

Ravenswood
Carraigaline
Co. Cork

21/3

8th Nov: 1888

Dear Sir/

In reply to your hopeful letter of the 28th August last, on the subject of a proposed grant of £100 towards the funds of the "South Ireland Silk Industry Association" from the Royal Dublin Society. I beg to forward our report just issued in hopes you may look favourably on it, and wish it may be the cause of your placing the matter before the council at its next sitting, and also enable you to use your powerful influence with the members of that council, and trust you will not have any difficulty in getting the sum required, so as to put this very important industry on a sure footing in a country, peculiarly adapted for it, and which offers so many advantages.

Space would hardly permit me entering into all the details of Sericulture, but I may just mention a few facts. It may be well to remind you that the movement was originally started, with the idea of assisting the more intelligent persons — particularly the gentler sex — to earn a little, by an easy method of labour, and so keeps those who suffered from a scarcity of light work, employed. The former attempt by the late Lord Kingston, to establish Silk culture was solely an individual one, and although he had at one time a large quantity of Mulberry trees in a flourishing condition, his efforts fell through for want of co-operation. Now, our present attempt to restore the losses of Lord Kingston, are worked on an entirely different basis, we are inviting every body — and especially those who are likely to become willing workers — to join. Those who will not be immediately connected with the business, are only anxious to give waste corners of their land for growing Mulberry trees which I need not say has been taken up warmly.

The subject divides itself into three heads in a commercial point of view, viz. the actual culture of Silk, the manufacture of anglers (or Roman) gut and the sale of Mulberry leaves, by those unable to grow Silkworms, all these points have been carefully tested, and proved in every way to be quite able to allow it to rest on its own merits as a commercial business. This year we have done very well, notwithstanding the cold wet summer, some growers have sent me several remarkably fine well grown cocoons, some I measured being equal to the best French or Italian. Several hundreds have passed through my hands en route to London, where they were reeled and returned fit for the weaver. The home grown Silk thus seen, was quite as strong as the foreign silk. A very

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encouraging as well as interesting fact (which I should not be lost sight of,) and which with pleasure I mention, is, that no contagious disease has made its appearance among the silk worms reared in Ireland, nor is it likely to do so, undoubtly due to the uniform temperature and absence of Electric storms, at spinning time so very hurtful in southern Europe. — The next branch of the industry and which promises to be of much benefit is the making of Anglers gut. I have carefully investigated the matter and find the gut drawn in Cork is quite as superior as that made in Como or Gibraltar, I have been sent a few samples drawn this past season, and highly recommend ^{it} to my many angling friends. A great source of profit likewise would be the sale of leaves by the growers of the Mulberry, which we do not object to. Regarding the culture of the Mulberry tree, the Soil and Climate of Cork seem to suit it admirably. The remnants of those trees which were introduced by ^{the} Huguenots scattered here and there in the old gardens throughout the county are still in a flourishing state. There are the Black Mulberry and very hardy. We are importing the White variety, perhaps not quite as hardy, but in sheltered situations, are likely to succeed splendidly.

Such then is the ground work on which we have founded our Attoe: and this very condensed report of mine I hope may appear clear to you, Before I close however I might say the plan of operation and a short account of our work already accomplished. ^{before you.} We propose to send gratis to all those who have old Mulberry trees, as well as those who will undertake to grow new trees seed of the best breed of silk worm, together with all necessary appliances and instructions, in the Month of May each year, until enough of seed is in the county to supply all, as soon as the clearing is over, each grower having skinned his (or her) cocoons, sends them to the Industrial Schools Union Lucy Cork, to be reeled for weaving. The growers are paid according to the continental prices for their cocoons. The reeling will (and is all the summer) carried on by Cork girls who have been taught the art, by experienced artists under the superintendance of Mr. Wardle of Leek. As soon as the silk is reeled we hope to introduce hand ^{worms} among Ladies in their own homes where several articles can be turned out easily in one day, and so become a considerable source of profit to those unaccustomed to hard work. Up to the present our expenses have ^{been} rather great, but when we come to consider the work done, we find a large margin could hardly be expected.

Last season we imported over six hundred trees (white Mulberry) from Bordeaux and distributed them over the County of Cork, next, we purchased a costly reeling machine on the Best Italian make still at Olympia, where it has been working during the Irish Exhibition. To keep it going at the close we had to purchase a quantity of foreign cocoons. Besides we had to buy frames, perforated papers, ova, and pay for a teacher, so taking all this work into consideration I think we may congratulate ourselves on the success which up to the present has attended our efforts.

I have only now in conclusion to say that unless we get supported what promises to develop into a flourishing Industry must fall to the ground. We propose now if our funds permit to import a further quantity of Mulberry trees from Orleans, before the the severe weather of late winter overtakes us in planting, we have also in view, as I before mentioned, the purchase of Hand looms, and the importation of a few Shetland sheep, (see report). As soon as we are in a position to give a complete list of our expenditure I shall with pleasure lay it before you, and also let you know of the American Industry, which as far as I can gather is at present in a thriving condition in the state of Ontario.

I hope this appeal will assist you to realize the earnestness of this industry, and help you to use your great influence with the "Royal Dublin Soc:", in aiding the "South Ireland Silk Industry Assoc.", by granting us the sum required.

I am dear Sir

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yours very faithfully

Michael Hodder Westropp

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