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EUTOPOTROPISM:—SENSE TO FIND THE FIT PLACE¹

By Professor ALFRED C. LANE

TUFTS COLLEGE

MY subject is Eu-to-po-tropism. I imagine some of my profaner hearers will be inclined to say, "What in hell is eutopotropism?" To which I would reply, "It is not in hell."

Others more literary may ask, "In what dictionary is it?"

To which I would reply: "It is not in any dictionary. I made it up." I made it up to shock you so that you will remember the idea, for although the word is new, the idea is not.

Eutopotropism is the tendency or sense to know where you are well off and go there, the sense to find the fit place. It is the opposite of the trait exemplified

by the June-bug who will "buzz and butt his head against a wall" or the moth that "shrivels in the fire."

I have an aim or a purpose, and my action is not determined by the past, but is determined by the future. I will call it by a word that you never heard before, that I invent for this occasion, eutopotropic. It means turning to the place where you are well off. The capacity to be eutopotropic is a sign of intelligence. For evolution by natural selection to work there must be three things—a variation, an environment where that variation fits, and, third, a disposition to occupy that environment. It is this third factor that I call eutopotropism. An extra coat of hair fitting an elephant to be a mammoth and live in the Northern part of Asia would not lead to a race of mammoths unless with the extra hair went a disposition toward a northern climate. It is this sense

¹ Address of the president of the Geological Society of America given at Tulsa, Oklahoma, December, 1931.

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