



Illustrated by
Ralph Barton

RODING FASHIONS

By Germaine de Reby

IT WAS the hour of the apéritif, which in American means cocktail, and at the Café Tussac in the Place Vendôme, mannequins were gathered from half the famous couturières of Paris. Dark, flashing types of French beauty mingling with blondes, living patterns of the latest modes.

Young men were there by the dozen to match the girls in good looks and good clothes. All sipped rose cocktails—an entrancing mixture of champagne, cognac and grenadine, delicious to taste and gayly effective.

And they gossiped. Famed names like Patou, Chanel, Paquin, Worth, Martial and others passed their lips in banter and repartee. Busy but attentive waiters picked out of the badinage bits of information regarding well-known designers and well-known customers, and not so well-known proprietors of ateliers, that specialized in pirating designs.

Those waiters with trained ears were skilled in serving drinks, more skilled in catching significant chatter from the shop-talk of those they served.

Gentlemen All

Refreshed, effervescent mannequins and boy-friends made engagements for the evening or the morrow and redistributed themselves among the costume and tailoring establishments in that fashion hub of Paris. After which the waiters, who had been particularly attentive, conferred and sought telephones.

With the result that in the Bureau of the Chambre de Couture, the central protective organization of the best costumers of France, there was conference and excitement. Following this, the further result that in an office of the Prefecture of Police, an exceedingly important officer lifted shaggy brows, uttered a satisfied grunt and summoned three detectives for assignment.

These were not ordinary detectives. In France there is no lingual equivalent for the species of policemen known in America as flat-feet, although we have that type of detective to do the wanted work of searching out apaches required for crimes of violence. These detectives were arrayed in the fashion, pleated trousers, picturesque cravats and tapering collars. On their well-groomed heads reposed hats of the latest model. As they set out for duty on the following day their boutonnieres were fresh, their canes elegant, their gloves all they should be.

In a taxi that hooted and skidded as it ferreted out little-known streets in the Faubourg St. Antoine, they discussed their errands. The spokesman, a stout Beau Brummell with an eloquent mustache, told them how his strategy would operate.

"I shall say to Madame Ycours," said he, "that we are gentlemen of affairs who desire quantities of the finest and most recent designs from the best shops. But, being business men, we also desire to avoid excessive payment.

"Madame Ycours will possibly be dubious; but we shall reassure her, gain her confidence and persuade her to show us samples. Then the matter will be settled, our case completed."

And he relaxed for the rest of the ride, lifting broad nostrils as one who smelled glory from afar.

Pirating ideas is almost as much of a business as smuggling liquor. Paris is the source of supply. Here is the story of how it's done—by one who has helped do it

The cab halted before an unpretentious establishment in an unpretentious street. Behind closely drawn Venetian blinds it was impossible to peer. This house might be the town home of some eccentric person who preferred to live in an obscure business quarter.

Without hesitation the detectives left the cab and pressed the bell. A grille in the door slid back, after the manner of the more melodramatic New York speakeasies. Alert eyes surveyed the three gentlemen of fashion. The door slipped open to the extent of a ten-inch chain and they were guardedly asked their business.

Uttering a familiar name, the spokesman and his associates were admitted and guided up two flights of stairs where, in a strangely bright atelier, they saw midinettes at buzzing machines, sewing garments, and others at cutting and matching boards.

Madame Ycours came from an interior room. A handsome brunette of middle age with a quick, aggressive tongue.

The spokesman displayed his strategy while the other gentlemen of fashion, hats in hand, glanced about the room—its tall wardrobes, ornate radiators and glossy cases.

Skillfully parrying questions, Madame Ycours was genially noncommittal. She exhausted the careful catechism of the spokesman.

"It is possible, M'sieur," she finally admitted, "to duplicate costumes and millinery from the big shops. It is, indeed, possible. But that would be a risk, too, for the Chambre de Couture is watchful for copyists."

"You would be willing, then, to oblige us—for a price?"

"One is willing," said the lady, frankly, "to oblige anybody for the right price."

Thereupon, the spokesman of the detectives amazed the busy midinettes by forsaking the suave tactic of inquiry and announcing his identity.

"We shall search your premises," he declared.

Madame Ycours rapidly and artistically scaled the diapason of opposition, from outraged hauteur to protesting submission. The mirrors of fashion, wearing their hats in token that they were now down to business and no mere customers, went in and out of rooms, peered into wardrobes and cases, demanded to see the attic—in brief, as Americans say, frisked the joint.

Chagrined and Dejected

Nothing rewarded their trouble save the quick sarcasm of Madame Ycours. Defeated, they were about to leave when she stood before them, and, one after another, inspected their hats, their boutonnieres, their cravats. Dramatically she squared her shoulders and edged her voice.

"You have come disguised as gentlemen to secure evidence against me as a copyist of costumes," she accused. "And you have the audacity to wear evidence against yourselves."

