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*A Rebel's
Vision Splendid*

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CHAPTER I

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THE CULTURE OF THE GLAD-EYE

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It is necessary to give a keynote to this book on "The Vision Splendid." It is done without hesitation, for the writer is an optimist. The best way to cultivate this optimism is to try and understand the universe, then to try and understand God, without the orthodox limitations, and finally to try and understand our relations to both God and the universe. To see man, that is, Divine man creating the new earth by the Universal Divine Spirit within him. The result of this understanding is a radiant optimism. The new world being created in this age of science means that in the near future disease will be gone, poverty will be gone, war will be gone, and insanity will be gone. So the reader of this book will now know that the writer has diligently cultured the glad-eye. A right understanding develops optimism. A wrong understanding means pessimism. As an orthodox parson he was a pessimist, for he ever referred to the world as having been created six thousand years ago. Now he has learnt the world has never been created at all, but is being created. That creation never ceases! The divinity in man is the creator; man is now co-operating with God; the world is in the making, and we are learning at last our social responsibilities, and the improvement of society is our happy work. To help God create a world of sunshine for everybody. In this duty we learn the deep sense of our

importance and we can join in the great adventure. The cause of so much gloom and misunderstanding is the forgetting that man himself is responsible for the creation of the better world. Man himself is responsible for the social injustices as they stand. God wills the happiness of all, while man, assisted by the orthodox creeds, crushes the divinity within him and prefers to dwell on the depravity within. Man at present is a victim of competitive capitalism, and this evil system interferes with God's goodness. God's moral law of happiness is thus interfered with, but when man learns to co-operate with God he will find that God's benevolence leads on to Communism, but not the fictitious Communism abroad to-day—that of force, violence and dictatorships, but the Communism of love and brotherhood.

While the writer of "The Vision Splendid" is a radiant optimist, yet he fully knows the agonies to be suffered during the birth of the new age which is upon us. The mother of the expected child also anticipates the travailing, but she is an optimist and knows the result will be worth it. If it was an ordeal too easy, the sense of the ultimate value would be lost or at least lessened. So with the birth of the new era; we have to endure the throes, they are overdue and almost upon us, but the results will be worth it; the agonies endured in the process will be as nothing compared to the new world, where the unity of all human creatures is recognised and where the well-being of each is the well-being of all, and *vice versa*.

At the present time our system—and we are all more or less the victims of it—the capitalist system—interferes with God's law of happiness. The social habit of rent, interest and

profit perverts God's moral law. Capitalism pulls awry, like the perturbations of Neptune. There is a Divine law of natural obligation, and it cannot be fulfilled under present conditions. It was Ruskin who taught that all interest is usury if it burdens anyone. Well, it does—it burdens ninety out of every hundred. We must away with the whole moral code, away with it because it is immoral, and not of God. Under its baneful influence poverty and crime can be forecasted as accurately as the moon's eclipse. We refuse to bend God's moral law to fit a crooked society. We refuse to conform further to the evil and immoral system. It is an evil and wicked thing, and we are responsible for its existence; we have the power, by the divinity within us, to lessen the evil, to wipe it out, and thereby to increase the common good. The person who refuses to join us in this, the person who wilfully defends the present immoral social injustices, is a mental and moral pigmy; he suffers with a mental and moral cataract. His mental attitude must be changed and this book of "The Vision Splendid" is written for the purpose of opening the windows of the soul. God's universe is good! There is more light than shadow! Through man's selfish and so-called sacred (?) laws of property, there is a temporary eclipse; society is darkened by the nationalist, imperialist, capitalist and military monsters, who make life hardly worth living. They fill society with the slimy shapes of jealousy—the muddy forms of fear—the vampires of worry—and reptilian class hate. While at the same time God's splendid universe is full of light and love, and it is free for everybody; yes, and free of income-tax, too, if people will only leave the

frosty side and walk in the sun. The frosty side cannot be left until the social order is radically changed.

The tree of capitalism cannot be trimmed, clipped or pruned; it has to be uprooted. Otherwise humanity cannot be happy, for the pleasures of yesterday were spoilt by fret and to-day is spoilt by the fear of to-morrow, so man is ever to be, but never is blest. Yet God is Love!

The letter fails—the systems fall!
And every system wanes!
The spirit overbrooding all;
Eternal Love remains!

