

A Point of Honor

By B. L. Jacot

A grim adventure in the underworld in which wits and sudden resolve battle against force

Illustrated by
Leo Kober

IN THE act of squirting soda water from the siphon at his elbow into a three-finger drink of brandy Dr. Rock paused uncertainly. Through the haze of alcohol fuddling his mind penetrated the consciousness that someone was knocking at the surgery door downstairs—had been knocking for some time. For a moment he grappled with the fact to pin it down, for visitors at this late hour were unusual, even for a slum doctor with a practice not above suspicion. But the knocking downstairs persisted.

Pushing himself unsteadily to his feet, a disheveled lumbering figure, he drew aside the curtains at the window and peered down into the darkness of the deserted street below. The naphtha flares about the stalls in the cobbled alley had long since been extinguished, but in the yellow cone of radiance thrown down like a cap from a squat street lamp he made out the shape of an expensive-looking limousine incongruously placed among the litter and filth of this Shoreditch back-street market. It took him some time to digest the fact, for the peak level of Rock's habitual insobriety was invariably reached in the early hours.

He made his way down into the converted shop which served as the professional portion of his premises, speculating vaguely but without great interest on the strangeness of this visit. Unlocking the surgery door he registered his first glimpse of the visitor. In the flickering light of the gas jet burning in the red lamp over the door a well-dressed young man in a neat gray overcoat and gray felt hat stood watching him critically, it seemed.

"DR. ROCK?" Not a figure to inspire confidence, this heavily built, shambling practitioner, with his shabby, ill-kept clothes, soiled linen, ragged white mustache, and nails not above suspicion of grime.

The doctor nodded, collecting himself with an effort to meet the calls of conversation. "Is—is there anything I can do for you?"

The young man stepped inside the surgery and closed the door. "An accident, Doctor. Urgent, or I wouldn't have bothered you at this hour. My car outside here—"

"Take a seat." The surgery with the door shut was in darkness relieved only by the light of the street lamp filtering through the dirt on the windows. Striking a match he fumbled at the tap and lit an incandescent gas light. His condition at this hour did not worry him. For ten, for twenty years James Rock had practiced medicine with alcohol as his only friend. Complete sobriety would have embarrassed him. "You say you have had an accident?"

His visitor nodded. He was running a critical eye over the evil-smelling little room. "An old man. We knocked him down along the street here, and took him to his home—just round the corner. He doesn't seem seriously injured—"

"We'll have to have him moved to the hospital, of course." For a moment he considered, then he began to search about the desk in the corner for his bag. "We must get along at once."

"Sorry to drag you out at this time of night, Doctor—"

But Rock did not hear. He was still fumbling about for his bag. Long practice had made his medical activities almost mechanical. An unusual call on his services, he was thinking, but there should be a useful fee. Not that money had ever concerned him much. Some half dozen years ago he had changed from whisky to brandy—a significant stage, and when a man has lived alone and drunk as heavily as James Rock, money together with all other interests is apt to fade into the fog of a neutral background.

Thirty years ago Rock's hand had been steady enough to knock up centuries for Oxford, and later for England. Now, it shook all round a pencil before he could pick it up. And for many years his eyes, once looking clearly and steadily on an assured brilliant future, had been yellow-tinged and

bloodshot. There were a hundred and one perfectly sound reasons why young Rock, with a brilliant Oxford degree and a house-surgeon's job in the biggest London hospital, should have gone from success to success. There was only one why he should not. Drink. But it was all-sufficient.

He had found his bag and was shuffling into a raincoat when the other attracted his attention.

"You will excuse my asking," he said, "but will you be leaving anyone in charge of the surgery?"

"In charge?" It took time for the question to emerge through the mists. He shook his gray head. "There's no one here but me."

"Then we'd better be going." The young man paused. "By the way, I suppose you have a book of death certificates with you? In case—that is to say—"

"Death certificates?"

"Just in case."

