While these tables indicate remarkable fluctuation of supply they show generally that Asiatic countries, besides supplying their own considerable demands, send to Europe fully one half of the whole silk consumed in Western manufactures. China stands first as a silk-producing country, yielding about 35 per cent. of the entire supply ; the whole produce of Italy amounts to nearly the same proportion ; the exports of Japan account for about 12 per cent. of the annual supply ; while in recent years France and the Levant are credited with about equal proportions.

In the United Kingdom the trade in raw silks has been in a condition of decline for a considerable number of years, much of the Chinese and Eastern produce which formerly came to London now being unshipped at Marseilles, and sold in the Lyons market, which has become the leading silk mart. But there is a very steady and continuous ex­pansion in the demand for waste silks and cocoons for the spun silk trade. The following figures show the official annual returns of silk imports since 1860, the date of the French commercial treaty, which exposed many branches of the trade to severe and fatal competition :—

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Years. | Raw Silk. | Knubs or Husks of Silk and Waste. | Thrown Silk. | Silk  Manufactures. |
| 1860-65 | lb  43,137,997 | Cwts.  132,020 | lb  543,679 | £  30,127,878 |
| 1865-70 | 31,645,505 | 141,628 | 859,251 | 49,885,971 |
| 1870-75 | 34,220,037 | 171,166 | 747,505 | 55,116,815 |
| 1875-80 | 23,003,683 | 158,887 | 545,247 | 62,539,166 |
| 1880 | 3,673,949 | 55,002 | 203,567 | 13,324,935 |
| 1881 | 2,904,580 | 54,119 | 131,836 | 11,727,397 |
| 1882 | 3,377,119 | 44,277 | 294,207 | 11,174,573 |
| 1883 | 3,178,593 | 62,064 | 292,433 | 10,523,920 |
| 1884 | 4,522,702 | 67,239 | 323,947 | 10,984,073 |

The sources whence the English imports of raw silk, the commercial names under which they pass, and their relative importance and values, are exemplified in the following table, extracted from the annual circulars issued by Messrs H. W. Eaton & Sons of London :—

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Description. | Imports,  1884. | Imports,  1885. | Extreme Prices during 1885. | Con­  sumption.  including  Export,  1885. | Prices  1st January 1886. |
| China—  Tsatlee@@1.......  Haineen, &c.  Taysaam @@2.......  Canton | lb  2,8C3,572  416,466  339,976  23,154  388,304  126,450  8,750  225  205,610  273,760 | lb  1,001,436  271,116  159,328  6,936  70,560  114,000  7,875  211,700  310,300 | *s. d. s. d.*  9 0 to 14 6  7 6 ,, 15 0  8 6 ,, 12 6  7 0 ,, 11 3  10 6 ,, 15 6  8 0 „ 14 6  19 0 „ 23 0  17 0 to 21 0  20 0 ,, 24 0  20 0 ,, 25 0 | lb  1,225,938  293,964  469,456  17,544  372,176  154,800  7,700  208,220  307,400 | s. *d. s. d.*  9 6 to 14 6  8 0 ,, 14 6  9 9 ,, 13 0  7 0 ,, 11 3  12 0 ,, 15 6  9 6 ,, 15 0  19 0 ,, 21 0  17 0 to 21 0  20 0 ,, 24 0  20 0 ,, 25 0 |
| Szechuen |
| Japan |
| Bengal |
| Patent Brutia  Persian |
| Italian—  Raw  Novi  Thrown |
| Total |
| 4,586,267 | 2,153,251 | ... | 3,057,198 | ... |
|  |

In the manufacture of silken fabrics France occupies the most important position among the nations. Not only is the whole of the raw silk produced in France worked up within the country, but a very considerable proportion of that imported from the Levant and from Asia passes into the hands of the French manufacturers. In all, between 8,000,000 and 9,000,000 lb of raw silk are on an average manufactured into various textures in France. Lyons is the headquarters of the trade, and, if the surrounding regions be included, employment is given to about 120,000 looms,—20,000 of which are driven by power,—principally in the production of dress silks, plain and figured, and in other heavy silken fabrics, and at St Etienne and St Chamond in the ribbon trade. There are also important manufactures of silk at Calais, St Pierre