My object in starting this book by writing a chapter on “The Culture of the Glad-eye” is to point out that a true Divine optimism ends in serenity. Someone has truly said the last lesson of culture is serenity. To thinking people who at times are perturbed by the thought of the volcanic disturbances of the near future, to such let me say, there is a real optimism that ends in bringing about that beautiful jewel: “Calmness,” the result of an attitude of mind—a mental poise. Emerson cultured it during the American Civil War. Compare this calmness of soul with the opposite state of fuss, fume, worry and so on, where there is little or no poise of mind. Contrast it with the uncontrolled passion, the ungoverned grief, or the tempestuous anxiety so often seen amid the crash and turmoil of things. There is something very attractive about the right mental poise. The Carpenter of Nazareth surely had it when the storm was raging and he, asleep! Yes, there is an attraction here, for we all reverence strength of that sort. Most of us are not admirers of the late

Andrew Carnegie, but a visitor sleeping in Skibo Castle saw on the mantelpiece these lines:

Sleep sweetly
In this quiet room,
O thou
Whoe'er thou art:
And let
No mournful yesterday
Disturb thy peaceful heart,
Nor let to-morrow
Scare thy rest
With dreams of coming ill.
Thy Maker is thy Changeless Friend;
His Love surrounds thee still—
Forget thyself and all the world,
Put out each glaring light—
The stars are watching overhead.
Sleep sweetly, then;
Good Night!

This is fine philosophy, and shows that even a millionaire can be troubled with a flash of reason at times, although very few of them have that Divine flash. It is more often found with a Buddha, a Socrates, a Jesus, or a George Fox. Why? Because the mental poise of serenity is the result of The Vision Splendid. After all, these so-called impractical visions or ideals are the seedlings of realities, just as the oak sleeps in the acorn, or the bird in the egg. To be candid, the visionary idealists are the world's saviours, and ever have been and ever will be, and he who cherishes the ideal

is aware of it by a higher intuition and besides he is apt to realise it:

Mind is Master-power that moulds and makes,
And Man is Mind, and evermore he takes
The Tool of Thought, and shaping what he wills,
Brings forth a thousand joys, a thousand ills:
He thinks in secret, and *it comes to pass*,
Environment is but his looking-glass.

All this leads me to and opens up the subject of this book on “The Vision Splendid.” Our thoughts, our ideals, can affect circumstances; the thoughts and ideals we weave within will help to weave the circumstances without, for the Divinity that shapes our ends is very much within—good thoughts cannot produce bad results, nor bad thoughts good results. When one says of a fallen friend: “It was a sudden fall!” Just retort: “No”—it was preceded by long secret thoughts and wrong ideals. The mind is a garden or a wilderness—plants or weeds—and plants are the result of culture. A man may not altogether choose his circumstances, but he can choose his thoughts, and thoughts shape his circumstances. He can go down to a selfish and evil brutism, or he can rise to The Vision Splendid and cultivate the Divinity within:

The human WILL, that force unseen,
The offspring of a deathless soul,
Can hew a way to any goal,
Though walls of granite intervene.

So let us see that man is a growth by mental law, and the future God-like man will be the result of the law of continued right thinking, we will:

Be not impatient of delay,
But wait as one who understands;
When spirit rises and commands
The gods are ready to obey.

CHAPTER II

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THE VISION SPLENDID

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MOST of the intelligent beings on the earth at the present time are looking forward. They sense a crisis ahead, and are likewise concerned about the immediate results, well knowing that the ultimate results will be for the social benefit of the human race. The prophet ever did look ahead; it was this habit that made him hated; hated because he was thereby dangerous; to look ahead was to idealise, to visionise, and by doing that the present was made rather insecure. It was the priest that looked back; the priest is ever conservative, and usually he becomes fat and smug by so doing. In other words, “it pays.” The prophet is a lean, hungry man—a lonely and a thinking man. The priest thinks other people’s thoughts—thoughts of the traditional past; he is a backward-looker. The prophet has initiative, originality and daring, and is not a gramophone record; he has not a rubber-stamp message. God’s Spirit finds a channel for the forward-looking message in his (the prophet’s) dangerous personality. He is a lonely man—often as lonely as the man of Gethsemane. So it is an easily seen cleavage—the forward-lookers versus the backward-lookers. Yes, the past has lessons for us, for the past has made the present, and also we of the present are to make the future.

To-day we have reached the point of conscious evolution; evolution is no longer blind and groping, but has become conscious in thinking man. Man looks back, and the farther he looks back the slower he sees the evolutionary movement to have been. To-day he sees how rapid and almost revolutionary the evolutionary movement to-day may be, for conscious man may guide it and hurry it forward. The long slow stone age reached a crisis when the polished axe was made. The modern man reached a crisis when the steam engine was made. To-day we reach the greatest crisis of all in World-Brotherhood and the United States of Humanity! The farther we go, the greater the momentum. To-day the movement becomes faster, as we see more clearly the goal for humanity hardening up through the mists. Thinking people are gradually getting an enthusiastic love for the general good; they are beginning to curb the narrow national feeling, and also to doubt the morality of commercial rivalry. They see at last, that way lies war!

