

TAFFETY, or TAFFATY, in *Commerce*, a kind of fine, smooth, filken stuff; having, usually, a remarkable lustre, or gloss.

Alamode, } the *taffetas noirs* of Lyons.
Lustring, }

Taffetas noir lustre of the French, is our *alamode*.

Non lustre is our *lustring*.

There are taffeties of all colours; some plain, others striped with gold, silver, silk, &c. others checquered, others flowered, others in the Chinese point, others the Hungarian; with various others to which the mode, or the caprice of the workmen, gives such whimsical names, that it would be as difficult, as it is useless, to rehearse them: besides, that they seldom hold beyond the year in which they first rose. The old names of taffeties, and which still subsist, are, taffeties of Lyons, of Spain, of England, of Florence, of Avignon, &c.

The chief consumption of taffeties is in the summer-dresses for women, in gowns, linings, window-curtains, &c.

There are three things which contribute chiefly to the perfection of taffeties, *viz.* the silk, the water, and the fire. The silk is not only to be of the finest kind, but it must be worked a long time, and very much before it be used: the watering is only to be given very lightly, and seems only intended to give that fine lustre, by a peculiar property not found in all water: lastly, the fire, which is passed under it to dry the water, has its particular manner of application, on which the perfection of the stuff depends very much.

Octavio May, of Lyons, is held the first founder of the manufacture of glossy taffeties; and tradition tells us the occasion of it. Octavio, it seems, going backwards in the world, and not able to retrieve himself by the manufacture of taffeties, such as were then made, was one day musing on his misfortunes, and, in musing, chanced to chew a few hairs of silk which he had in his mouth: his reverie being over, the silk he spit out seemed to shine, and, on that account, engaged his attention. He was soon led to reflect on the reason; and, after a good deal of thought, concluded,

that the lustre of that silk must come, 1. From his having pressed it between his teeth. 2. From his having wetted it with his saliva, which had something glutinous in it. And, 3. From its having been heated by the natural warmth of his mouth. All this he executed upon the next taffeties he made, and immediately acquired immense riches to himself, and to the city of Lyons the reputation it still maintains, of giving the gloss to taffeties better than any other city in the world.

It will not, we conceive, be less useful than curious, to insert here the description of the engine contrived by Octavio to give the gloss to taffety; and to add the manner of applying it, and the composition of the water used in it.

The machine is much like a silk-loom, except that, instead of iron points, here is used a kind of crooked needles, to prevent the taffety from slipping: at the two extremities are two beams, on one of which is rolled the taffety to take the gloss; and on the other, the same taffety, as fast as it has received it. The first beam is kept firm by a weight of about two hundred pounds, and the other turned by means of a little lever passing through mortises at each end. The more the taffety is stretched, the greater lustre it takes: care, however, is to be used that it be not weakened by over-stretching.

Besides this instrument for keeping the stuff stretched, there is another to give it the fire: this is a kind of carriage, in form of a long square, and of the breadth of the taffeties: it moves on trundles, and carries a charcoal fire under the taffety, at the distance of about half a foot.

These two machines prepared, and the taffety mounted, the lustre is given it by rubbing it gently with a ball, or a handful of bits of fine cloth, as it rolls from one beam to the other; the fire, at the same time, being carried underneath it to dry it. As soon as the piece has its lustre, it is put on new beams to be stretched a day or two; and the oftener this last preparation is repeated, the more it increases the gloss.

For black taffeties, the gloss is given with double beer and orange or lemon-juice; but this last is the least proper, as being apt to whiten them. The proportion of the two liquors is, a gallon of orange-juice to a pint of beer, to be boiled together to the consistence of a rich broth. For coloured taffeties, they use gourd-water distilled in an alembic.

There are also several different sorts of taffeties manufactured in China; as corded taffeties, which wear well; and also some with flowers, and others beautifully striped; and a particular taffety, of which they make drawers, and other kinds of wearing apparel. This last is thick, and yet so pliant, that it may be folded and pressed with the hand, without leaving any mark in it. They also wash it, like other stuffs, without its losing much of its lustre. The Chinese workmen give the lustre to this taffety with the fat of the river-porpoise, which they purify by washing and boiling; and then with a fine brush, they give the taffety two beds in the same direction, on the side which they intend to render glossy.