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Paul Hervieu's "Labyrinth."

By Frederic Davidson

I wonder how many among the scant audiences who witnessed the production of this play last week had the feeling that here was a great tragedy, a work of literary art wrought by a master hand, destined to descend to posterity as one of the monuments of our times, but a monument also to the eternal sameness of human nature and the insolubility of its problems. Such was my impression, wrong perhaps, and due, it may be, only to a mood of peculiar receptivity or to a prejudice in the author's favour, but perhaps also not far from the truth, as I hope to show in the considerations which follow. All criticism is subjective, if we may believe the master impressionist, Jules Lemaitre, who says somewhere that there is no such thing as objective criticism, that the personal equation not merely enters into it, but is the whole thing; and that instead of writing a book on Shakespeare, for instance, one should say: "I propose to talk about myself with reference to Shakespeare." That is it. Oneself is the subject one knows best and upon it therefore one is sure to be most interesting. So with an egotism whose motive may, I hope, obtain pardon for the sin, I propose to speak of my impressions of "The Labyrinth."

The title is well chosen. The Cretan labyrinth wrought by Daedalus, the cunning artificer, was not more difficult to trace than the psychic mazes whose involutions we here thread under the artist's guidance, nor did the youths and maidens, Attica's tribute, look with greater horror on the bull-headed monster to whom they were sacrificed than do these victims of their self-wrought fate upon the dread phantoms their frenzied consciences conjure up. Hervieu's "Labyrinth" is a puzzle made of the delicate interrelations of men and women in the world of today, and his Minotaur is Divorce.

The elements of the problem are simple: their arrangement is the impasse. Max de Pogis and his wife Marianne are divorced because of an infidelity of the former, committed in a moment of caprice through no weakening of love for his wife. The latter, though her happiness lie in ruins about her, lives on for the sake of her child, sustained by pride and by the friendship of Guillaume Le Breuil, a man who comes to love her truly, purely, to give her his whole life, and eventually to win her hand through friendship, pity and also because she must save her reputation in the eyes of the world which has begun to couple her name with his. The pain of her first

love is deadened; in respect for her new husband and love for her boy she finds a semblance of peace, which, however, is rudely disturbed by the reappearance on the scene of Max de Pogis, who sets up a claim to a share in the education and guardianship of their son. The woman for whom he had deserted his wife is dead, and the child is now to him, as to her, the only real interest. Meeting at the bedside of the little Pierre during a dangerous illness the old love blossoms anew. Marianne discovers that Max has always loved her and he wins her back to his arms. She cannot now go back to her loyal second husband; that would be a double degradation. She cannot divorce him and re-marry her first husband—that is contrary to the law of France. Guillaume learns the situation, and, though heart-broken, consents to renounce Marianne if Max will do likewise, but the latter refuses, knowing that she loves him. Marianne determines to reject both and to live on for her child, but De Pogis comes to persuade her to leave France with him. He meets Le Breuil; a quarrel and struggle ensue, at the end of which the second husband drags the first over a precipice into a whirlpool beneath in which both meet their death.

The climax has been criticized as melodramatic, but it evolves naturally from the intense jealousy of the two lovers and from the determination of the first husband not to give up his wife, knowing that he is loved by her. It is a fitting ending to the play, but not by any means a solution of its problems. For these indeed we feel that there can be none.

There is a sub-plot and counterpart to the story of Max and Marianne in the domestic affairs of the Saint-Erics, whose course touches the main plot sufficiently to be not merely episodic, but an integral part thereof. Here it is the wife who is fickle. She is brought to her senses by the death of her child, a victim of the same epidemic of diphtheria which so nearly carries off the little Pierre de Pogis. She is utterly broken, but the great heart of Marianne, though bearing bitterer burdens, has yet room for comfort and sympathy for her friend. The frail, frivolous black figure in the arms of Marianne is shaken by a great gust of tragedy.

In point of art, the stark simplicity and grandeur of Aeschylus or Sophocles are equalled here. In point of human interest, Greek tragedy with its externally intervening fate, blind, undeserved, seems pale and trivial beside this tragedy from within, this drama of responsibility more