les Calais (tulles and passementerie), Paris, Nîmes, Tours, Avignon, and Roubaix. Next to France in the extent and value of manufactures comes Germany, where the principal seat of the silk trade is at Crefeld, nearly one half of the whole production of the empire being manu­factured there. The looms of Crefeld and the district it controls numbered in 1881 about 33,000, and the trade was flourishing and expansive. The manufacture of union velvets is the special feature of the industry, about one half of the looms being devoted to that textile ; but Crefeld controls also a large trade in union satins, and pure silk broad goods and ribbons of all kinds. The whole value of its trade amounted in 1881 to almost £4,000,000, one-fourth of which found a market in England, and about a quarter of a million went to France. The other principal centres of the silk trade, all in Rhenish Prussia, are Viersen, Barmen, Elberfeld, and Mühlheim. Third on the list of Continental producers is Switzerland, where Zurich takes the lead with broad goods (failles, armures, satins, serges, &c.), and Basel rivals St Étienne in the ribbon trade. The number of looms throughout the country is estimated at 40,000, of which 4000 are power- looms. Italy—the early home of the silk trade, the land of the gorgeous velvets of Genoa and the damasks and brocades of mediæval Sicily, Venice, and Florence—has fallen from its high estate, and now employs not more than 30,000 looms, the centre of greatest activity being at Como; but Genoa still makes velvets, and the brocades of Venice are not a thing of the past. In Austria the silk trade has found its principal development in Vienna and its immediate neighbourhood, the number of looms throughout the entire empire being estimated at from 15,000 to 20,000, of which 2000 are power-looms. In Russia there is, with a growing cultivation of raw silk, a considerable and in­creasing manufacture, the special feature of which is the weaving at Moscow of gold and silver tissues and brocades for sacerdotal use, and for traffic with Central Asia.

In the United Kingdom all the silk industries—these depending on spun silk alone excepted—have been in a depressed and declining condition ever since 1860. The principal silk manu­facturing towns of England have been Coventry, Macclesfield, Congleton, Leek, Derby, London (Spitalfields), Manchester, Middleton, and Nottingham, and it is estimated that at the best period not fewer than 150,000 looms found employment in the trade. In 1872 that number was reduced to 65,000, of which 12,500 were power-looms. Spitalfields in her best days (about 1825) kept 24,000 hand-looms occupied ; now there are not more than 1200. Manchester once had about 20,000 looms weaving silk ; now there are not 6000 so employed. When the French treaty of 1860 came into operation Coventry had about 9000 looms, principally employed in ribbon weaving ; now not more than one-fourth of that number are in operation. The cause of several of these severe changes is to be found in the introduction of the factory system of working and the extension of power-loom weaving, which crushed out domestic weaving, the original form of the silk industry ; but undoubtedly also the English manufacturers were beaten in the battle of free competition brought on by the French treaty. On the other hand, the remarkable development of the

*Silk and Silk Goods exported from the United Kingdom during the years 1860 to 1884 inclusive.*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Year. | Raw Silk. | Knubs or Husks of Silk and Waste. | Thrown Silk. | | Silk Manufactures. | |
| British. | Foreign and Colonial. | British. | Foreign and Colonial. |
|  | lb | Cwts. | £ | lb | £ | £ |
| 1860 | 3,153,993 | 1,506 | 826,107 | 426,866 | 1,587,303 | 224,366 |
| 1865 | 3,137,292 | 1,212 | 767,058 | 306,701 | 1,404,381 | 166,936 |
| 1870 | 2,644,402 | 4,167 | 1,154,364 | 39,771 | 1,450,397 | 166,297 |
| 1875 | 2,551,417 | 1,779 | 880,923 | 87,924 | 1,734,519  1,794,565 | 328,426 |
| 1876 | 3,064,725 | 4,210 | 1,080,678 | 50,202 | 303,054 |
| 1877 | 1,652,935 | 7,450 | 570,999 | 17,910 | 1,705,153 | 229,130  222,133 |
| 1878 | 1,841,505 | 8,012 | 565,266 | 40,470 | 1,922,953 |
| 1879 | 1,375,608 | 5,029 | 694,735 | 24,461 | 1,697,209 | 248,495 |
| 1880 | 947,165 | 9,241 | 683,591 | 7,553 | 2,030,659 | 259,023 |
| 1881 | 903,997 | 4,528 | 1,008,272 | 5,561 | 2,564,730 | 263,826 |
| 1882 | 915,773 | 6,941 | 825,572 | 6,281 | 2,692,275 | 341,107 |
| 1883 | 524,182 | 5,216 | 705,825 | 5,596 | 2,426,299  2,175,410 | 340,805 |
| 1884 | 377,349 | 6,538 | 612,951 | 50,559 | 644,722 |

@@@l The figures relating to Tsatlee comprise Re-reel, Hangchow, and Yuun-fa. @@@2 The figures relating to Taysaam comprise Tussah.