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By JOHN EGLINTON

"Here are trees—let us think this matter out."—Buddha.

OF the vegetable world, as man of the animal world, the tree is the perfect type and development: and hence it is that when man is thoroughly at peace with himself, prosperous and flourishing, there is nothing that we compare him with so instinctively as a tree. "He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." "Man is indeed described by a tree in the Word," says Swedenborg, "and his wisdom from love by a garden; nothing else is signified by the Garden of Eden." In the tree the passive ideal of existence is realised, the vegetative ideal; and though the limitations of that ideal were destined to be demonstrated when the notion of an axe flew to the brain of the latest uncouth-looking mammal, there were entire ages during which the true type of attainment was still the tree, and not in any of the apparently aimless activities of those animals who crashed or climbed or slunk through the forest, or lodged in its branches. Providence, however, had some other end in view, as it appeared, with this planet that the realisation upon its surface of the vegetative ideal: an end which has been perhaps too boldly defined by the Swedish seer as the "production of a heaven from the human race." However that may be, it is in man—"earth's thoughtful lord," as Wordsworth sings him; "for perfect action formed under laws divine," as Whitman proclaims him—that the purpose of creation, so far as we have knowledge, appears to be concentrated. He has even begun to dream of himself as the medium through which the creative purpose of the universe shall manifest itself further; and only a little while ago a professor of philology in Germany threw up his chair and retired into the Alps in order to proclaim to the world his doctrine of the Superman, according to which man himself assumes within certain limits the rôle of creator. Nietzsche, how-

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ever, was a mere poet, and more anthropomorphic than any of the Hebrews whom he vituperated. As if, after barely a million years of existence, and a few hundreds of more or less uninterrupted and conscious social development, it were yet time to begin to think of the next stage of evolution! The Superman was perhaps really nothing more (or less) than a personification of the State, an entity which has been created not so much by us as in spite of ourselves by our necessities, and has only in our own time begun to acquire self-consciousness and self-direction. It is true that Nietzsche vituperated the State as the "coldest of cold monsters"; but it is only in the State that the "great man mankind" attains to some of those superhuman attributes with which Nietzsche endowed his Superman, and the Statesman who best interprets the collective will of mankind is perhaps the nearest thing to him that it is permissible to hope for.

The State is, in fact, a cosmic agent, in so far as it is its part to restore the balance of nature where that has been upset by the reckless behaviour of man in the past: to determine, for example, what portions of the earth's surface it can now afford to set apart for the ancient races of the trees. Yet in looking to the State, as to a new Providence, for the solution of all our problems, we are perhaps only giving time for casual energies to mature which lie altogether outside the range of state-interference. What is known as the problem of rural life, for instance—at which the State has recently begun to tinker—awaits for its solution nothing more or less than a new way of looking at things, a new idea, which may arise Heaven knows how, and may change the face of society at any time. For a long time to come we may expect that society will fall into two main parties or divisions, both looking to the State for their sanction, one acting in its name to secure revolutionary adaptations of society to the pressure of its difficulties, the other regarding its own cause as nothing less than that of the maintenance of civilisation, and succeeding periodically in arresting the precipitation towards anarchy. And nature—human nature—will find in neither of these parties, nor in both together, the plasticity and spontaneity required

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for the moulding of the future of man; it will rather find these in a third class which will meanwhile have arisen, consisting in the first case of those who have fallen away from social effort and public ambition, the "intellectuals" as we call them at present, the "incompetents," and the increasing number of those who are appealed to by the ideal of self-culture, contemplation, and even asceticism. It is amongst these that a new idea might conceivably arise which might even lead ultimately to a new form of civilisation. It is hard to say, for example, what influence the appearance of an English-speaking Tolstoi might not have in peopling the derelict country with small holdings, inhabited no longer by peasantry—a class which the whole modern system of things is tending to abolish—but by those to whom the prizes of civil life no longer presents an overpowering attraction, and to whom, on the other hand, nature calls. It is an *idea* for which we wait. Without an idea man is frivolous, anarchic, dissatisfied, despicable. With an idea, the long-hoarded initiatives of his nature are liberated, he strains forward to new consummations, he "did not know that he contained so much virtue."

"They reckon ill who leave Me out," says Brahma in Emerson's poem: and the saying may be applied to the "anticipations" of sociologists like Mr. H. G. Wells, which leave out of account the possible effects on the whole structure of society of the renewal in mankind of a disposition for spiritual adventure: a change which would make any prizes which society has to offer to the better sort of individuals as nothing compared with such rewards as Buddha offered in Emancipation, or Jesus Christ in the Kingdom of Heaven. He must be very dogmatic or unimaginative who would affirm that man will never weary of the whole system of things which reigns at present: of respectability and security, of eight hours of work and cards in the evening, of shops, professions, motors and newspapers, of household-life and the sacrifice of his natural love of liberty to the requirements of town-loving woman, of churches and theatres. We never know how near we are to the end of any phase of our experience, and often when its seeming stability begins to pall upon us, it is a sign that things are about to take a new turn. Man,

