

THE MAILMAN.

EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR.

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THE SILK QUESTION.

WHAT is all this about silk, says one—Skinner, what do you know about silk, says another—is all a wild speculation, says a third—a mere humbug, says a fourth!

It seems then that a few, with more than common forecast, perceiving that the morus multicaulis tree, would supply the only desideratum which had been wanting to make the culture of silk a profitable branch of industry in the United States; set themselves quietly to work, to meet the demand which it was obvious must result from this extraordinary tree, when its remarkable properties should become to be made known; and these gentlemen, more far-sighted than their neighbours, when the trees were ready for market, did realize almost incredible profits—larger than have ever been reaped from any investment except in a lottery ticket drawing a grand capital prize.

There are two cases in which it is not only convenient but agreeable to jump at once from premises to conclusion—the one when we have not at hand the means of comparison, argument and regular deduction—the other when laziness or self-conceit forbids the trouble of inquiry.

So eager, in fact, is mankind, in the pursuit of all-labour saving contrivances, that we would fain avoid the trouble even of thought and reflection—hence, by a 'machinery' in a science that shall here be nameless, a few men think for the mass of society.

Have we not experienced greater difficulties at the commencement of the introduction to our country of many other arts and manufactures, far more complicated, and demanding ten times the capital that this does. Look at our great iron foundries and glass manufactories. How much more forbidding and impracticable must have appeared, at first view, the project for the introduction of these vast establishments—requiring immense outlay, and the importation of foreign artists, with all their accumulated treasures of experience and of science!

It must be admitted that silk making has heretofore been confined almost exclusively to a small portion of New England. In Mansfield and the contiguous towns, silk has been one of the staples—making a 'fair business' for fifty or sixty years, under all vicissitudes in the affairs and condition of our country, and with the old tree, which requires six years before it is ready to be used. If then, under all these advantages, the New England cultivator could make a living, what may not be done with the new tree?—For experience as we are informed beyond question has shown, that the labour of gathering any given weight of leaves from this old Italian or white mulberry tree, is six fold greater than is required to gather the same weight of leaves from the morus

multicaulis—the Italian moreover requiring six years growth before it is ready for defoliation, whereas the morus multicaulis gives a merchantable article in less time from the planting than does the Indian corn.

Mr. Olmstead, of East Hartford, Connecticut, exhibited specimens at the convention in Baltimore, of sewing silk, raised on his land by Mr. Danforth the last season, from trees planted from the 15th to the 20th of May.

Nothing can be more true than that, if all were to continue growing trees, and none go to making silk, the mulberry tree speculation must soon blow up—and ought to blow up—but does it not occur to those who entertain doubts on this subject, if that may properly be called doubt, where there has been no inquiry—where no thought has been bestowed—does it not, we say, occur, that out of the large investments already made in trees, and the benefit to the thousands who are interested in keeping up their value, there must spring up an adequate motive, and an impulse strong enough to insure extensive establishments for feeding worms and producing silk? and this brings us to the main question after all, to wit: what has been done, and what is about being done towards making this famous, so much talked of, high-priced, polypus-like morus multicaulis tree available? Here lies the marrow of the whole question.

On this depends the value of the tree and the claim which this new branch of national industry has to public attention and patronage—or to be called a humbug. Now, we answer at once to the point, that it has already, in numerous instances, been demonstrated by as shrewd and clear-headed, and sober-sided men as any in all Yankee land, that, after leaving the trees at present prices out of view, the production of silk, as a business of itself, constitutes the most profitable use, by far, that can be made, of land, labour, and capital combined.

But we have said, that the work is already begun—that silk culture is a thing in esse and rapidly progressing. With opportunities of observation as yet but limited, since the commencement of our editorial duties, it is already known to us that in the way of cocooneries for breeding silk worms, Mr. Cheney, of Burlington, in the autumn of 1837, built, and has in full operation a cocoonery, one hundred feet long, two stories high, thirty feet wide, and nine feet between joists, with a gutter under the whole, in which he can feed a million of worms at one time successfully.

Mr. Physick, a worthy son of the American luminary in the sciences of medicine and surgery, has built, near Germantown, a cocoonery of two hundred and fifty feet long, thirty feet wide, and two stories high, with a cellar under the whole.

The Silk Company of Baltimore, have purchased a water power and building for a large silk manufactory.

A friend in the District of Columbia, who was in great part educated in France—is a man of much observation and travel, and not likely to be humbugged—after minute inquiry and the most mature reflection, has entered largely into the business of rearing silk—and he writes as follows:

February 2, 1839.

