

NAMING OUR CLOTHES

"SILK" was born in China, where the Seres first manufactured it for their own garments (Sericae Vestes). To a street in Bagdad, "Atab" by name, we owe our crisp, rustling "taffeta." Long centuries ago the Eastern merchants residing in this street manufactured it under the name of "Atabi," which we have corrupted to "Taffeta," states C. Marton in the *Daily News*.

The Saracens gave us Sarcenet, and Moussul, near to the Eastern capital of the Caliphs, Muslin.

Jersey coats had a romantic birth. The women of Jersey, while sons and husbands toiled at sea, plied their needles to fashion the first sample.

We order our tweeds for the shooting season, but had it not been for a mistaken reading of an invoice in the early days of its weaving, we might still be calling them "Twill." Because a colony of cloth workers settled on the banks of the River Tonques in Normandy, centuries ago, we added to our language "Tucks," white "Duck" trousers, "Tuckers" for children, as well as bed "Ticks."

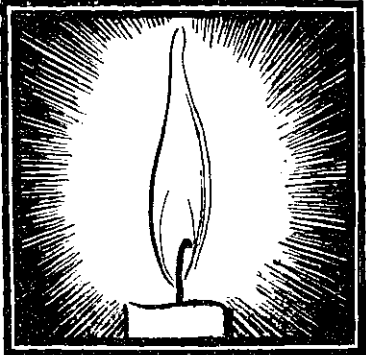
The "Shawls" of our factory lasses have for god-parent the valley of Shawl in Afghanistan. Though now made largely in Paisley, the famous Kashmir shawls were bred in this valley. The weavers' "Fustian" trousers were even transmuted from the suburb of Cairo called Fostat.

The shepherd princes of Spain (the Emirs) were sponsors for our "Merino" wool, while the Spanish Moors christened our "Moire" skirt.

"Spruce" meant originally "In the Prussian fashion." "Tawdry," we say of our neighbour's new costume, but St. Ethelreda might not like the scorn we put into the words. For St. Ethelreda (or St. Awdrey) died of a swelling in the throat, which she believed to be a judgment on her for her youthful love of finery. After her death the pilgrims to her shrine visited the fairs and decorated their persons with cheap imitations of chains and beads.

"NOW, Tommy," said his mother, giving her final instructions before he left for the Christmas party, "remember, if you're asked to have something you want, you must say, 'Yes, thank you,' and if you don't want it—"

Tommy raised his hand. "That's all right, Ma," he said, "you needn't bother about that part of it."



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