

till nearly half the length of the coast which looks north-east has been past, do you find inhabited country.<sup>1</sup>

"The first race then encountered are the *SERES*, so famous for the fleecy product of their forests. This pale floss, which they find growing on the leaves, they wet with water, and then comb out, furnishing thus a double task to our womenkind in first dressing the threads, and then again of weaving them into silk fabrics. So has toil to be multiplied; so have the ends of the earth to be traversed: and all that a Roman dame may exhibit her charms in transparent gauze."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It is evident from a comparison of this with the passage of Mela quoted in the preceding note, that both authors are drawing from some common source.

<sup>2</sup> Seneca is still stronger in expressions to like purport: "*Video sericas vestes, si vestes vocandæ sunt, in quibus nihil est quo defendi aut corpus, aut denique pudor possit; quibus sumptis mulier parum liquido nudam se non esse jurabit. Hæc ingenti summâ, ab ignotis etiam ad commercium gentibus, accersuntur, ut matronæ nostræ ne adulteris quidem plus sui in cubiculo quam in publico ostendant.*" *De Beneficiis*, vii, 9.

From these passages it would appear that the silk textures in such esteem among the Romans of those days were not what we should call *rich silks*, like the satins and damasks which were imported from China in later days, but *gauzes*, the value of which lay in their excessive delicacy. And that this continued to be the character of the China silks in most general estimation for several centuries later may be gathered from Abu Zaid, who tells us that the chief Chinese officers wore "silks of the first quality, such as were never imported into Arabia," and illustrates this by the story of an Arab merchant whose curiosity was attracted by a mark upon the chest of an officer of the imperial household, which was plainly visible through several folds of the silk dress which he wore; and it proved that the officer had on five robes of this texture, one over the other (*Relations* i, p. 76). Like stories are told in India of the Dacca muslins. One tells, I think, of Akbar that he rebuked one of his ladies for the indecent transparency of her dress, and in defence she showed that she had on *nine*, of the kind which was called *Bâd-baft*, or "Woven Wind."

The passage of Pliny here translated, coupled with another to be noticed presently, has led to a statement made in many respectable books, but which I apprehend to be totally unfounded, that the Greeks and Romans picked to pieces the rich China silks and wove light gauzes out of the material. This is asserted, for example, in the treatise on Silk Manufacture in Lardner's *Cyclopædia* (pp. 5, 6), and in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* (7th ed. article *Silk*). Smith's Dictionary of Greek and Roman Geography also (article *Serica*) says: "Pliny records that a Greek woman of Cos, named Pamphila, first invented the expedient of splitting these substantial silk stuffs, and of manufacturing those very fine and web-like dresses which became so celebrated under the name of *Coæ Vestes*."

The whole passage of Pliny here alluded to is as follows (xi, 25): "Among these there is a fourth kind of *Bombyx* produced in Assyria and greater than those of which we have been speaking. These make nests of clay, having the appearance of salt, fastening them upon stone; and these nests are so hard that they can scarcely be pierced with a pointed tool. They secrete wax in these nests more copiously than bees do, and the grub too is of proportionately larger size.

"26. There is one with another mode of development produced from a yet larger grub which has two peculiar horns as it were. From this it becomes first a caterpillar; then what is called *bombylius*; next *necydalus*;