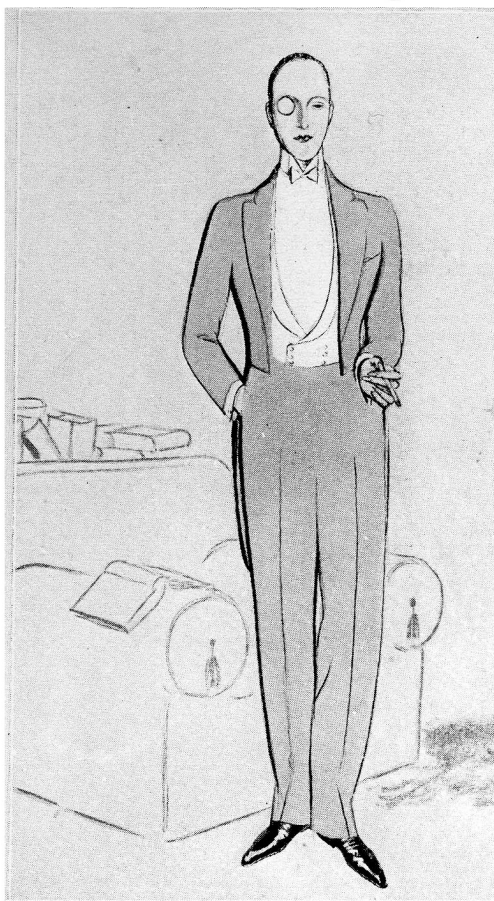


V A N I T Y F A I R

JANUARY, 1923

Our London Letter on Men's Fashions

*What the Smart Man in London
Wears and Some Impressions of
the Men in the Clubs*



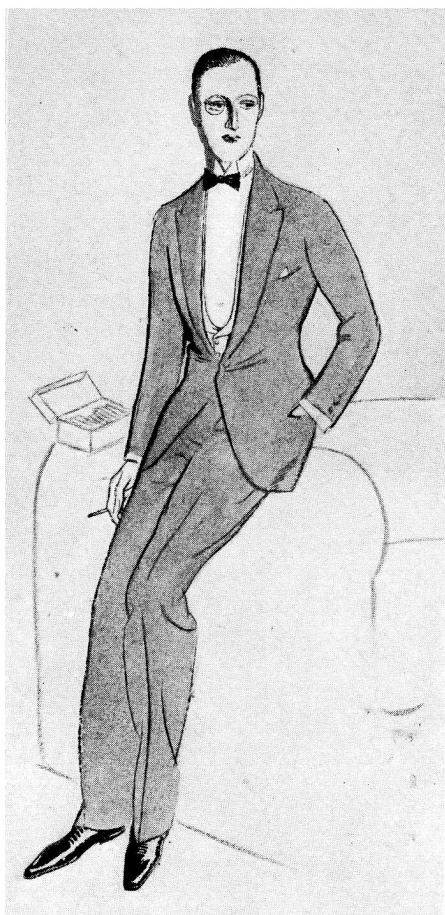
ESENTIALLY traditionalist in the matter of men's clothes, London is never more conservative than in dress clothes, and the changes from year to year are of the slightest. During the war, as in America, the dinner jacket and black tie were admitted everywhere, but fashion has again veered to the old custom, and unless a man is specifically requested to dress informally, he now wears the tail coat on all occasions. However, one still sees far more dinner jackets in restaurants than of yore, when black tie and short coat were for the home circle or the club alone, but in society, whether for small dance, ball, dinner or theatre party, the white tie is the rule.

One may broadly define the fashion of to-day as an accentuation of the figure from the waist upwards. Coats are cut close to the body, so as to suggest its lines and sleeves are made narrow, without the slight "bell" effect of last year. From the waist down, it is as if the body were obliterated, trousers being made very full, pleated at the waist, and falling in one long line from hip to heel. The ideally cut trouser does not even give a hint of the calf of the leg when standing.

A point of detail as regards trousers is that the braiding down the sides has quite gone out of fashion with full dress, and is seen but rarely with the dinner jacket.

Another well-defined mode is that of wearing a silk hat instead of the opera hat. This fashion started when the dinner jacket came into such general use and it is undeniable that

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with it the shiny silk looks better than the opera hat. It has now spread to such an extent that the vast majority of well-dressed men wear nothing but a silk hat in the evenings. Soft hats are not worn with dinner jackets by Englishmen except out of season in London, and this rarely, or else at foreign resorts where it is the custom of the country.

DRESS ties are worn with a very narrow bow. This is particularly true of the white tie, the ends of which are kept just within the breadth of the wing on the collar. In addition, they are tied with the smallest possible knot, and are single, that is to say, the under loop of the tie is drawn through the knot and then tucked away between shirt and collar, over the collar stud, and so behind the shirt-front. This way of tying helps greatly to the "waspy" effect which is the mode of the moment. Incidentally, the bow is invariably forward of the collar wings, and not behind them. Black ties may be a shade wider than the collar wings, and are more commonly worn double, as the single form suggests an excessive dressing which is out of harmony with the informal dinner jacket.

The facings of both dress coats and dinner jackets are being made in flat-toned silk, and not in satin as is the case in New York. The satin or silk waistcoat has never been popular here, and is not affected by Londoners.

Waistcoats remain single-breasted for the vast majority, though many smart young men have taken to the double-breasted, and it is very likely that this fashion will extend during the coming winter.

As regards overcoats for evening wear, the ordinary straight-lined loose coat of tradition in some fine black material and with silk facings, continues to hold sway. The very newest thing, however, is the close-fitting frock overcoat which has been reintroduced by a few men who pride themselves on being just ahead of the fashion. These coats are cut like a frock coat, except that the line is a little looser at the waist, and are made without side-pockets, though they preserve the ubiquitous breast pocket.

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Incidentally, the same breast pocket is re-appearing occasionally in the full dress evening coat, but it is very doubtful if it will "take on," as it tends to make a man look over-dressed, and the relief of the corner of white handkerchief is not needed as with the more sombre dinner jacket.

The straight evening cane has gone quite out of fashion, and the crook-handled malacca is now the correct thing for evening as for day wear. The smart Englishman, however, does not carry a cane in the evening when he wears an overcoat. Nor, generally, does he do so with a dinner jacket. Gloves are not worn with the dinner jacket except in cold weather and for utilitarian purposes, when they are not white kid, but an ordinary town glove. For full dress, the correct glove is of white kid and quite plain.

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