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after all, is still man, the same being who flung himself into the wars of religion in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, who departed on the Crusades, who peopled the deserts of Egypt and the East, the forests of Germany and the isles, with hermits; and there is no reason, should the idea of doing so enter into his head, that he should not try some new experiment. There is nothing of which we should be less disposed to say that it cannot happen, than that such an idea should not at some unexpected moment occur to him. Mankind, in fact, is always acting impulsively on an idea of some sort. About a century ago, for instance, it took to scooping out the coal-measures, the formation of which occupied nature for millions of years, and already it has almost come within sight of their exhaustion—and all for what? Chiefly because the idea of Speed had taken possession of it, the apparently unassailable ideal of expediting work and locomotion indefinitely. A man does not particularly enjoy ripping through mountains in an express-train or tearing along tarred roads in a motor, but it is an idea, and one of which he may weary any day. The imbroglio of labour and capital, and the first symptoms of a disconcerting but not really irrational “revolt of woman,” are perhaps, at the moment of writing, the outstanding results of his devotion to this idea. Probably when he changes it for some other, the trees, which during his obsession by this idea have been threatened with extermination, may steal down upon the plains again, to his advantage in every way. What if the ideal of Leisure were to succeed that of Speed? If we rightly apprehend Hegel’s theory of an inherent logic in historic development, we might almost use his authority in predicting that it will. Of course we must expect that the generality of men will overdo this ideal, just as they have overdone it in India and the East, and just as they have overdone Speed in Europe and America: but its adoption might be attended with one advantage, which can scarcely be said to have attended devotion to Speed: the highest type of human being might be brought out once again as in certain epochs of the past, the sage, the man like unto a tree planted by the rivers of water.

The outlook therefore, we consider, is not without hope; nor

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are we discouraged in contemplating the growing numbers of young men who have been sent to the universities in order to become lawyers, doctors, clergymen, engineers, etc., and have lost their vocation by the way, imbibing perhaps, to the despair of their parents and guardians, irrelevant notions of self-culture from Goethe, the itch of authorship from Emerson and Carlyle, vagabond propensities from Whitman or Stevenson, insubordination from Nietzsche or Shaw, Christianity from Tolstoi, indeterminate literary æstheticism from W. B. Yeats, etc., all according to their various temperaments. It cannot be said that our universities are directly responsible for this result, whether good or bad, of their training: on the contrary, mundane success of one kind or another is their ideal, and when by some chance one of these young ne'er-do-wells, matriculating in the vast university of life, attains eventually to honours, the old time-serving alma mater will consider it her special privilege to bind his laurels about his brows. The most flagrant instance of this is perhaps the case of poor Goldsmith, whose monument now "welcomes the coming, speeds the parting guest," Trinity College claiming to have "produced" him. But in what sense did Trinity College produce Goldsmith? Did she discover beneath his pock-marked exterior the graceful and enfranchised spirit whose mission it was to instruct the great British public in the art of expression for more than a generation? Did he feel in his wanderings through this world of care that her eye was upon him, or did her *Macte Virtute* sound gratefully in his ears when he gained his first successes? No, the ideal of Trinity College is, of necessity, the successful professional man, not the poet, not the thinker; and it would be a mistake to infer from the situation of Foley's fine monument that a beautiful maternal relationship exists between these old seats of learning and mundanity, and their prodigal sons. A little rage at the recollection of Smiglesius and Burgersdicius (fifty years before Goldsmith, Jonathan Swift has been "esteemed a blockhead" for his inability to read these authors, "they were so stupid"), and some memories of cruelty and snobbery which rankled in him throughout his life, were all that Goldsmith carried away with him when he passed through the gate-

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way of Trinity for the last time. Yet we are far from suggesting that it is not the main function of a university to turn out as many good citizens as it can, or that she should maintain any other than a resolutely and even sternly mundane attitude toward her young idealists: Newman, who came over here in the middle of last century (thinking, like others of his countrymen, that Ireland was a country where ideas grew wild!) had regretfully to acknowledge that this was so, and to abandon his project of starting a university with God for its central idea. And still less would we fail to acknowledge that universities may now and then retain among their teachers one as different as possible from Theaker Wilder.

Have we wandered from the subject of Reafforestation? Not perhaps so very far. We are in quest of the tree-like man, whom our civilisation has hitherto failed to produce, nor does it appear that the seed of him is sown in those "sacred nurseries of blooming youth," our universities. According to the old Indian custom, the time of thought, reflection, discipline, cultivation of the higher powers, education, in fact, in the true sense of the term, came at the end of life, when a man had fulfilled his part as a householder, and presumably had lost a too distracting appetite for the pleasures of life. With us, on the contrary, the time of education is placed at the outset of life, at that period in which a man is probably least amenable to real instruction, the period at which almost any man looking back upon himself will acknowledge himself to have been a young puppy. At the time when the Indian was about to enter upon the more serious and interesting part of his life, and beheld—as a man travelling to the sea may behold from afar the distant port from which he is to embark—the forest hermitage in which he was to make ready for a new incarnation, our citizen, bothered probably by a clamorous brood of sons and daughters, is beginning to wonder whether it is worth his while to give them an education which meant so little to himself: looking cheerlessly round on the waste places of his spirit, of no economic account in the present system of things. It is these waste spaces of the human mind that its reafforesters, our poets and thinkers, must learn how to utilize.