

RED REVOLUTION IN MEN'S CLOTHING



Bright Colors for Sport Presage End of Apparel's Age

"Those blue shirts and yellow ties. Dear me!"

A very blonde, very pretty, very slender, very British fashion designer called New York reporters into the Fashion Academy at Rockefeller Center one day last week to tell them the worst. Her name is Mrs. Angela Shepherd, she is twenty-four and she thinks the American male dresses just too frightfully.

"I have not," she sighed, "seen a single well-dressed man since I arrived."

The National Association of Merchant Tailors of America, however, has seen at least twenty-three. Last spring, anticipating men's clothing sales surpassing even the 1929 peak, it conducted a nationwide vote to select the twelve best-dressed men in America.* On the supposition, perhaps, that actors are men apart, the tailors also selected the eleven best-dressed Hollywood males.**

Display—Since the Glacial Age forced men to don bearskins for protection from icy

*Rating by points: Anthony Drexel Biddle of Philadelphia, 115; Marshall Field of Chicago, 84; Edward T. Stotesbury of Philadelphia, 81; William Rhineland Stewart of New York, 63; Milton Holden of New York, 62; Joseph E. Widener of Philadelphia, 61; Alfred P. Sloan, Jr., of New York, 60; William Goadby Loew of New York, 59; Lucius Beebe of New York, 57; T. Markoe Robinson of Long Island, 51; Claude K. Boettcher of Denver, 32; Conde Nast of New York, 32.

**Movie actors' rating: Clarke Gable, 35; Lewis Stone, 26; William Powell, 25; Robert Taylor, 24; Robert Montgomery, 23; Ronald Colman, 21; Herbert Marshall, 20; Adolph Menjou, 14; Clive Brook, 13; Franchot Tone, 12; Nelson Eddy, 12.



Jerome Zerbe

Lucius Beebe . . . among the
best-dressed men in winter

Revolution

winds, mankind has worn more—or less—than necessity demanded. From fied teeth and brilliant sarongs in the tropics to gay mackinaws in the North Woods, the tendency toward decoration is inherent in the human being.

Casual observation at resorts, where men have got up from their sick-bed of drabness, show the peacock no pea-hen would be. Even in semiformal attire, male stylists put their stamp of approval on such heresies as plum-colored dinner jackets, the mixing of odd trousers and coats.

Publicity—In line with increasing style consciousness derived from *Esquire* drawings of Fellows, Stewart and Saalburg, newspapers in large cities throughout the country devote columns, even whole sections, to men's wear. The *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, advising men to watch the hang of their trousers, exhorts:

"If you are going to make your figure an asset, as *The Plain Dealer* men's figure contest advocates, don't spoil a good start with a poor finish!" The *Chicago Daily Tribune* goes lyrical on the subject of bright sweaters:

"Light-weight materials make sweater-shirts ideal for laundering because they may be tubbed and blocked at night."

The *New York American* shows all the enthusiasm of women's *Vogue* in describing accessories:

"Another smart novelty belt is made of a silk ribbon-like jacket over a rubber lining!"

Likeness—The silk ribbons of *The American* unmask an underlying principle which escapes most writers on the subject of dress; there is a cyclical tendency of males and females to dress alike. According to Romain de Tirtoff-Erté, artist contributor to *Harper's Bazaar*, *Vogue*, *l'Illustration*, it was no accident that in War days women began wearing trousers and dressing like men. Nor is it any accident that men are following women into gay beach costumes and sports clothes (where the going is safer, at first).

Mr. de Tirtoff-Erté has history to prove his case. In the evolution of Western garb are two divisions:

The shirt and cloak from tropical countries, trousers from the arctic family circle. In modern countries, a combination of these two influences has evolved into trousers for men, skirts for women. It was not always so. In Babylon (3,000 B.C.), men and women dressed alike in tunics of undyed wool. In Greece of the bronze age the same rule held, as it did also in Egypt.

It was during medieval times, with so many men in the military service of their local lords, that men's clothing became the jacket and doublet. Long hose for men became common in the fourteenth century, while women, less active, clung to skirts.

Athletics—Given opportunity, however, women proceeded to meet men more than half-way in the matter of dress. In the twentieth century, developing an interest in sports, women followed the freedom of men's trousers with slacks and divided skirts, showed an interest in masculine suits. Since women again have extended the friendly hand, men show a tendency to grasp it. Hence, loud slacks on the beach this summer, gay shirts on golf-courses and tennis-courts.