"Do you know," she persisted before the surprised shrugs of the elegant three, "that your hats are spurious imitations of Pelissier headwear? And your cravats, what are they but copies of originals by Froissart? Your boutonnieres—how (Continued on page 76)

The Thirteenth Card

By E. Phillips Oppenheim



Sir Jasper Slane, gentleman student of crime, goes in search of a missing friend, and spends an exciting evening

A LITTLE company of men, among whom was Jasper Slane, trooped out from the dining-room of the Lavender Club and approached the broad staircase which led to the bridge rooms. The hall porter, who had been speaking on the telephone, hurried over to them.

"Sir Jasper," he announced, "you are wanted on the telephone, sir."

Slane paused dubiously. Telephone calls at that hour of the evening were inopportune.

"Do you know who it is?" he asked.

"He didn't mention his name, sir," the man replied, "but I fancy that it was Lord Minchingham's voice. He said that it was an urgent matter."

"Put me in the table, and I'll play the next rubber," Slane begged his companions, with a little sigh of regret. "I don't know what the devil Minchingham wants with me at this time of the night."

He entered the telephone compartment, and picked up the receiver.

"That you, Minchingham?" he inquired.

"Wizard!" was the brief response. "I say, Slane, are you doing anything very particular?"

"Well, I was just going to play bridge."

"So were we, but fate seems to have intervened. What I want to know is

He paused to smell the flowers and his fingers closed upon something just out of sight of the princess and her companion

Illustrated by
T. D. Skidmore

whether you can come round here, number 6A, Cunningham Mansions, you know."

"DO YOU mean at once, or later on?" Slane queried with a certain lack of enthusiasm in his tone.

"I mean this minute. Come in the quickest taxi you can find. Something has happened which we don't quite understand. I think you could help us. Awfully sorry, and all that, but—"

"I will come," Slane promised.

He hung up the receiver, sent a regretful message upstairs, put on his hat and coat, found a taxi, and drove to Cunningham Mansions. The building itself, in which the flat was situated, was a comparatively small one. The ground floor was taken up by shops on each side, the first floor by offices, the second floor by a residential flat, and the third by Lord Minchingham's small but famous bachelor suite.

There was a slight air of disturbance, Slane noticed, in the entrance hall. The commissioner was looking annoyed, and the elevator man distraught. Slane, however, asked no questions, stepped into the elevator, ascended to the third floor, was relieved of his coat and hat by Minchingham's perfect butler, and ushered at once into the library. Minchingham, pale, with a high forehead and languid eyes, slim, debonair, but extremely lethargic, not from mannerism but from real disposition, rose to meet him. He had been seated at a card table, at which were two other men. The third place was vacant.

"Very good of you to come, Jasper," Minchingham said, as he shook hands. "You know these fellows, I think."

SLANE nodded, and exchanged greetings with the other two men. One was Goring Brett, who held a permanent post in the Foreign Office; the other was Sir Martin Phipps, a member of Parliament, chairman of many companies, and a well-known figure in the world of finance. Even from the moment of his entrance, there seemed to Slane to be something curious about that third and empty place.

"What are you doing? Playing cut-throat?" he asked.

"We are half afraid there is someone else who is doing that," Minchingham replied, in his high-pitched, bored tone. "We sat down to play a rubber of bridge three quarters of an hour ago—we three and Cartwright. You know Ronny Cartwright, of course?"

"Yes, I know Ronny," Slane admitted.

"The cards had just been dealt, when Thomson, my butler, came in and announced that someone wanted to speak on the telephone to Cartwright. He apologized and hurried away, carrying his cards, and sorting them as he left the room. The telephone is in the little hall smoking-room outside, as I dare say you know. I am telling you all this rather carefully because we have so little to go on, and any trifle might give you an idea."

"Quite right."

"WELL, we waited a minute or two," Minchingham continued, his drawl becoming more pronounced. "We waited five minutes. We waited nearly ten. Then these fellows began to get the fidgets, and I went out. Cartwright's cards were on the small table by the side of the telephone instrument. The front door was open, but he himself had vanished. I rang for Thomson. Thomson knew nothing. I looked round the flat—no sign of Cartwright anywhere. I went downstairs to the commissioner. The commissioner had been in his little office for the last three quarters of an hour, and was sure that not a soul had entered or left the building. The long and the short of it is, Slane—it's a damned silly thing to say—but Ronny Cartwright has disappeared."

"Well, he can't have got very far," Slane observed, with a smile.

"That should make the task simpler," Minchingham rejoined, "but all we ask is, find him for us. You know the geography of the place. The ground floor is all let out in shops which have been closed up for at least three hours. The floor above consists of offices, and they have been empty since seven o'clock. The floor above them and immediately under us is occupied by Princess Varnava, a very wealthy Russian-Polish lady who keeps us in touch with the *haute monde* inasmuch as even Buckingham Palace calls to see her. We two are the only tenants."

"Does Cartwright know the princess?" Slane inquired.

"I am quite sure he doesn't, because only last time he was here he asked, curiously enough (Continued on page 24)