

**REPORT TO THE
DEPARTMENT OF
STATE ON SILK AND
SILK MANUFACTURERS**

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Report to the Department of State on Silk and Silk Manufacturers by Elliot C. Cowdin

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ELLIOT C. COWDIN

**REPORT TO THE
DEPARTMENT OF
STATE ON SILK AND
SILK MANUFACTURERS**

MESSAGE

FROM

THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES,

IN ANSWER TO

A resolution of the House of 18th ultimo, transmitting report of Elliot C. Cowdin, Esq., commissioner to the Paris Exposition of 1867, on silk and silk manufactures.

MARCH 25, 1868.—Read, referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs, and ordered to be printed.

To the House of Representatives of the United States:

In answer to a resolution of the House of Representatives of the 18th ultimo, relating to the report of Mr. Cowdin, I transmit a report of the Secretary of State, and the document to which it refers.

ANDREW JOHNSON.

WASHINGTON, March 25, 1868.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE,

Washington, March 25, 1868.

The Secretary of State, to whom was referred the resolution of the House of Representatives of the 18th ultimo, requesting the transmission to that house of the report of Elliot C. Cowdin, Esq., commissioner to the Paris Exposition of 1867, on silk and silk manufactures, has the honor to lay before the President the report thus called for.

Respectfully submitted:

WILLIAM H. SEWARD.

THE PRESIDENT.

UNIVERSAL EXPOSITION, PARIS, 1867.

REPORT

TO THE

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

OR

SILK AND SILK MANUFACTURES.



ELLIOT C. COWDIN,
" "
UNITED STATES COMMISSIONER.

WASHINGTON, D. C.

1868.

REPORT.



SIR:—

The undersigned, Commissioner of the United States, and Member of the "Committee on raw materials and manufactures of great use, or displaying remarkable skill or merit," to whom has been specially assigned the subject of *silk and silk manufactures*, respectfully submits the following

REPORT.

Silk, by its characteristic qualities and unchangeableness, as well as by the richness and beauty of its appearance, is, in relation to textile substances, what gold is to metals.

It is, of all filamentary substances, that which gives the finest, most durable, and most elastic threads. Its tenacity is about equal to that of good iron; that is to say, a thread of silk of the same size will support nearly the same weight before breaking, and the textile matter affords

an elasticity superior to that of the mineral substance.

Silk consequently unites the most brilliant properties with the most solid qualities.

Its various excellent and advantageous characteristics have made it an object of research in all ages, by the different nations of the world.

China, even in our own day, the most important country for the production of silk, appears to have been its cradle, at the most remote epoch. The Chinese annals attribute to the Emperor *Fau-Hi* the merit of having employed silk in the manufacture of a musical instrument, of his own invention, 3400 years before the Christian era.

The Empress *Si-ling-Chi* was the first to invent silk tissues 2650 years before our era, which invention contributed so immensely to the prosperity of her country, that she was placed among the Chinese divinities, under the name of *Sien-Thsan*;* and even now the Chinese Empresses offer annually solemn sacrifices to her memory.

As it is the habit of the Emperor of China, once a year, to plough the earth, in order to add dignity and honor to agricultural pursuits, so, in

* This name means the first promoter of silk industry.

like manner, the Empress, by annually visiting the silk-worm nurseries and laboring with her own hands, encourages the production of this valuable commodity.

Two centuries before the Christian era, the Chinese carried on a commerce of silk with Persia, Greece, and Italy. Their caravans, or troops of dealers, were protected by military settlements or colonies.

The generic name given to this precious material has remained unchanged, except with a slight modification of the word. In fact, the French word *soie* or *silk* bears among them the name *sec*. The Mongols name it *sirke*. The Mantchoos, *sirche*. The Russians designate it by the word *chek*, and the Greeks by *sez*, etc.

Notwithstanding the antiquity of the use of silk, its nature was for a long time unknown, and its importation into the West was of recent date compared to its high antiquity in Asia.

The history of the introduction of the first eggs of the silk-worm into Constantinople during the reign of the Emperor Justinian, is well known.

The Chinese, determined to retain the monopoly of the silk industry, forbade the exportation of the eggs under penalty of death.

They were, nevertheless, obtained, A. D. 552, by two Persian monks, who had lived a long time in China, as missionaries, and were acquainted with the rearing of silk-worms; stimulated by the gifts and promises of the Emperor Justinian, they succeeded in conveying a large number of eggs concealed in hollow canes, to Constantinople, where they watched their hatching and the development of the butterflies.

The breeding of silk-worms spread, however, very slowly in Europe. The Moors imported them into Cordova about the year 910. Greece and Italy undertook it in the 12th century. From thence, this branch of industry passed to Marseilles. At the commencement of the 14th century, Pope Clement V. introduced it into Avignon. Under Henry IV., Sully established a silk-worm nursery in the *Garden of the Tuileries*. Louis XIV. continued to encourage this enterprise in France, though with but slight success, so far as relates to the production of cocoons and the spinning of silk.

The weaving of silk goods with foreign thread had, on the contrary, already made marked progress in France, and had a great development, which it preserved even up to the revocation of

the Edict of Nantes, after which period the weaving, as well as the spinning of silk, lost ground considerably.

The emigrants carried this beautiful industry into England, Germany, and Switzerland, and raised the most active competition against France, whose manufactures of silk remained in a languishing condition up to the close of the great revolution at the end of the last century, and until shortly before the return of peace to Europe.

RISE AND PROGRESS OF SILK INDUSTRY IN THE
UNITED STATES.

America was not insensible to the efforts made by other nations to appropriate to themselves the production of silk.

During the early periods of the colonization of Virginia, James I., on several occasions, advised with and encouraged the London company, in regard to the cultivation of the mulberry-tree, and addressed a letter to the company, in which he enjoined its members and exhorted the planters to apply themselves with diligence to the breeding of silk-worms, to establish silk-worm-nurseries and spinning-grounds, and to devote their activity