THE PROSPECTS OF SILK CULTURE IN THE UNITED STATES.

The prospects of a large and healthy, though probably not rapid, development of the native silk industry in this country are now particularly bright, for three reasons:

1. The general prosperity of our people and the wide diffusion of wealth have been attended by, if they have not created, a large and steadily increasing demand for silk fabrics, as the annual importation of over forty million dollars' worth of raw and manufactured silks amply demonstrates.

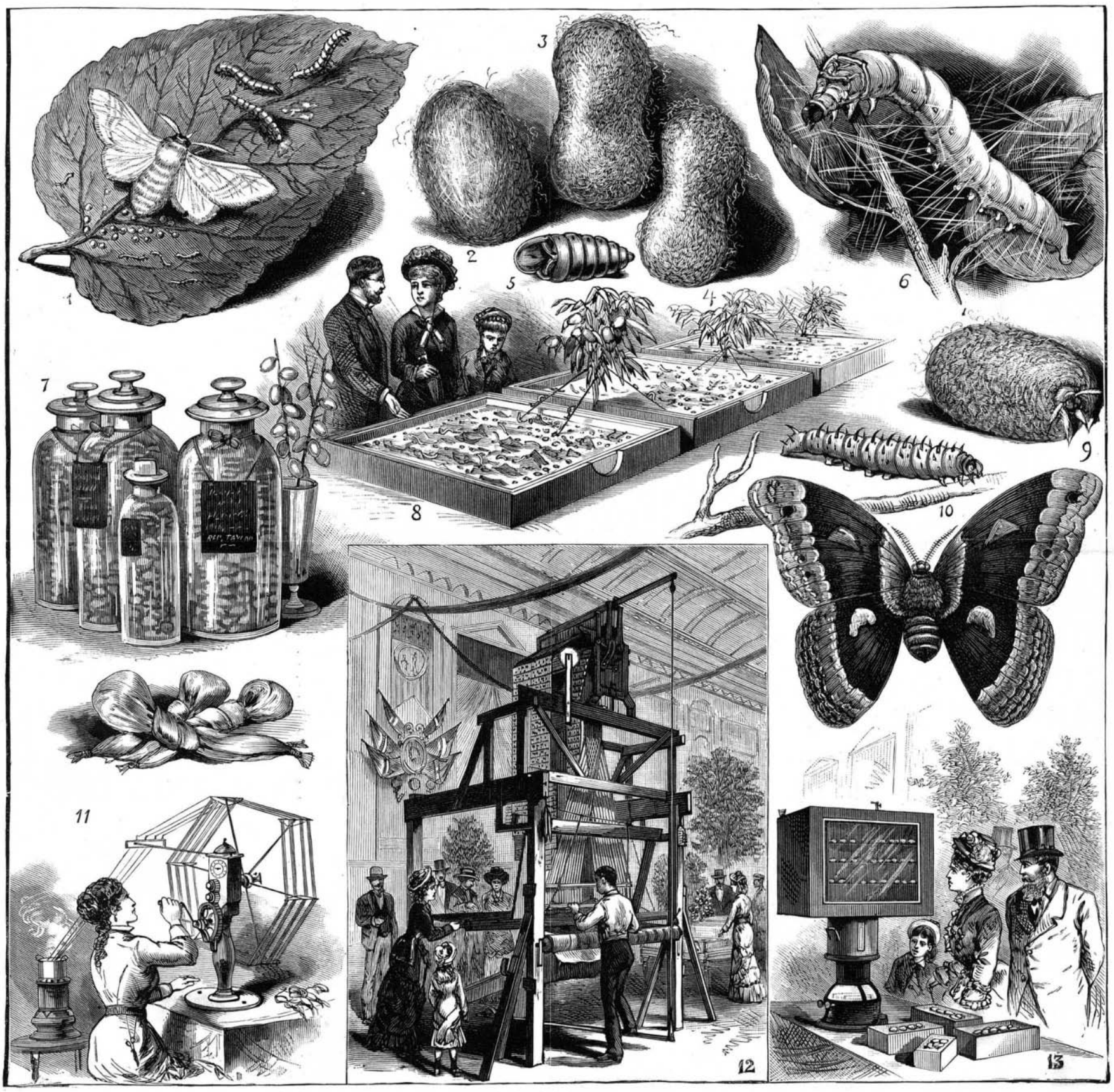
2. The rapid and stable development of silk manufacturing here during the past ten or a dozen years, and the probability that our manufacturers will not stay their efforts until at least the home market has been conquered. Our two hundred silk mills are already converting from ten to twelve million dollars' worth of imported raw silk into manufactured goods, worth thirty million dollars or more. In other words, there is now a home demand for at least ten million dollars' worth of raw silk to encourage home production—a demand that has doubled in the past two or three years, and is likely to increase quite as rapidly in the future. The declining silk production of Europe, owing to diseases affecting the worms, indicates that we may, if we choose, compete with the East for that vast market also, certainly with respect to the supply of eggs and cocoons.

