

not for the fact that the lomechusa after pupation must remain buried in the ground in order to develop, and that the slave-makers, unaware of this necessity, dig up as many of the parasitic pupae as they can find and consequently destroy them, there would soon be no more formica sanguinea to delight the naturalist.

This weird story, which is nothing to what could be said of some of the gross and dangerous inconsistency of supposedly reasonable human beings, suggests many questions anent the reasons for the development of society as a factor in animal life. Although Professor Wheeler in his introductory chapter seems to give his approval to the pleasant but insupportable generalities of Prince Kropotkin concerning mutual aid among men and animals, he does not hesitate to point out that the species which develops parasitism is doomed to ultimate extinction and that a change from the independent individual existence to the social state is one sure way of becoming host to innumerable and inescapable parasites. This does not do much to prove that society is the great triumphant aim and end of organic evolution. In fact, with due allowances made for the ineffectuality of any analogy between the life of humans and that of other animals, it still may be true that society, the pitfall into which, from our tree-top heritage, we have ungracefully fallen, is but a confession of and a defence against weakness which at the last shall strike us down from our proud place as the deity, if not the king, of beasts.

Professor Wheeler is wise enough not to attempt to draw any analogy of this or of any other sort which could be accepted as definite evidence in favor of any one point of view. His work, however, leaves no uncertainty in the mind of the reader as to the truth of one thing. That thing is the fact that, if there is any one cause for the apparent failure of animal life to continue in those channels of evolutionary process which it must once have followed, it is the development of the social instinct among living beings. For those animals which have become social, and they are by no means as numerous as Kropotkin would have had us believe, are no longer moving along the trunk of the tree of life but are branches and terminated twigs carrying the vitality of the trunk out into the impalpable nothingness of air. The ants, of which there are no solitary species, are the chief branch of the insect world, while we, poor casuists that we are, hang like an old apple from the mammalian twig. Our one chance of salvation seems to be in a mysterious and terrifying vitality out of some exudation of which we build a spirit, sometimes subtle and sometimes murderous, that transcends mere intelligence. Professor Wheeler's remarkable book is a petal of the fine flower of that spirit.

RAYMOND HOLDEN.

The Literary Discipline

The Literary Discipline, by John Erskine. New York: Duffield and Company. \$1.75.

THIS is a collection of neat little essays on the limitations imposed upon literature by art, convention, morality, and so on.

The first, Decency in Literature, is a quiet, well-considered discussion of some restrictive tendencies lately exhibited. It is an old, old problem, and Erskine has nothing in particular to add to it. He preaches a decorum of art which should observe the limitations of its medium, be that stone, or harmony, or printer's ink. He finds an objection to the free expression of certain things in liter-

ature because "the great limitation of language is that it must be heard or read one word at a time." But who reads one word at a time? Surely no one beyond the chronological or mental age of ten. Surely not Mr. Erskine himself. Literature moves in the sweep of phrases, in the cantino of the sentence, seldom in the staccato of the spoken word.

The second essay, Originality in Literature, calls attention to the fact that stupid things have been said for the first time. The third, The Cult of the Natural, is an elaboration of the ancient aphorism that art is artificial and appears natural. The fourth, The Cult of the Contemporary, need not detain us. The last, The Characters Proper to Literature, is a plea for characters a little better than life.

The whole forms a highly proper book to be placed on the library tables of Suburbia. There is not a false expression, not a word astray, no hint of feeling or charm disturbs the quiet flow of language. It is all eminently correct, and not a little dull.

JOHN E. LIND.

Man and Mystery in Asia

Man and Mystery in Asia, by Ferdinand Ossendowski. New York: E. P. Dutton and Company. \$3.00.

READERS of Dr. Ossendowski's sensational book of last year, *Beasts, Men and Gods*, could not but ask: Who is the man himself, and what preparation, what equipment had he for that terrible journey, in flight from the Bolsheviki, across the width of Asia, the account of which details adventures of almost incredible violence and variety, set down with such cool precision, brevity and naïveté? The present book explains. Chronologically it antedates the other—in parts by twenty years; it is a sort of post-introduction, as one may say, to the great *Odyssey*. In his younger days, Ossendowski, a chemist with an eye out for the natural resources of an unexploited continent, had joined a scientific expedition to study the salt lakes beyond the Yenesei; and some years later he was given a government commission to inspect the mineral wealth of the country north of Vladivostok. Hence his readiness with languages, his knowledge of manners and customs, and his aptitude for dealing with his beasts, his men, and his gods. These, in the end—if we set aside the author's prowess as a hunter—were all men together: at one extremity of the scale the *bête humaine*, whether escaped from control or never fully tamed by it; at the other extremity, the Living Buddha of Urga, and the Pandita Hutuktu, a "living god" devoted to European clothing, electric lights, wine and card-playing; in between, the multiplicity of Mongol tribes, harried by demons and sorcerers and pressed alike by Russia and China, together with a miscellany of desperate refugees who were seeking to establish order where order had utterly failed, or who were fighting their way through toward safety—over a wide continent wherein security was almost non-existent—under another and better régime.

The present book maintains the interest of its predecessor. It lacks the simple, massive unity of the other, being the record of four minor journeys instead of a single major one; but in topical variety it is even superior. If one may say with reason, "always something new out of Africa," one may say with double reason, under such guidance as Ossendowski's, "always something new out of Asia." We open ourselves in widest receptivity, and we set aside all

criteria. The aberrations of the Asiatic nature seem endless, and the vagaries of Asiatic humanity inexhaustible. Our own western "wonderland" almost irons out to plain prose, and the excesses of our Wild West, even in its freest days, range themselves within an ordered domesticity. If we, in our city jungle, have failed to realize, despite the ministrations of a daily press, what the human animal may be and do and suffer, we shall be able to learn it from the course of things in the remotest and savagest East. Little wonder that our traveler and adventurer should declare that the best of educations is an out-of-door-education—one which develops morale and which enables a man to maintain himself against an unfriendly nature and, inferentially, against inimical humankind.

