Gilda Varesi informed me one day she was writing a play. "Yes?" I answered. I was an intimate friend and not obliged to assume a thrilled expectancy. Her genius as an actress could not surprise me. I expected her always to sway, fascinate, charm the public, but a play! Forgive me. About every other actor I meet is going to make a fortune with a drama or a chicken farm. Well, "Enter Madame" by Gilda Varesi and Mrs. Byrnes, the greater part by Gilda Varesi—made an instantaneous hit. Maybe, I will some day visit a model actor-chicken farm. Maybe, Miss Varesi and I were living at 317 West 47th Street, when the spirit moved her to write. Every day she came to my room to read her play. It grew and grew. Its charm surprised the author and the intimate friend. One night she jumped up and down and asked, "Min, that does sound well. I didn't think I could do anything like that, did you?" A truthful negative was my answer. Miss Varesi was frail. She was playing an arduous role in "The Jest" at night, yet working all day at the play. Hard work, persistence, unerring energy, plus genius made Gilda Varesi's success.

It was finished. Now to place it. Hope one day, disappointment the next, but at last, glorious news. Brock Pemberton, bless him, accepted the play and gave Gilda Varesi the part of "Madame" and I was to have the role of the stiff secretary.

We rehearsed four weeks. One hot, rainy night in August, Gilda Varesi and "yours truly" got into a taxi and were driven to the Garrick Theatre—to open cold, as we call it. We arrived with fear and excitement. Miss Varesi said, "Cheer up, Min—we'll get two weeks salary anyway."

The house was sold out. The audience tense, expectant. Miss Varesi was loved by her fellow actors, by the public who had seen her make small parts stand out like comets. What would she do in her own play?

Our doubts are traitors, and make us lose the good we oft might win By fearing to attempt. —Shakespeare.
For centuries architects have looked to Greece and Rome for knowledge and inspiration; painters and sculptors to Italy, and of course to the more recent interior decorators. The later years interior decorators have sought out Paris. That there is an inalienable bond between Paris and interior decoration is not to be denied. Scarce a great court of Europe since the middle of the seventeenth century was not modelled or remodelled after that of Versailles. In Russia one finds a crude rhythmic style which is obviously but a Russianized Louis XV. Our own American colonial in its last stages amounts to a variation of the French Directoire and Empire styles. "L'Art Nouveau," the free, flowing, "back to nature" style of the nineteenth century, though it has somewhat lost favor in France, has flourished in northern Spain and is singing its swan song (we hope) in the gigantic cathedral of Barcelona. Pictures of the late exposition leave nothing to be said of the influence of France's youngest child of fancy upon "arts decoratifs" of modern Europe, Asia and Africa, while America, though not so prone to accept the new style, is adopting the seventeenth and eighteenth century styles of France, till there is not a country boasting western civilization but which has carried in its heart's content the undeniable imprint of one or more of the French styles.

That the great styles should have been born in or near Paris is not surprising when one notes the character of the French people. A taste for great enthusiasm and spontaneity, quick and excitable, capable of dealing with but one idea at a time, they have put heart and soul into whatever they attempted, working together to one end. Gifted with great originality, a supreme individuality and a love for anything new and different, they have created much—much that was good and more that was bad; but the prevailing French taste and the love of beauty, quick to recognize and champion a proved what was good and allowed the rest to be swept away by the avalanche of the next style. Often there were mistakes and some of France's greatest art treasures have given place to unworthy successors. But save for the ruinous marlizing and whitewash of Louis Phillipe, which is, perhaps, after all, preserved only for the fine architecture which it covers, France has cherished little that is without merit. The contorted forms, the bizarre lines of the "art nouveau" of the end of the last century is even now being swept away by the simple forms, flat surfaces and direct lines of the newer style and its garish, grating colors are disappearing under the tendecy toward greys, beiges, silvers and the subtler harmonies of the twentieth century style. True, much remains that is bad and there is much in it that is new, but the style is young, is still in its experimental stage. Give it time, and we shall find that France has given us another great style as well suited to modern life and as expressive of it as was Gothic to the simple life of its day and to the glory of God; as was the style of Louis XIV to the court life of the last half of the seventeenth century and to the glory of "Le Grand Monarque," for today the only greater thing Paris can say of a piece of furniture than to call it "bien ancien" is to proclaim it "bien nouveau."

In the Loire valley one can study to heart's content the Gothic and Renaissance chateaux, at Versailles one finds the French styles of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, at Malmaison, the Empire and in Paris all of them. From Paris it is but a short journey to Spain, Italy, Holland and England, the centers of the few non-French styles which are important to decorators.

Too, in Paris a student has prestige. In America he is "only a student" until he has proved himself great; in Paris he is a possible genius until he has proved himself otherwise. In museums here a foreign student is freely granted privileges he cannot obtain in the museums of his own country.

So when the great tirade of criticism which was once hurled upon the now loved furniture of the Louis XV period has been cast off by the present style and an understanding world is flaunting it against some future innovation, Paris will still be the mecca of students of interior decoration.