According to Raymond Godfrey Twyeffort, Chairman of the National Fashion Committee, colorful beach-wear is but the first step. His own exclusive tailoring firm has sold \$5,000 worth of canary-yellow dinner jackets this season.

From conservative Philadelphia come orders for dinner jackets of pastel green, Gulf Stream blue, bisque. From Minneapolis, St. Paul and other cities of the West, orders for dinner jackets in nearly fifty colors have reached tailors.



Jerome Zerbe

Lucius Beebe . . . among the best-dressed men in summer

Most popular of all is a combination of Quaker gray jacket, dark blue trousers, maroon cummerbund. A "must" is that they be worn with colored studs.

For the West, Mr. Twyeffort points out, is a land of naturally colorful environment and with its pioneering spirit is less traditional. A Westerner takes his courage in hand and expresses a natural desire for color that most Easterners repress.

Color—Tracing to color in advertising the explosion of color repression after 100 years of drabness, Mr. Twyeffort points out that even the gray cities of the East go in for bright taxis, homes and packaged products.

"And as our city environment takes on more of the colors that modern chemistry makes possible, men will gather the courage to take more color unto themselves. Within the next few years," Mr. Twyeffort predicts, "men will wear more colorful raiment than women. Black dinner jackets will be laughable; there is no excuse for drabness in our leisure hours."

Mr. Twyeffort's predictions are borne out by recent fashion shows for men. Merchandisers from all over the country have come to New York, looked and gone home with ambitions to introduce this summer such items as the following:

Norwegian-type shoes for sports wear; monk-front shoes in patent leather for evening, buckled with instep straps; bright beach-shoes and lounging slippers with decorative effects stemming from the far corners of the earth; an East Indian madras cummerbund used in place of a waistcoat with a white dinner jacket.

Man's Town—By going to far places for "inspiration," merchandising of men's clothing resembles the preferred method of selling styles to women. But from whatever source inspiration may come, stern dictatorship of men's wear bears down—just as Paris has the last word on feminine attire—from London. More specifically, the Guild of Merchant Tailors decides what is correct.

Unlike tailoring establishments in America, which are geared to business-office efficiency, the London establishment of a Guild tailor has all the trappings of a club. Leather armchairs, magazines and newspapers invite the client to stay a while.

Revolution

Nor are high-pressure methods of selling used. A tailor will not make a suit to his client's taste—unless it coincides with his own.

"My Man"—A London tailor (generally referred to by his customer as "My man") doesn't "grab 'em in off the street," expects his clients to remain with him for life—as, no doubt, did the client's father before him. He expects new clients to come with letters of introduction.

Under the almost paternalistic relationship between tailor and client, loans often are made, letters forwarded, complete outfits put together for the client wiring ahead before returning to London from afar.

As casually as he orders his suits, usually more than one at a time, does the Londoner pay his bill. It is the last batch of suits he pays for when he orders the next; most clients, in fact, are not square with their "man" during their lifetime. Yet London tailors, when estates are settled, have fewer bad debts than American tailors.

Men in America, for the most part, do not have their clothes made to order. With the vast superiority of mass-production methods in this country, clothing stores have wide selections of styles, materials, cuts and sizes. A man walking into the John Davis Store, Fifth Avenue, New York, seldom presents a figure that can't be fitted from stock. This men's shop, paying \$150,000 rent a year, sells more than \$20,000 worth of suits on a good day, half as much more in accessories.

Advice—Mr. Robert Hastings, kindly Manager of the store, often gives experienced counsel to clients lucky enough to be preparing for a new job in a distant city or for a long trip. His recent selection for one man:

For business and daytime wear: A double-breasted gray suit; single-breasted brown suit.

For sports and travel: A garbardine suit with a plain back, fresh and cool looking in the new *bisque* shade; a sports-jacket in hound's tooth-check with contrastingly plain slacks.

For evening wear: Tails, even tho the customer did not have a dinner jacket.

Coats: Oxford gray double-breasted Chesterfield; a top coat of lighter gray, cut with a wide swing to the back.

**THE
LITERARY DIGEST
July 3, 1937
p. 32**