3. In all parts of the country, particularly in the South and Southwest, a lively popular interest in silk culture has arisen during the past five years, and hundreds are experimenting in that direction with encouraging results. The Women's Silk Culture Association of the United States, established only two years ago, reports over ten thousand correspondents. Trees and silk worm eggs—technically *grain*—have been sent by them to twenty-four States for testing local and personal capabilities for silk production; and American raw silk and grain have been submitted for critical tests in Turkey, Milan, and Lyons, winning such commendations as to prove that, if the question of cost can be as satisfactorily settled as that of quality has been, our silk growers need not fear competition in any quarter.

The question of cost is now the important one. The caring for silk worms is likely to be here, as it is almost everywhere where its prospers, a domestic enterprise chiefly employing the spare time of women and children during the early summer. The time available for such pursuits is now largely unoccupied; devoted to silk growing it would be so much clear gain; yet the industry must yield an enticing profit for the time devoted to it, compared with other possible occupations, or it will not command more than sporadic attention. Fortunately the number of those who are now trying their hands at silk raising is so great that the financial problems involved cannot remain long in doubt. If the stories of profit told by many of these experimenters are no more than half true the industry is bound to prosper, certainly in the South, where the conditions are most favorable.

The Women's Silk Culture Association, whose headquarters are in Philadelphia, has been, perhaps, the most influential single agency, both in developing the revival of interest in silk culture and in keeping it from extravagance or anything tending to a repetition of the popular craze of forty years ago. The establishment of a new industry, involving the intelligent action if not co-operation of thousands largely unfamiliar with business methods, and unused to sustained painstaking labor, is not an easy undertaking; and the success already achieved through their efforts speaks well for the soundness and prudence of the methods of the association.

The beginning of the revival was manifested during the Centennial Exhibition. The exhibition and training school organized in the Permanent Exhibition by the association gave it a new and powerful impetus, the influence of which was broadened by subsequent exhibitions of silk production at State fairs in Pennsylvania and New Jersey, and at the American Institute Fair in this city. The remarkably successful exhibition of the Women's Association in Philadelphia last spring added materially to popular knowledge of silk culture and the industrial inducements it offers. In the meantime a silk culture society has been projected if not organized in New Orleans, and establishments for the cultivation and distribution of silk worm eggs and trees for feeding worms have been established in or near various Southern cities. In this city a Silk Exchange has been organized for the purpose of furthering the silk industry, and during the summer an exhibition of the processes of silk production and manufacture was maintained for several weeks. The accompanying engravings give several views of the materials and processes there shown. The contrast in size of the cultivated silk moth and some of our native moths yielding silk (and of their cocoons) is very great; yet none of the latter appears to yield so large a quantity of fine silk in condition to be readily unwound or reeled from the cocoon. It is quite possible, however, that by careful cultivation and selection there may ultimately come from our native moths insects which, in yield of silk, hardness, and general availability for this climate, will surpass the foreign moth as markedly as they already do in size and beauty.



1. The moth and larvæ one and four days old.—2, 3, and 4. American, French, and Chinese Cocoons.—5. Chrysalis.—6. A full-grown larva spinning.—7. Bottles containing American cocoons.—8. Breeding boxes.—9. Moth leaving cocoon (natural size) —10. The ailantus moth and larva (half size).—11. Reel and finished raw silk.—12. Loom.—13. Apparatus for loosening the silk threads from the cocoons.

VIEWS FROM THE SILK INDUSTRY EXHIBITION AT NEW YORK.

THE deepest mine in the world, according to Prof. H. Hoefer, is the Przibram silver mine in Bohemia. The lowest depth is 3,300 feet below the surface.