CHAPTER XXVII

MODELS

An historical interest attaches to fashions in women's costuming, which the practised eye is quick to distinguish, but not always that of the novice. Of course the most casual and indifferent of mortals recognises the fact when woman's hat follows the lines of the French officer's cap, or her coat reproduces the Cossack's, with even a feint at his cartridge belt; but such echoes of the war are too obvious to call for comment.

It is one of the missions of art to make subtle the obvious, and a distinguished example of this, which will illustrate our theme,—history mirrored by dress,—was seen recently. One of the most famous among the great couturières of Paris, who has opened a New York branch within two years, having just arrived with her Spring and Summer models, was showing them to an appreciative woman, a patron of many
Madame Geraldine Farrar as Carmen.
In each of the three presentations of Madame Farrar we have given her in character, as suggestions for stage costumes or costume balls. (By courtesy of Vanity Fair.)
Mme. Geraldine Farrar in Spanish Costume as Carmine
years. It is not an exaggeration to say that in all that procession of costumes for cool days or hot, ball-room, salon, boudoir or lawn, not one was banal, not one false in line or its colour-scheme. Whether the style was Classic Greek, Mediæval or Empire (these prevail), one felt the result, first of an artist's instinct, then a deep knowledge of the pictorial records of periods in dress, and to crown all, that conviction of the real artist, which gives both courage and discretion in moulding textiles,—the output of modern genius, to the purest classic lines. For example, one reads in every current fashion sheet that beads are in vogue as garniture for dresses. So they are, but note how your French woman treats them. Whether they are of jet, steel, pearl or crystal, she presses them into service as so much colour, massing them so that one is conscious only of a shimmering, clinging, wrapped-toga effect, à la Grecque, beneath the skirt and bodice of which every line and curve of the woman's form is seen. Evidently some, at least, are to be gleaming Tanagras. Even a dark-blue serge, for the motor, shopping or train, had
from hips to the bust parallel lines of very small tube-like jet beads, sewn so close together that the effect was that of a shirt of mail.

The use of notes of vivid colour caught the eye.) In one case, on a black satin afternoon gown, a tiny nosegay of forget-me-not blue, rose-pink and jessamine-white, was made to decorate the one large patch-pocket on the skirt and a lapel of the sleeveless satin coat. Again on a dinner-dress of black Chantilly lace, over white chiffon (Empire lines), a very small, deep pinkish-red rose had a white rosebud bound close to it with a bit of blue ribbon. This was placed under the bertha of cobweb lace, and demurely in the middle of the short-waisted bodice. Again a robe d'intérieur of white satin charmeuse, had a sleeveless coat of blue, reaching to knees, and a dashing bias sash of pinkish-red, twice round the waist, with its long ends reaching to skirt hem and heavily weighted.

Not at once, but only gradually, did it dawn upon us that most of the gowns bore, in some shade or form, the tricolour of France!