautiful Green, and very prickly; among which grow Husks in form of a Heart, of a green, tending to a yellow Colour, in which are enclosed a Quantity of small Seeds of the size of a great Pin's-head, in shape sometimes flat, sometimes triangular, but always rough, of a greyish silver Colour to the Eye, and as red as Blood within. The Plant which bears them is call'd *Opuntium*.

We bring this Seed from *Peru* and other Places of *New-Spain*, as the Gulf of *Mexico*, from whence it is brought by the *Spanish Gallies*, or Plate-Fleet to *Cadix*; as *Ipecacuana*, the *Cortex*, *Sarsa Parilla*, and other Drugs are; and from thence transported to *England*, *Holland*, or *France*.

The *Meslich Cochenille* is a Thing of that prodigious Consequence to the *Spaniards*, that they would undergo any Punishment, rather than yield that it should be propagated in *France*.

There are very few Persons but what believe that this *Cochenille* is a little Animal or Insect; and I was of the same Opinion, 'till convinced of the Truth of the contrary, by two Letters of the *Sieur Francis Ronfseaux*, a Native of *Auxerre*, dwelling at *Leoganna*, near *St. Domingo*, who writes to me thus:

“ The *Cochenille*, Monsieur, which you are desirous to know by the Plant, grows about two or three Foot high, furnish'd with Leaves of two Fingers Thickness, of a fine green Colour, full of Thorns on all Sides; the Seed is small, and contain'd in Husks form'd like Hearts, turning to a Yellow when they grow ripe. What is brought to *Spain*, comes from all those Parts call'd the *Salt-Sea*, for the little we have about *Leoganna*, is not worth speaking of.”