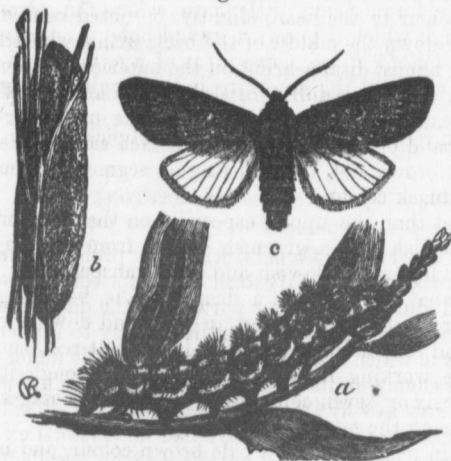


9. THE SMEARED DAGGER (*Acronycta obliquata*, Sm. and Abb.).

Fig. 13.



The accompanying figure illustrates this insect in its various stages. The larva is a brightly ornamented, hairy caterpillar, about one and a quarter inches long. Its head is flat in front, rather below medium size, with a few yellow hairs; its jaws are black.

The body above is of a deep velvety black, with a transverse row of prominences or tubercles on each segment, those above are bright red, and set in a band of the same colour, extending far down on each side. From each tubercle there arises a tuft of short stiff hairs, those on the upper part of the body being of a red colour, while below they become yellowish or mixed with yellow. On each side of a line drawn down the centre of the back, is a row of bright yellow spots, two or more on each segment, and below these and close to the under surface, is a bright yellow band deeply indented on each

segment, the indentations being on a line with the rows of tubercles. The spiracles or breathing holes are pure white, and are placed in the indented portions of the yellow band; there are also a few whitish dots scattered irregularly over the surface of the body.

The under side is dull reddish along the middle, and brownish black along the sides; the feet are of a shining black, and slightly hairy, while the thick fleshy hinder legs, called the prolegs, are reddish tipped with brown, with a cluster of short hairs on the outside of each.

This caterpillar is conspicuous from its beauty, and at first one can scarcely believe that such a handsome caterpillar could produce so plain and quiet looking a moth. Since this larva does not usually feed in company, but is scattered about singly, and as it is such a general feeder, there is no probability of its ever becoming very injurious, but its brilliant appearance is sure to attract the attention of every beholder. We have found it feeding very commonly on strawberry, also on raspberry, and occasionally on the Lombardy poplar. Mr. Riley has found it very common on smartweed, and a correspondent of his in Jefferson City, Mo., has found them very numerous on his peach trees, and has known them to denude both apple and willow trees.

As soon as this larva is full grown it draws together a few leaves or other loose material and constructs a rude case, within which it changes to a dark brown chrysalis. In this enclosure it remains a considerable time; those that we have bred have changed to chrysalis early in September, and did not produce the moths till June following. Mr. Riley says that in Missouri there are two broods each year, and it is possible they may be double-brooded with us also, in which case the summer brood must pass through the various stages of its existence in a much shorter time.

The moth, Fig. 13, c., is shown of the natural size. Its fore wings are grey, with a row of blackish dots along the hind border. There is a broken, blackish, zigzag line—sometimes indistinct—crossing the wing beyond the middle, and some darker greyish spots about the middle of the wings. The hind wings are nearly pure white.

In Mr. Riley's third "Report on the Insects of Missouri," he says, "there are at least three natural enemies which serve to keep this insect in check. The largest of these is the Uni-banded Ichneumon fly (*Ichneumon unifasciatus*, Say) a large black fly, 0.60 inch long, and characterized by a white annulus about the middle of the antennæ, a large white spot about the middle of the thorax, and a white band on the first joint of the abdomen."

"This fly oviposits in the larva of the Smeared Dagger, but the latter never suc-