

Preface

Gentlemen of the readership—bankers, lawyers, consultants, accountants, educated service providers, my white-collar brethren (collectively, “Professional Gentlemen”)—herein please find what I hope will be more than just serviceable guidelines of style on how to dress.¹ This book is my attempt to explore the topic of personal presentation through the very practical viewpoint of the Professional Gentleman’s actual environment—your day-to-day office reality. The goal of this exploration is to encourage appropriate spheres of self-expression in your appearance and thereby enhance your career and enrich your life (hopefully more than just financially).

To put this in some perspective: if you are a young strutting peacock, fresh out of graduate school, the laws of style set forth herein (the “Laws”) may rein in some of your more dandy impulses to a more subdued professional presentation.² Your innate sartorial curiosity, however, will be refined and encouraged by the Laws, giving you a subtle sophistication and mien all within your budget. Alternatively, if you are a grinding service partner at a large firm who couldn’t care less about fashion, the Laws will escalate your style game to a level that could elevate your current standing. The Laws will also potentially expose you to a degree of sartorial appreciation that will allow you to actually begin to enjoy the self-expression your choice of dress affords you. Verily, you’ll be a new man, man.

As Professional Gentlemen, we find ourselves in a period of distinct change—a cultural shift. More and more men are measuring success not just financially, but creatively in other spheres of their lives. I’d like you to be one of these men. We are also at a time when the general public takes a dim view of many of us. There is a common perception (not without some basis in fact) of bankers duping investors, accountants advising large corpo-

1. You’ll indulge me, perhaps you’ll even appreciate, the legal agreement formatting of certain text. I’ve been comfortable drafting agreements this way for 20 years, so I’m comfortable writing a book that way now. I assume you all know how the defined term works.

2. With so many choices available, often what we choose *not* to wear exhibits as much style as what we ultimately put on.

rations how to minimize their tax obligations, and lawyers suing for sport and the prospect of a fat payday. We are perceived as the 1% and, really, in the minds of many, perhaps the nastiest segment of it. Pitiless Trumpian henchmen. This collective opinion has many of us not wanting to actually look like Professional Gentlemen. I don't want you to be one of these men.

I truly believe that style is a form of self-respect. Respect yourself. Respect your profession. Respect your appearance. And by the transitive property of equality—respect the clothes. What you wear and how you wear it are, as one of my clients, menswear designer Robert Tagliapietra puts it, “the first and last defining thing you present to people when you meet them.”³ Do not underestimate the importance of a first impression. Your appearance speaks before you do. Let it have a dulcet tone.

There are no books focused on educating Professional Gentlemen on this subject. Moreover, we are living at a time—an aesthetic inflection point—where business norms in manners of dress are changing. Casual Friday has given way to the full-time casual workplace in many industries. This has thrown many men (not to mention many menswear brands) into a state of generalized confusion. Sadly, for many, the default reaction to this state of affairs is apathy.

The books for men that focus on how to dress like a British gentleman in a suit (and there are too many of such books to count) have become hopelessly outdated for today's Professional Gentleman. And yet interest in menswear has seemingly never been greater.⁴ To many economists, men are the new women—and we want options, dammit! With options come choices, and choices are best made with advice. That's where this book comes in—offering good advice for your particular station.

I certainly hope this book will be fun for you, a good read, a decent catalog of apparel, accessories, and brands, as well as a source of some chuckles. But *I know* this book will offer very practical advice. At its most basic level, it is a guide to improve your ability to effectively interact with clients and other Professional Gentlemen and thereby advance your career. Yes, clothing and accessories and how you put yourself together are career tools. What we will consider herein is not frivolity but is indeed important stuff.

So I will attempt to treat this subject with the degree of gravity it requires from the perspective of a fellow Professional Gentleman, not a fashionista nor a fusty old snob. Which is to say, I'm prepared to be extremely serious about the subject of menswear, but not damned precious or snotty about

3. Council of Fashion Designers of America, *The Pursuit of Style: Advice and Musings from America's Top Fashion Designers* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2014).

4. The growth of the global market for men's clothing was up 24% in 2015 and will reportedly reach \$40 billion by 2019, according to a January 2016 report from Barclays.

it. If you don't get your shoes made by hand with a cobbler your family has had a relationship with for generations, that's fine with me. Given my background, I am sincerely hoping I am able to commiserate and accept professional realities in your clothing and accessory choices rather than talk down to you from some stylistic ivory tower.

I've been representing clients in the fashion industry for 20 years as a corporate lawyer. I've done this in big law settings (Shearman & Sterling in New York and Paris offices) and boutique settings (HBA—one of the pre-eminent firms in fashion law). I've . . . well, I've been there friends: dealing with large public company clients in Asia, Europe, the Middle East, and South America; in late-night drafting sessions at the financial printers with lawyers, bankers, and information agents; in court with clients with a lot on the line; and in diligence sessions with lawyers and accountants of various stripes. In addition to maintaining my practice at HBA, I am the general counsel at the American brand Rag & Bone, as well as to the Council of Fashion Designers of America.

I am also an adjunct law professor, with a course on fashion law at my alma mater, New York University School of Law, as well as a practicum on fashion law at Cardozo Law School with law students working with students from the Fashion Institute of Technology, where I've been a long-time member of the school's Couture Council.⁵ For good measure, I am a member of the London-based Luxury Law Alliance and speak about cross-border issues facing the fashion industry. I received an MBA from NYU's Stern School of Business and focused on finance. I interviewed with a sharp-elbowed crew of investment banking hopefuls in the '90s and considered taking up banking as my occupation but ultimately felt my temperament and skills were better matched to legal practice.

My wife started one of the first new-media companies focused on fashion—*Daily Candy*. Despite her high level of credibility in the industry and her consideration of personal appearance, she does not dress me. Far from it. I revel in my clothing choices. I am my own man.⁶ I challenge her for closet space (just ask her). I present myself the way I want to be seen and the way I feel most confident and comfortable. I look capable and elegant.

I've seen a few professionals dress very, very well. Of this group, they are all, without exception, wildly accomplished, confident men. I've seen many others do an adequate, safe job of it. Of this group, some have done very well, others not so well. And lastly, I've seen way too many men do it

5. No, this book is not the textbook for either course. Both courses address the actual legal regimes facing companies that operate in the fashion industry.

6. I am both a man of style and a man's man. I don't at all find these to be contradictory terms. In fact, they are complementary terms.

wrong—sometimes not only to their own shame, but to the general denigration of our professions.

So gentlemen, since we are a rule-based group and, to our credit, have logged the hours of study and practice to commit many of those rules to memory, I hereby offer up a few helpful rules of style. The Laws! With which, I hope and expect you will do great things.