

begun work on another play, that he had discovered another star, that he was just off to Europe or just back. Money poured in upon him, and he spent it in the manner of the actors, his friends. That is to say, he arrayed himself with striking elegance, surrounded himself with regal objects of art, and was ministered to by hordes of lackeys. The man, indeed, was always far more the actor himself than the literary gent. He wrote his plays in and for the theatre; they were full of fat parts; they staggered Broadway for a season, and then they vanished. Today, I believe, they are all dead, including even "The City," which made Broadway gasp. "The City" was not produced until after Fitch's death. Mr. Moses and Miss Gerson grow lyrical over its success, but the truth is that it succeeded only for one terrific night. After that it shocked no more, and soon it was shelved. It is Broadway legend that its shocks were not actually inserted by Fitch himself, but by a post-mortem collaborator. That collaborator is said to have been the late Theodore Kremer, author of "Nellie, the Beautiful Cloak Model."

Fitch had a sort of talent, but it was extremely slender. The minutiae of current manners interested him, and he reproduced them in his plays with great fidelity. No one could do a fashionable funeral better than he, or a dinner party, or a conversation between mistress and maid. What ailed him was that he had no mind—that he never thought about the things he depicted so cunningly. He came into the theatre at a time when ideas were beginning to invade it, but he brought in none of his own, and he seems to have been unmoved by those of other and better men. As a result, even the most amusing of his plays were as hollow as jugs. They got out of date as soon as the fashion in mourning changed, or in shaking hands, or in idle vice. Had he lived long enough he would have written a parlor melodrama about mah jong. He was interested in waistcoats, rugs, lip-sticks, Biarritz, the rise and fall of the crinoline and the bustle,

but there is not the slightest sign in any of his plays that he had any interest in the eternal struggle between man and his fate. The letters printed by Mr. Moses and Miss Gerson are instructive and at the same time devastating. They depict a grown man with the interests and manners of a somewhat intelligent girl of seventeen.

Stevenson Again

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON: A CRITICAL BIOGRAPHY, by John A. Steuart. Two volumes. Boston: *Little, Brown & Company*.

Two months ago, in reviewing Miss Rosaline Masson's book on Stevenson, I bemoaned the lack of a critical biography of him, separating the facts about his life and work from the romantic gurgling of his admirers. Mr. Steuart's two large volumes make a gallant attempt in that direction. They depict the young Stevenson of the Edinburgh days very realistically: a grotesque young mountebank about town, dressed like a guy, boozing in the lowest pubs, and carrying on a long series of depressing love affairs with ladies of the town. One of them, a street-walker, he even proposed to marry. Whence came such aberrations in the son of a respectable Presbyterian? Mr. Steuart, with Scotch smugness and lack of humor, blames them all on a touch of French blood: on the Stevenson family tree, distaff side, there hung the glands of a certain Lizars, or Lisouris, who settled in Edinburgh about the year 1600. Perhaps the theory has something in it: for a pure Scot to become an artist, even a bad one, is surely rather unusual. But the long hair, the beer-bibbing and the wenching are sufficiently accounted for, it seems to me, in a simpler way. Louis came to adolescence in an era of rising doubt, with the name of Darwin on every Christian's lips and Huxley in full eruption. He was, furthermore, an only son, and greatly spoiled by a doting mamma. What more natural than for him to rebel violently against the paternal Calvinism, and what more natural than for

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