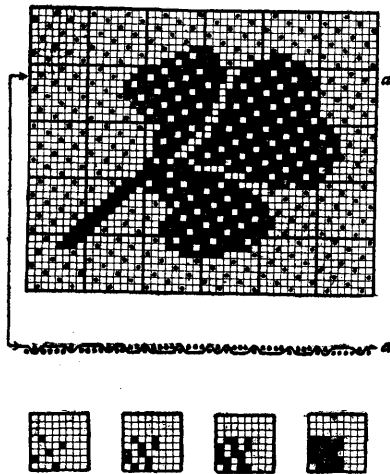


DAMASK, the technical term applied to certain distinct types of fabric. The term owes its origin to the ornamental silk fabrics of Damascus, fabrics which were elaborately woven in colours, sometimes with the addition of gold and other metallic threads. At the present day it denotes a linen texture richly figured in the weaving with flowers, fruit, forms of animal life, and other types of ornament. "China, no doubt," says Dr Rock (*Catalogue of Textile Fabrics*, Victoria and Albert Museum), "was the first country to ornament its silken webs with a pattern. India, Persia, and Syria, then Byzantine Greece followed, but at long intervals between, in China's footsteps. Stuffs so figured brought with them to the West the name 'diaspron' or diaper, bestowed upon them at Constantinople. But about the 12th century the city of Damascus, even then long celebrated for its looms, so far'outstripped all other places for beauty of design, that her silken textiles were in demand everywhere; and thus, as often happens, traders fastened the name of damascen or damask upon every silken fabric richly wrought and curiously designed, no matter whether it came or not from Damascus." The term is perhaps now best known in reference to damask table-cloths, a

species of figured cloth usually of flax or tow yarns, but sometimes made partly of cotton. The finer qualities are made of the best linen yarn, and, although the latter is of a brownish colour during the weaving processes, the ultimate fabric is pure white. The high lights in these cloths are obtained by long floats of warp and weft, and, as these are set at right angles, they reflect the light differently according to the angle of the rays of light; the effect changes also with the position of the observer. Subdued effects are produced by shorter floats of yarn, and sometimes by special weaves. Any subject, however intricate, can be copied by this method of weaving, provided that expense is no object. The finest results are obtained when the so-called double damask weaves are used. These weaves are shown under DIE, and it will be seen that each weave gives a maximum float of seven threads. (In some special cases a weave is used which gives a float of nine.) The small figure here shown to illustrate a small section of a damask design is composed of the two single damask weaves; these give a maximum float of four threads or picks. No shading is shown in the design, and this for two reasons—(1) the single damask weaves do not permit of elaborate shading, although some very good effects are obtainable; (2) the available space is not sufficiently large to show the method to advantage. The different single damask weaves used



in the shading of these cloths appear, however, at the bottom of the figure, while between these and the design proper there is an illustration of the thirty-first pick interweaving with all the forty-eight threads.

The principal British centres for fine damasks are Belfast and Dunfermline, while the medium qualities are made in several places in Ireland, in a few places in England, and in the counties of Fife, Forfar and Perth in Scotland. Cotton damasks, which are made

in Paisley, Glasgow, and several places in Lancashire, are used for toilet covers, table-cloths, and similar purposes. They are often ornamented with colours and sent to the Indian and West Indian markets. Silk damasks for curtains and upholstery decoration are made in the silk-weaving centres.