HE SHOOK his head. There were many dark and mysterious sides to Rock's practice in the slums of Shoreditch. With consultations a shilling a time, scruples are apt to be luxuries beyond a practitioner's means. After his name Rock could write F. R. C. S. and D. M. (Oxon.); his qualifications as a surgeon were the highest, and he used

them. Tearful mothers with tight-lipped daughters at the side door . . . his professional ministrations affecting the birth rate were widespread. If he ever gave a thought to the ethics of it or to the honor of a profession without peer, it was to incline to the view that no man—police, magistrate, member of parliament—has any right to compel a woman to bring a child into this world. This suggestion about death certificates worried him, however.

"Why should I bring my book of certificates?"

His visitor raised a reflective hand to his chin. He seemed to be dwelling on the poverty-labeled atmosphere of this surgery among the market stalls of a cobbled back street—the shop windows painted three quarters of the way up with black paint, the flickering red lamp with its cracked panes and the inscription "Surgery" in a half hoop of ground glass, the cheap linoleum agape with ragged holes, the benches, the greasy desk in the corner. He made no reply, but the doctor was sober enough now to notice the sneer on his lips.

"Even if the man dies I can't give a death certificate. It's a job for the coroner."

The other smiled. "All the same," he insisted, "I think you had better bring your little book along with you." James Rock (Continued on page 47)



After a moment the doctor rose to his feet again. "This man has been dead some time. He has been stabbed through the heart with a stiletto"

Sheer Modernism

By Marie Beynon Ray

You couldn't wear a seatpack parachute over a bustle, nor worm through a subway crowd with a hoop skirt. So modern dressmakers look at you modern women—at your boyish figures, clipped heads, smart faces, and pert little ways—and give you exactly what you need in this century of speed and sensibleness. And not a stitch more. As progress speeds up, there will be fewer stitches. Dress isn't concerned with art any more, but with comfort—yet beauty tags along

AFTER the French Revolution women bobbed their hair and slit their skirts to the knees. After the World War women bobbed their hair and cut their skirts clean off at the knees. The first time it was a gesture—a brazen but temporary declaration of independence. The second time there was no bravado about it. It was a quiet necessity.

This time when women used the shears they inaugurated the most momentous change in fashion that has taken place in a hundred years.

We are developing one of the greatest fashion periods in history—as distinctive of our age as the dress of the time of Marie Antoinette or of the Directoire was of its generation. At no time has feminine dress been anything like what it is today—except that perhaps Diana, when she went a-hunting, or Atalanta, when she ran her famous race, was dressed a little like us.

This is the mode that is called Modernist. We have Modernist Art, Modernist Decoration and now Modernist

Dress. All three have much in common, being peculiarly expressive of our times.

The scissors which women have used so ruthlessly are symbolic. Modernism is an art of the shears—a process of elimination and of suppression. It is simplicity reduced to its final terms. Clothes today are architectural—as stark and inevitable as our skyscrapers, as swift and beautiful as our airplanes. They are not something superimposed on women—totally extraneous as were the hoops and panniers of other periods—but rather an inevitable outgrowth of the modern woman's different body and spirit.

Something New Greets the Sun

A slim body, stripped like a willow wand. An emancipated, leaping spirit. A life made up of motor cars, elevators, subways, golf clubs, offices, ocean liners, cinema houses, traffic, compact apartments, tennis, swimming, traveling. Picture this type of woman with this new spirit leading this sort of life and

clad in a crinoline—or even a bustle!

After the war, the French dressmaker cast a dejected eye upon the modern woman. She was slimmer, younger, more active, more eager—and poorer! She was independent, practical, ambitious. She had cut her hair—shorter than Trilby's. Where, asked the *grand couturier*, was the elegant creature who had trailed his laces, flaunted his brocades, borne aloft his birds-of-paradise, languished in his velvets, floated in his pools of satin? Had elegance disappeared from the earth? It had.

