

D A M

DAMASK, French *Damas*, in the *Manufacture of Cloth*, is a tweeled fabric, with flowers, or other ornaments, raised upon it, generally of very extensive patterns.

It has been conjectured, from the similarity of the name, that this branch of the art of weaving originated at Damascus. Whether this etymology be correct or not, damask has been long woven in silk, both in France and Italy. We find in many of our own popular ballads and legends, that a damask gown or bed is frequently noticed as an article of magnificence.

The damask manufacture of the continent was chiefly of silk for garments and ornamental furniture, such as bed-hangings, table-linen, and the like. The silk damask was frequently woven with a great variety of colours, and produced a very beautiful effect. It is not exactly ascertained at what period the art of weaving this species of cloth was introduced into Britain; but it is probable that it was brought over in queen Elizabeth's reign, by the Dutch and Flemish weavers, who fled from the persecutions of the duke of Alva, and his master Philip II. of Spain. The silk damask, from the high price of the raw material, and the great labour of mounting and working the looms, was very expensive, and, among the middling ranks of people, articles of this kind were only worn upon occasions of ceremony, and at all other times carefully preserved, and frequently transmitted for several successive generations in the same family. The more modern practice of purchasing articles of dress at moderate rates, and changing them frequently according to the variations of taste or fashion, has almost entirely exploded the use of silk damask, at least in Britain. This branch of ornamental manufacture is now almost entirely confined to the fabrication of table-linen, which is manufactured to great extent, and in great variety. The chief seat of this manufacture is probably the town and neighbourhood of Dunfermline, in Fifeshire, where it is considered as the staple, and has proved a very profitable branch of traffic to the manufacturer, and given employment to many industrious people.

The material used there is chiefly linen; but many have been recently woven of cotton, since the introduction of that article into the manufacture of cloth has become so prevalent. The cotton damasks are considerably cheaper than those of linen; but are not considered either so elegant or durable. The cotton, also, unless frequently bleached, does not preserve the purity of the white colour nearly so well as the linen.

The tweeling of the more common kinds of damask is generally performed with five leaves of front mounting, exclusive of the harness of the draw loom. The finest and most extensively ornamented damasks are woven with eight leaves. The patterns of the damask, which are frequently very extensive, are called *designs*, and are drawn upon paper lined into small squares to direct the weaver in mounting his loom, so as to produce the design required.

For:

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For a particular description of the process of manufacturing damask, see the articles **Deston**, and **DRAW-LOOM**.