I have received your letter covering the prospectus of the Journal of the American Silk Society and Rural Economist. The name is happily chosen, and I trust that the paper will be highly useful and be looked up to as the best authority on the very interesting subject of which it is destined to treat. Be assured that I will do all I can to promote the growth of mulberries and the production of silk, by other means as well as by planting and spinning.

At Fredricksburg, Mr. Smith has built a cocoonery, of one hundred and fifty feet long, by twenty-five wide, and two stories high, about large enough to feed a million of worms—this for a beginning. I shall not have leaves for more worms next year, but the year after, deo volente, I will do ten times as much. As to silk worms' eggs—the price here is too high. I have sent to France for my supply, and shall have I think some to spare, at rather less than \$40 an ounce, the price charged by the vendors of this country.

At the old Armory, in Virginia, a large establishment is being built by Mr. Pleasant and Mr. Randolph, and Mr. Pollock proposes, as will be seen in this number, to build a manufactory that shall call for one hundred thousand dollars worth of silk in a year. The New Castle county (Del.) Silk Company, is building a cocoonery to feed one and a half millions of worms this year, and five millions the next, besides several other less, but yet considerable cocooneries in the same state.

Mr. Danforth, whose communication we shall publish, made under specified and undeniable disadvantages, at the rate of seventy-two pounds of silk to the acre, and is confident that under circumstances within the control of the cultivator, it would have been easy to make a hundred and twenty-five pounds to the acre; which even at six dollars the pound would be seven hundred and fifty dollars—now suppose we take half of that, and what other use of land will yield half as much? Mr. Danforth says further, that not a person employed in the culture of the trees or the care of the worms had ever before seen a tree or a silk worm!

With these glimmerings of light which a short time, and as yet but limited opportunities of research and reflection have enabled us to throw on the subject—what candid reader will now say that the silk business in the United States is a mere humbug? P. S. Hark! here comes a voice, and a potent one too, from old Virginia, and when she speaks, as Governor Floyd once said on the floor of Congress, let all other nations give ear.

From the Richmond Enquirer of February 12. THE SILK CULTURE.—The spirit is certainly moving our fellow citizens. On Thursday, there was evidence submitted to the public, which was calculated to shake the scepticism of the most incredulous.

Mr. Olmstead, from East Hartford, Connecticut, appeared in the capital with a table on which were spread the most splendid specimens of silk we ever beheld; all from American worms, fed on American leaves, by American hands. There was raw, twisted and sewing silk, of various colours.—Among them were forty-four large hanks of silk, of the most glossy appearance.—The eyes were singularly delicate and rich, particularly the lilac. These skeins are equal, if not superior, to the finest French or Chinese silks.

The weight of the whole was probably between four and five pounds, (besides a specimen of woven and sprigged satin from a loom in Beaver, Pennsylvania.) The whole was raised on the one-sixteenth part of an acre of land.

The specimens of silk which Mr. O. exhibited were manufactured on his own farm, during the last year, by Mr. J. Danforth. So rapid is the production, that the morus multicaulis, on whose leaves the worms were fed, were planted as late as between the fifteenth and twentieth of May last, and they commenced gathering the leaves and feeding about the tenth of July, when the trees were four or five feet high.

The quantity of leaves gathered amounted to 1,164 lbs. The quantity of silk worms fed, 32,000; and the quantity of cocoons produced, nine bushels—yielding nine pounds of silk; waste silk and floss, one pound. About 5,000 of the worms were fed on 180 pounds of leaves, and the product of them was two bushels of cocoons, or two pounds of silk.—This establishes the fact, that ninety pounds of leaves of the morus multicaulis are sufficient to produce one pound of silk.

He thinks the products of the eighth of an acre would have been more than 1,200 pounds of leaves; but being short of worms he had use for no more than 1,164 lbs. If we take the estimate of 1,200 lbs. of leaves to the eighth of an acre, as a basis, the product of an acre would be over 100 lbs. of silk; but allowing even 100 lbs. to the acre, the silk as manufactured in sewing silk, being worth \$10 per pound, the produce of one acre of land would be \$1,000 besides multiplying the trees for market.

†Nine states, not yet including Maryland, have already (12th February) offered a bounty to their citizens for the production of silk—Georgia going ahead of all that have preceded her.

HUMBUGS. MULTICAULIS SEED AND CHINESE CORN. It would seem that the information which we have aimed to furnish to our readers and the public is very little prized; nor is availed of even when it would prevent the most barefaced and shallow yet successful and gainful deceptions, which are continually imposed upon the agricultural public.

It has been about five years since we first published the fact that the seeds of the multicaulis would not re-produce their kind, and that, of course, they were worthless for propagating the parent stock; and from time to time this warning has been often repeated, accompanied with the most positive proof of its truth.

Mr. Randall, on the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal, in Maryland, is preparing to operate on a large scale, for the culture of silk.