When this devastated creature came knocking at his door, the *grand couturier* sighed and took up his laces and velvets and spangles despairingly, yet resolved to do his best by her. Once more the great artist would create, hoping that in time this gamine would become more gracious, more the *grande dame*—and richer! A forlorn hope.

But meantime there were one or two dressmakers—women, they were—who looked, not with despair, but with ravishment upon the scapegrace. At last, something new in the world of fashion! Away with brocades and plumes and embroideries and all the trailing glories of a bygone age. Here stands a new woman on our doorstep. Come in, my dear, come in!

Take off that ridiculous garment. Of all things—long sleeves and a high collar! And hooks down the back where you can't reach them—you who no longer have a lady's maid! And stays! How could you breathe?—and on the golf course one must breathe! Those shoes—absurd! Of course you can't drive a car in them. What fools those men dressmakers have always made of us! Dressing us up like dolls and pincushions! One would think you were to step into a sedan chair! Let me see—let me see. What shall I do with you?

Now when the dressmaker of the old school came to this point in his soliloquy—"What shall I do with you?"—his next question inevitably was, "How shall I make you more beautiful?" But strangely enough this woman dressmaker leaped suddenly and illogically to the question, "How shall I dress you more comfortably and more suitably?"

Comfort at Last

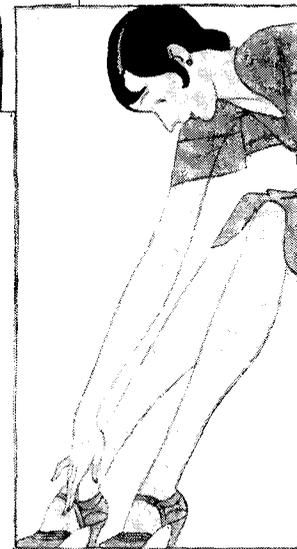
And you can see what a very different answer there would be to a question like that. "What do you need," said this modern dressmaker, "for the golf course? What do you need—and not a shred more—for the

A bag and belt of Rodier jersey with the design woven into the fabric, from Saks Fifth Avenue



Illustrated by
Harry
Beckhoff

Henning designs an evening sandal of silk crêpe with silver kid overlaid in a modern pattern



beach? What do you need for the crowded dance floor of a night club?"

It may be something that has never been called a dress before, admitted these emancipated dressmakers. It may be bloomers—or trousers—or—

"It may be a sweater," said Chanel—and lo and behold, it *was* a sweater.

"It may be no bones, no buttons, no collars, and no sleeves," said Vionnet—and it actually *was* no bones, no buttons, no collars, and no sleeves!

"It may be skirts to the knees," said a third—and it *was* skirts to the knees.

And so in no time at all this post-war paradox was clad in tweeds, homespuns, jersey and sweaters, topped off by a careless little felt hat, and for the first time in history women were more comfortably and sensibly dressed than men. And oddly enough, they were beautifully dressed—many would say more beautifully than ever before in history.

Isms in Fashion

One would not expect a dressmaker who says, "I have nothing to do with art," to create sheer beauty. Before the war, where did the *grand couturier* look for his inspiration? To the past—in museums, old costumes, old fashion books, old paintings; in foreign lands—in Persia, in China, in Egypt. And so our clothes were always marked by some ancient or foreign influence—by a minaret tunic, a princess waist, a Persian coat, or peasant embroidery.

No more. Our modern dressmakers refer to the past as little as does the designer of a zeppelin or a submarine. They look only at the modern woman—her boyish figure, her clipped head—and give her exactly what she needs for her twentieth-century life—and not a stitch more. They are practical business women first and foremost, these modern dressmakers, and artists secondarily. Those, like Chanel, who stick strictly to their trade and aim to produce, not works of art, but just the wearable, sensible, suitable clothes that a woman needs today, make the smartest, and to our (Continued on page 46)

ET FRERES



A coat of goatskin by M. Cohen turns a smart and graceful back to show two tones of gray skillfully matched in the new manner