CHAPTER XX

SEX IN COSTUMING

"European dress" is the term accepted to imply the costume of man and woman which is entirely cosmopolitan, decrying continuity of types (of costume) and thoroughly plastic in the hands of fashion.

To-day, we say parrot-like, that certain materials, lines and colours are masculine or feminine. They are so merely by association. The modern costuming of man the world over, if he appear in European dress (we except court regalia), is confined to cloth, linen or cotton, in black, white and inconspicuous colours; a prescribed and simple type of neckwear, footwear, hat, stick, and hair cut.

The progenitor of the garments of modern men was the Lutheran-Puritan-Revolutionary garb, the hall-mark of democracy.

It is true that when silk was first introduced
into Europe, from the Orient, the Greeks and early Romans considered it too effeminate for man's use, but this had to do with the doctrine of austere denial for the good of the state. To wear the costume of indolence implied inactivity and induced it. As a matter of fact, some of the master spirits of Greece did wear silks.

In Ancient Egypt, Assyria, Media, Persia and the Far East, men and women wore the same materials, as in China and Japan today. Egyptian men and their contemporaries throughout Byzantium, wore gowns, in outline identical with those of the women. Among the Turks, trousers were always considered as appropriate for women as for men, and both men and women wore over the trousers, a long garment not unlike those of the women in the Gothic period.

Thaïs wore a gilded wig, but so did the men she knew, and they added gilded false beards.

Assyrian kings wore earrings, bracelets and wonderful clasps with chains, by which the folds of their draped garment,—cut like the
woman's, might be caught up and held securely, leaving feet, arms and hands free for action.

When the genius of the Byzantine, Greek and Venetian manufacturers of silks and velvets, rich in texture and ablaze with colour, were offered for sale to the Romans, whose passion for display had increased with their fortunes, and consequent lives of dissipation, we find there was no distinction made between the materials used by man and woman.

It is no exaggeration to say that the Renaissance spells brocade. Great designs and small ones sprawled over the figures of man and woman alike.

Lace was as much his as hers to use for wide, elaborate collars and cuffs. Embroidery belonged to both, and the men (like the women) of Germany, France, Italy and England wore many plumes on their big straw hats and metal helmets. The intercommunication between the Orient and all of the countries of the Western Hemisphere, and the abundance and variety of human trappings bewildered and vitiated taste.

Unfortunately the change in line of costume
PLATE XXVI
Mrs. Vernon Castle costumed à la guerre for a walk in the country.
The cap is after one worn by her aviator husband.
This is one of the costumes—there are many—being worn by women engaged in war work under the head of messengers, chauffeurs, etc.
The shoes are most decidedly not for service, but they will be replaced when the time is at hand, for others of stout leather with heavy soles and flat heels.
Mrs. Vernon Castle Costumed à la Guerre for a Walk
SEX IN COSTUMING

has not moved parallel to the line in furniture. The revival of classic interior decoration in Italy, Spain, France, Germany, England, etc., did not at once revive the classic lines in woman's clothes.