To be candid, what is needed is a Universal New Heart; and that is being born. This Divine ethic is evolving from the ranks of the industrial classes, where in the history of the world all Divine ethics do arise. Strange to say, it does not arise in the Church—the Church is too much concerned with a personal new heart, and the universal new heart seems of little consequence. The Church puts the query to the individual—are you saved? Also society puts the query to the individual—are you wealthy? Hence the Church can well support the nation in its trade rivalries, its commercial greed and its glorified John-Bullism. Of course, John Bull always

quotes a text from his Bible, but his real inspiration comes not from there, but from trade and the cash register. Other nations in irony point to England and her oversea dominions, and say: "See the result of England's three commodities—Beer, Bullets and Bibles!" This ever blessed trinity has caused her flag to fly over one fifth part of the globe. The danger is they fasten on the second element in the trinity—bullets, the logic of which is what the British Empire got by naval and military force, why may we not also get by the same force? This is the essence of imperialism everywhere. Until this is swept out of the way there can be no Universal New Heart.

What hinders, then, this aspect of The Vision Splendid? There is a double hindrance. It is to be found in the following two terms: Conservatism is Feudalism. Liberalism is Commercialism. It is tweedledum versus tweedledee. They both support imperialism, and are both supporters of a soulless commercial system. Also they both support militarism. In war time a Liberal is not distinguishable from a Conservative, for patriotism and profits kiss each other, and in times of peace the only difference is in their phraseology. The industrial world is quick to see it, and so they designate them both to one class, and the result is on the one side there is class ascendancy and on the other side the increasing solidarity of the workers.

And in The Vision Splendid there is to be an ever-decreasing conservatism in the feminine mind. To many women still there is a great attraction in soldiering. Flags, buttons, uniforms, colors and khaki fascinate and hoodwink them. But the thinking mothers see the folly of this spirit of

bloodshed; the reflective mothers are saying: "Shall we in the future sit silent and see piled up this mountain of corpses? Are we to sit silent and agonise over this—the result of the greed of a few individuals? Are we to be silent while the great god competition runs the earth? Are we women ever to be the victims of this vulgar, ill-bred wealth? We are beginning to see and learn that competitive trade is a continual warfare, and nationalism and imperialism use the naval and military castes to carry out their designs. Then when war is declared the patriotic stop is pulled out, while they fleece us of our sons and money." So thinking women are reasoning, and it is a good omen, for class-rule and a fake old civilization must go. When the women take a hand its days are numbered.

So in The Vision Splendid we see the Universal New Heart is necessary. The rise of the industrial classes is the finest sign of the times. In the unity of workers all round the earth lies our hope. Not in any League of Nations, but in a League of Working Peoples. The former is based on force, and the latter is based on brotherhood. Therein lies a difference—and it is the real vital difference. Peoples don't hate! Their interests are the same! The enemy of one people is the same enemy of all peoples—i.e., the exploiter! That is the only enemy the people of any country has. Every country is vulgarised by these champions of trade greed. It is they who whoop for war when they think the national totem or symbol is insulted. Totem is the correct word; it sounds aboriginal, and so it is, for the lower branches of the human family had as a totem an emu, kangaroo, buffalo or, maybe, a snake or lizard. Woe be to the neighbouring tribe who dared to insult

the totem. But the so-called modern civilized nations have their totems too. It may be an eagle, a rising sun, a lion, a bull-dog, stars and stripes, or a Union Jack. Insult one of these, and war results. As with savages, so with moderns! There is no difference. If there be a difference, the savages have the advantage, for they cannot kill so splendidly; they have no bombs, mines, machine guns or poison-gas. Savagery is here more civilized! What irony!