\*He is mistaken—the prices charged by the vendors in this country is \$20 per ounce. There were a few of a rare kind sold at the convention at \$40 per ounce, but the right kind are for sale at Centers, at \$20.

of, but it shall be our business to collect these, with other silk statistics, for subsequent numbers. Have we not, however, already exhibited facts enough to show, that the culture of silk, as a business of itself, is already progressing with good head way? for be it remembered that those extensive arrangements for feeding the worms, are but the growth of the past year—while hundreds on a smaller scale, and in a more domestic way, will be started next summer all over the country.

In the meantime, it is well ascertained by correspondence with the manufacturers and silk dealers in England and France, that they stand ready to take from fifty to sixty millions of dollars worth of our raw silk annually—and it is on all hands agreed that our raw silk is worth twenty-five per cent. more than the foreign article—may we not then ask is not the field for enterprise unbounded? Under these circumstances may we not repeat the emphatic observation of Mr. Olmstead in the convention—'that the specimens of silk there exhibited were as good a guarantee for the sale of the trees, until the whole country is supplied with the article, as the specie in their vaults for the sale of our bank notes? and the investment much more safe even than bank stock? agreeing with him that were it not for this firm foundation of intrinsic value, the bubble, it may be admitted would burst, like the Dutchman's tulips.

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probably be bought, (provided the price is high enough,) and be allowed to perpetrate a fraud, unless the planter should be so lucky as to find that it will not vegetate. It will add but little force to our charge, to say that not one pound or even ounce of seed truly produced from the morus multicaulis has ever been offered for sale. All believe this who are well informed on the subject. But even if all the parcels of seeds so advertised were in truth so produced, they would be no better, and their progeny no more like the multicaulis than the seeds really sold, or those of any other kind of mulberry.

Another among the greatest of humbugs was the 'Chinese tree-corn,' advertised by Grant Thorburn, and pilfered by so many papers who aid his 'benevolent and charitable' design. We presented so full an exposure of this very shallow, and yet very successful imposition upon the public credulity in a former number, (p. 490, vol. vi.) that it was considered useless to pay any further respect to a matter so small and contemptible, by republishing the more detailed charges and exposures which afterwards appeared in the 'Journal of Commerce.' Well! the result has been that the 'Chinese corn,' which had been advertised by Thorburn at 25 cents a ear has since been selling under our nose here, as well as elsewhere, at \$1 the ear—and bought by hundreds who have had an ample opportunity to profit by the notice which we had taken of the humbug.

If our attempted exposures of humbug seeds, &c. actually serve to advertise and give them greater currency with purchasers, we wish at least that that fact could be understood by the salesmen of such articles. In that case, perhaps, they might be willing to pay for our denunciations, such bribes (direct or indirect) as we have refused to receive as the price of puff and recommendations.—Farmer's Register.

SOUTHERN COMMERCIAL CONVENTION. This body met in Charleston on Monday the 15th and was numerously attended.—There were delegates present from South Carolina, North Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Tennessee and Florida.

Asbury Hull of Georgia was chosen President, and a Vice President was appointed from each State represented in the convention. A committee of 21 was appointed, and a committee of 10. The object of the latter to ascertain and report if goods had been imported into the Southern States and sold as low as those imported into the Northern States.

April 16th.

Chancellor Harper, from the Committee of Twenty-One, stated that the Committee had agreed to report the Resolutions of General Hayne, with some amendments, and that they had adopted reports on a direct Trade with Europe, and on the Taxation of Commercial Capital, and a proposition for the revival of the Southern Review which would be severally read or submitted by other members of the Convention.

Gen. Hayne then read the report on a Direct Trade with Europe, an able and eloquent document, demonstrating the ability of the South to resume the control of her own commerce, and reap her just share of the profits and advantages of a trade, which her own supineness chiefly has so long suffered to enrich the coffers, of others, and pointing out limited partnerships, the embarkation of the surplus capital of the planter in trade, and the establishment of lines of packet ships and steamers, as among the means of effecting this happy revolution. [This Report is too long for publication at present.]

The Resolutions, with which the Report concludes, are as follows:

1st. Resolved, That in the opinion of this Convention, the present state of our trade, by which the supplies of foreign goods, received in exchange for the productions of the Southern and South-western States, are chiefly obtained through the cities of the North, is highly injurious to the citizens of these States, and we are therefore called upon by every consideration of duty and patriotism to correct the evil.

2d. Resolved, That as the producers of the great staples which constitute the basis of the foreign commerce of the Union, it is right and proper that we should enjoy a fair share of the profits of that commerce, of which however, we have heretofore been deprived by the unequivocal action of the Federal Government, and to the exclusive devotion of our own citizens in other pursuits.