The book, like its mate, exhibits everywhere the composure, "virtu" and concision of a man who has gone through much; where wonders and horrors are so many, no particular one need be selected for treatment with emphasis and verbosity. The Slavic provenance of both books is manifest in the taste for the mysterious and the mystical: here and there we are turned toward visions and premonitions, clairvoyance, hypnosis and hallucinations. The same racial bent may be perceived, now and again, in traces left at once by the altruist and the pessimist. When, after an interval of twenty years, our author revisits certain localities in Western Siberia, to find the ruins of industrial establishments and of workmen's homes, and to come across the bodies of Tartars and their herds slain by the Bolsheviks, he cries out: "Where are you, my young days? Where are the thoughts and ideals of my youth?" Was it this, he asks, that he expected from life and civilization when wandering here years before, while working for the progress and happiness of humanity and hoping to give a better destiny to this boundless and promising land?

In Eastern Siberia he is equally shocked by the criminal activity of the Russian merchants among the Mongolian tribes. Alcohol is the first preliminary to barter. Drunken stupor follows vodka. Fires go out and whole camps freeze. In fact, Russian traders, working eastward across Siberia, have shown even less conscience toward the Mongol nomads than American traders, working westward from the Mississippi, have shown toward our Indians. Still more dreadful the experiences of the "White Swans," those wretched Koreans who have ventured northward into the Ussurian forests; and utterly hideous the account of the convicts on Sakhalin—before they were amnestied to share in the new governmental order under the Soviets.

Man and Mystery in Asia is studied with brief set-pieces of narrative which have all the shape and force of "short stories from the Russian." In compactness, in intensity, in grim horror and sometimes in quaint humor, and in the light they throw on the psyche of the Slav, they come within hail of the work of the best Russian fictionists. One may note, as conspicuous, the chapter on The Avenger of Onor. This person was a religious zealot who had gone to Sakhalin to work among the convicts. After his young son had been murdered by some of the very men among whom he had preached, he settled down on the mainland to capture and destroy other convicts as they escaped. Some years later this same man became the terror of Western Siberia, bringing havoc and slaughter among the Bolshevik commissars, who had been prisoners on the other side of the continent. The author, by a singular coincidence and regardless of the difficulties of time and space, met and talked with this "avenger" at both extremes of Asia. An-

other of the narratives, which also seems too well shaped, deals with the sect of suicides on the slopes of the Altai Mountains. All the elements are present: the holy man who has imposed himself; the credulous peasants ready, when suitably worked on, to slit their own throats; the hesitating wife of the engineer, on the edge of conversion—and of carnality; the determined husband prowling through the forest with his rifle; finally, the author himself, stumbling through thickets and peatbogs, so as to keep the sequence of events under observation. It is in such instances as these—and these only—that credulity slightly falters. A tale may be too well turned out, too symmetrical, too conclusive. It may lead to the surmise that, after a certain amount of practice with the pen, the author, full as he is of first-hand knowledge of unique and vastly important things, may have mistakenly sunk, now and then, to the level of what has been termed, disparagingly, "mere literature." Dr. Ossendowski is the last man in the world who needs to do this, and one prefers to hope that he has not done it.

For the catalogue of his marvels and hazards is unending. Long coincidence and high precision may well be among them. The climatic and the vicissitudinous assuredly are. One curious impression comes after an hour spent with the Tartar herders of the steppes. It sometimes comes, too, when one dwells upon other and more developed phases of the life Asiatic, where chiefly personal force and dexterity keep a man a "going concern." It recurs when ambitious but over-administered Egyptians, for example, complain of the curtailments suffered by native ability: the *carrière*—though possibly one of chicanery and cruelty—is no longer *ouverte aux talents*. Is not our sheltered and ordered western life, after all, possibly but a complicated deviation from the normal—a confounding of the passing and incidental with that which is permanent and fundamental? To the Occidental who feels thus, Asia, with her long chances and her stark realities, beckons; and Ossendowski remains, thus far, the chief exponent of her varied yet equivocal opportunities.

HENRY B. FULLER.

The Index for Volume XXXVII, which was completed with our issue No. 481, has been printed separately. It will be mailed on request, post free, to any subscriber who will send his name and address on a post card directed to The New Republic, 421 West 21st Street, New York City.

Contributors

DICKINSON S. MILLER has been a professor in philosophy at Columbia and is now professor of apologetics at General Theological Seminary.

GEORGE S. CHAPPELL has been an architect for a number of years and is at present also associate editor of a new magazine, *The Architect*. Besides having written on architectural subjects Mr. Chappell has contributed articles to *Vanity Fair* and *Life*.

LEO STEIN, who has made a life study of painting, is at present in Italy.

HARRY ELMER BARNES is professor of history and sociology at Smith College and a member of the teaching staff of the New School for Social Research.

RAYMOND HOLDEN has contributed book reviews and special articles to the *New Republic* and other periodicals. His first volume of verse, *Granite and Alabaster*, has recently been issued by the Macmillan Company.

JOHN E. LIND is a neurologist who has served since 1913 on the staff of St. Elizabeth's Hospital, Washington, D. C.

HENRY B. FULLER has written novels of middle western life and stories of Italian travel.