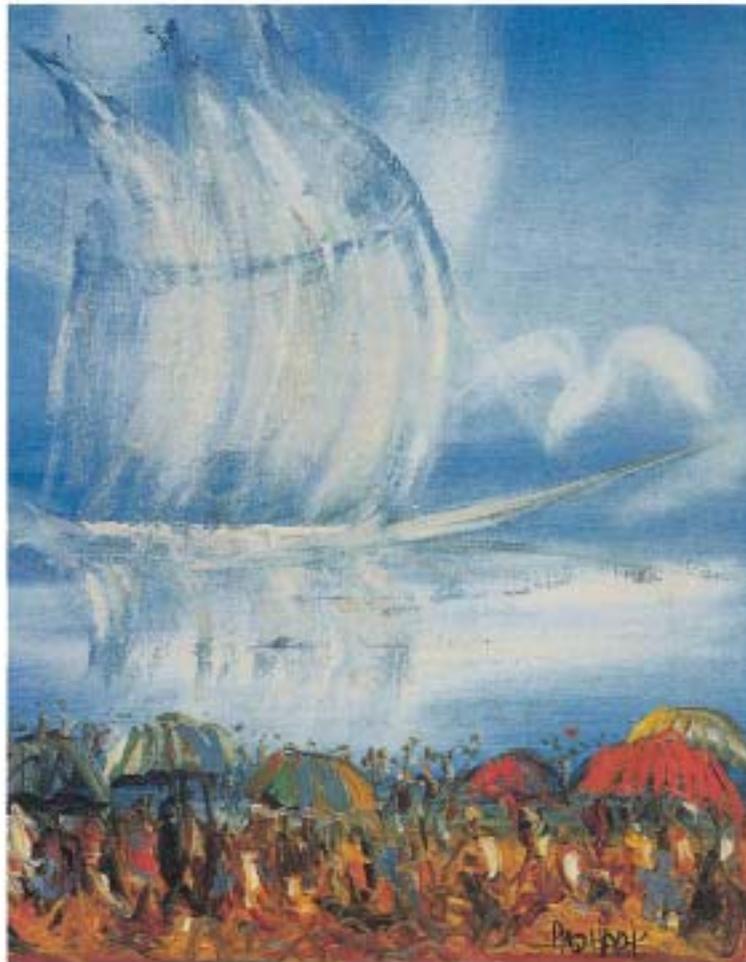


Bright Bird and Shining Sails

GEOFFREY C. BINGHAM

Illustrated by
PRO HART



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Book One

CHAPTER THE FIRST

The seer sees his vision of the three-sailed ship. Although delighted by it he is' also troubled. He is' concerned for his' readers lest they do not profit by what they read. For this' reason he warns some against reading it.

They say there is a place, and even a time, between sleeping and waking when we are between two worlds. They say that in that betweenness we may see things that are never there fully, either in waking or sleeping. Of this I do not really know. It could well be so. All I know is that I saw the three-sailed ship, clearly as though it were fully in this world, and in no other place. Yet it is also true that it was in another world, where the dimensions were such as I had not known, nor ever expect to know while this world stands.

This three-sailed ship was to say the least, startling. I might as well warn you, that if you read this account you, too will have to enter into the in-between time and place, for in this place the reality of this world is not rejected; indeed it is present. Again, in the in-between world some other world is also present, and it has the kind of dimensions you generally associate with dreams. Yet it is real. Hence, when you see the three-sailed ship with me, you will fully understand. Given in all this, I have something of a warning for you. For want of a better word I have to call my

story a vision, and yet I do not rightly know what a vision is, and I doubt whether any can give you a true description of a vision. A vision is like a dream, no doubt, but it is something you see in your waking moments. Once seen it is with you forever, and you cannot forget it, A dream generally fades away like the mist dissipating before the rising sun. Not so with a vision. To tell the truth it enters into you and is there always, and you can never get away from it.

I said, "a warning". Why then a warning, and what for? The answer is that a vision is so powerful it can totally change the life of a person. I need not recount to you men and women, both religious and otherwise, who have had visions, and what it has done to them, and also what they have done as a result of this vision. The ancients used to say, "Where there is no vision the people perish", I like that saying and am strongly inclined to believe it. However, it is its corollary which frightens me. The corollary is this, "Where the vision is told the visionary perishes!"