3d. Resolved, That in order to secure to these States, the estimable advantages of a direct import and export trade, commensurate with their resources and their wants, it is, in the opinion of this Convention, indispensably necessary, that the public mind should be enlightened on this subject by full and free discussions, and that a general sympathy should be enlisted, and harmony of feeling and concert of action secured, by earnest and reiterated appeals to the public spirit of our fellow citizens.

4th. Resolved, That the progress already made in this work, as manifested by the wise Legislation of several of the States—in the deep and growing interest every where felt upon the subject—the great increase of our foreign and domestic trade, and the number of merchants from the interior who now obtain their supplies from our own ports, affords great encouragement for the continuance of our efforts

and should urge us on, with renewed zeal, energy and perseverance.

5th. Resolved, That the following measures are in the opinion of this Convention, necessary to be adopted for the purpose of ensuring our success, viz:—

1st. That the commercial capital and credit of the Southern and South western States should be so extended and enlarged, as to enable our merchants to carry on the business of direct importations on an extensive scale, and on the most advantageous terms.

2d. That for this purpose, it is highly important that a portion of the capital now absorbed in other pursuits should be directed to commerce, for which the strongest inducements are now offered by the passage of laws in several of the States, authorizing the formation of limited co partnerships, and from the reasonable assurance that such investments will be as profitable as they must be beneficial to the community.

3d. That our Banks should extend all the aid in their power to this trade, and afford the necessary facilities for carrying it on successfully, by enlarging the capital and extending the credit of those who may engage in it, to the utmost extent, consistent with the safety of these institutions and the public welfare.

4th. That the proper efforts should also be made to bring in foreign capital and credit, in aid of the resources of our own country, and that for this purpose suitable agents should be sent abroad to induce foreign capitalists and Merchants, to establish agencies and to form co partnerships in our cities, with the assurance of their receiving a cordial welcome, and zealous support.

5th. That similar efforts should be made to bring about a co-operation, between our Merchants and Capitalists, and those of Europe, for the purpose of immediately establishing lines of Packet Ships and Steamers, whereby regular communications, at stated periods may be secured—and that all other proper measures should be adopted to effect as speedily as possible, this all important object.

6th. That in the opinion of this Convention, it is essential to the success of any scheme of direct importation, that a demand should be created in our own Ports for all the goods so imported, which can only be effected by opening free communications with the interior, by an extensive system of Rail Roads, Canals, and Turnpikes, by which the Merchants of the interior may be enabled to lay in their supplies on better terms than they could procure them from any other quarter.

7th. That a Committee of five be appointed in each of the States represented, to carry out and effect as far as practicable, the measures recommended by the Convention.

8th. That we regard the trade between the Ports of the South western States and all other ports of the Union, as governed by the same principles which are applicable to our foreign trade, and while the same shall consist in the direct exchange of our productions for those of other States, as entitled to our support. But in this, as in the foreign trade, we regard a direct importation in our own ships, through our own resident Merchants, as essential to enable us to enjoy all the benefits of this intercourse.

9th. That among the measures auxiliary to the important objects we have in view, this Convention cannot but regard as of deep interest and importance, the adoption of the proper means for introducing commercial education among the youth of our country—the training them up to habits of business, and thereby establishing a body of Merchants, whose every interest and feeling shall be identified with the country which has reared and sustained them.

10th. That in the opinion of this Convention, the establishment of a Southern Review, under the direction of able and learned men, to be faithfully devoted to the promotion of science and literature, and also to the defence of the institutions, the vindication of the rights and the development of the resources of the Slave-holding States is an object of the deepest interest, and one which should command the cordial co-operation and support of every citizen of these States.

MITCHELL KING, Esq. read the following REPORT ON THE TAXATION OF COMMERCIAL CAPITAL.

Your Committee are deeply convinced that much of the Legislation of the South, instead of fostering and encouraging, has tended to discourage and depress commerce. The same principles which in England have sustained a corn laws that that country, have prevailed here. The Legislative power has been chiefly in the hands of the agriculturists. They have been accustomed to pay a tax on their property, according to its estimated value. Their capital is fixed and cannot escape from the impost. They have naturally enough considered, that capital invested in trade ought to contribute its fair proportion to the revenue of the country, and without sufficiently considering its floating character, the facility with which it can be removed beyond the reach of their taxation, and its constant tendency to escape from it, they have generally imposed taxes on this floating on the same principles as on fixed capital. It is believed that much heavier taxes have generally been imposed on the farmer than on the latter. In one of the Southern States, thirty cents ad valorem is levied on every hundred dollars of the lands granted by the State, and sixty cents per head on all slaves; and for a number of years in that very State, a tax of sixty cents on the hundred dollars of stock in trade has