The result of this Universal New Heart in The Vision Splendid will be some form of Communism. The real Communism of love and brotherhood, not of force and dictatorship. Communism is really inherent in the human race from the beginning, and the secret of life is in the spirit of it. We see to-day it begins to divide the world into two camps. The cleavage becomes wider—Communism or Capitalism? Love expresses itself in all things common! The great enemy is private property of those things God meant to be socialised—land, ships, railways, machines, and so on. It is not to be an equal dividing up of everything; only the vulgarisers of Communism talk that way; even as the vulgarisers of Evolution talk of monkeys and missing links. The possessive instinct in things essential has to go; it is the opposite of love and brotherhood, and love is evolving and is the strongest. When we come to think deeply, much of the lust for private property is really the illusion of dead matter. Let me ask—is it sanity to spend one's life in collecting a heap of metal discs we call money, and then after a few years, when the heap is just about big enough, the hearse to be at the door? To spend our days gathering a heap of "matter" which a jackdaw or a magpie, or a raven,

or a maori-hen does! What will God say to these mentally undeveloped individuals, who pull down their barns to build greater to pack their material wealth in? But great souls are indifferent to ownership. The possessive instinct arose in aboriginal malice, and the possessive instinct yet arouses malignant passions. The possessive instinct in centripetal—indrawing. The communal instinct is centrifugal—a scattering out. One is selfish and egoistic, the other is altruistic and serving. The Nazarene took a towel and served! They who knew his teaching and example best, they who dwelt upon his words, had all things common. The words common, communion, communism and common-union all come from the same root. Yet what a comedy the Communion service of the orthodox churches has become! What a burlesque is orthodox Christianity to-day!

The religion of Jesus should have softened the position caused by private property, should rather have revolutionised it. Our laws protect private property, our politics defend it, our morality perverts the conscience on private property, yet modern science increases it, while custom casts a spell on it and even art panders to it, in order to get bread and butter cheques. But the masses see the incongruity of it all, and begin to stir and to stretch out hands of amity across the seas. They begin to discover there is the same soul under the heart of all peoples. That the same private property curse is causing all peoples to suffer. Since the days of Marx they are learning that the surplus profits of the workers are really stolen to buy land, mines, stocks, shares, bonds, jewels, furs, flash gowns and expensive cars for parasites, who have the impudence to

call the surplus profits of industry private property, and even to talk of the “Sacredness” of it. But great days are looming up; science will yet in greater quantities create life’s necessities, and also see they are scientifically distributed. Science will yet give greater leisure to all. Science at present is a victim of the capitalist conditions; it is used to give to, and increase, the wealth of the few. It does not ease toil, nor does the machinery add to the people’s ease and plenty. Herbert Spencer defined progress as the release of humanity from toil, and to-day one train does the work of four hundred thousand men, yet how are the people bettered by it? Science talks of capturing tidal-power and sun-power, and the power is to be released from radium and the atom. Very good; but are the people to benefit? Or are these sources of power to be exploited by the money-makers?

Said one of the professors of science: “There will yet be little need to earn bread by sweat!” True; there is little need now for any person to work more than five hours per day, but the exploiters and parasites see to it that you do, and the law protects them in their exploitation. Civilization so far is a failure, and only protects the few, but in The Vision Splendid every child will have its opportunity, every mother will have her rights, every man will have his full reward for labour, every youth will be free from the body-snatching military curse. Tell your parson he is wrong—the Garden of Eden is not behind, the Garden of Eden is ahead and Divine man is the creator of it.

This is a day of optimism, not pessimism. The world of tomorrow is beyond all your dreams. Say with Browning: “The

best is yet to be.” We march out of a past as black as night and we march to a future full of joy, full of light, full of sweetness. Give to your children The Vision Splendid; tell them they are creators and co-workers with God in shaping the new world. Tell them to vision the Kingdom of God and that the greatest dreamer of all was Jesus. Teach the children these lines:

Men counted him a dreamer! Dreams
Are but the light of clearer skies,
Too dazzling for our naked eyes,
And when we catch their flashing beams
We turn aside and call them dreams.
Believe me, every thought that yet
In greatness rose, in sadness set,
That time to ripening glory nursed
Was called an empty dream at first.

CHAPTER III

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A NEW ORIENTATION AND NOT MATERIALISTIC

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THERE is a fresh facing, a new bearing. The hour strikes for truth, and it is the duty for everyone who sees below the surface of things to speak or write in order to get mental comfort and soul satisfaction. To criticise and challenge what is wrong and to encourage what is right; but it is the rebel and heretic who knows the right and sees the truth most clearly. The hands stretched towards heaven to-day are the hands of the heretics. Said one, in a kind of chuckling glee: "To-day, in order to find God, one has to leave the traditional churches!" This is the result of a new orientation, and it is not an orientation of materialism, but the reverse. Neither is it confined to religion, for it means a new orientation in the political sphere. There is a new power, a new force, abroad, and it is of the Spirit. The poor people who make the wealth and who are overburdened with rents, dear food and uncertain employment are beginning to feel their power and are arousing themselves. On looking back, one is almost staggered at their patience and docility.

Said a recent speaker: "England wants quiet peace and pre-war conditions." Does she? Well, until she sweeps away her social injustices she won't get these things. The writer is