Now the strange thing is that the visionary lives in a terrible dilemma. If he tells his vision he will

perish. If he does not tell it he will perish from the containing of it within himself. The strong, hot, and powerful vision will begin to work within him as a strange power which cannot be contained, and the pitiful visionary will feel its pull and tug and thrust, and then the very structure of him—body and mind—will feel the shaking and the trembling and the vibrations, so much so that he will not endure the agony, and at last, in an anguish of ecstasy he will tell the vision—come death or come life. So it is with me. So it is with me: I know that when I tell it the protest of many will be so strong that I shall be run out of town, or out of life, or be ridiculed, and the laughter will not simply be scornful, but pitying and shattering, making me foolish. However, since I would find the pity better than the inward rumbling and tumbling and vibrating, I am forced to share my vision with you.

Because I am launched into it I am anxious to tell it and be over with it, and doubtless you also are curious. You will want to see what the fool is saying, and to decide whether it be the vapourings of a dreamy mind, or maybe even the strong message of some prophet. Also I would like you to make up your mind. Yet I must tell you of a strange property of a vision. If I do not tell you, then it will be like cheating you, and that I must not do. You may even be angry or plainly incredulous when I tell you, but tell I must. It is this: a vision is there to reveal

truth or give information to those who will see and hear, and even feel, but for those who will not, the vision conceals what it would otherwise reveal! That is to say, that if you are on the light side of the vision all will be light and understanding to you, but if on the dark side then the vision will surely hide what you might otherwise see. This is at once both mystifying and kind.

Bear with me another moment whilst I tell you another and important thing. This is to warn you against danger, but not against delight. It is this: a vision does something to the depths of a man. Do not think I am mystical, and that I believe in the mere power of impressions to harm or help a man. That is not my thought. No, I mean that the vision is a living thing, and works in the depths of a man in a most powerful way, either gripping his will and taking him along with it, or calling up the fierce opposition of his will and hardening him against itself. Its powers are not intended to be destructive, but this is how they work, whilst for the true hearers a rich world of understanding is opened up, albeit the vision-watcher does not realise one whit of it, consciously. I am not saying he does not sense a fair impression of wonderful matters. He may, but this is not essential. It that happens then so be it. But do not say I did not warn you. Proceed if you will with the vision but know the end may be troublesome. On the other hand, of course, it may be of the richest delight.

CHAPTER THE SECOND

The seer, whilst confessing he has little nautical knowledge yet persists' in describing his vision of the ship. He describes its strange properties. Its strange irradiation affects' him deeply. He is then confronted with the unusual phenomenon of the wind in the sails. Even more strange is the emergence of the bright bird.

To come now to the vision of the three-sailed ship: I have to confess that my vision cannot be told in the technical language of the seaman for I am a land-lubber of the crudest sort. Sea-terms represent a bother to me. I know a prow and a keel, a mast and a sail. I am not sure what is a ship and what a boat, but it is fixed in my mind that it is a three-sailed ship I saw. In fact, it paralleled any ship you might see in the centuries back of the twentieth, but it had properties that are beyond any vessel of such days.

I saw this vessel in the vision and it was as fair as any man has ever seen. First I must say the sea on which it stood was calm and peaceful, a shining stretch that shone out towards a steady horizon. Not even the faintest quiver of a wave was discernible. You may say this ship was becalmed, but to the contrary, you will soon know that she never could be becalmed, so strange and wonderful were her properties. You can say she rested upon the still waters, shining in the whiteness of sheer splendour, or the sheer splendour of whiteness. Words will not

capture the strangeness and wonder of her, for though you try these will evade you.

As to form, she had three white sails. The mid-mast and sail were higher than the other two. The sail forrard and the sail aft were equal, so to speak, but it is perhaps better that we drop the word equal in regard to these sails, even the three sails, for I have seen the after-sail suddenly tower above the mid-sail and the forrard-sail. Likewise the forrard-sail could suddenly extend in height and width and power beyond either of the other two sails, or any one of them. This was the amazing power the sails had. However, at this point of watching I did not really know this.

The sails were plain and white and regal. Set firmly into the deck, they were part of the ship, yet more than the ship, as though the ship were fortunate and blessed and privileged to have them with it. Sure, they gave meaning to the deck and the under-deck, in fact to the whole hull, and thus giving them an identity of their own.

The sails had other properties which I did not then know. They could heighten or diminish without notice. The thing is really laughable. One moment the sails could be tiny and delicate and a fragment of true sails, like a child's toy ship, and the next moment they could heighten until they could reach the very heavens, and even pierce into them and go beyond them and the sight of a man. At another time they would so diminish that you would think the sails, and the whole ship for that matter, were a fairy thing. When the sea moved, and when it raged, the proud vessel would rise and fall, dip and bow and rise again, in majesty. When the sea was a twinkling calmness the vessel might become like a cockle, rocking as a seagull does upon the flapping waves. At times it would diminish down until almost lost, as small as a periwinkle, and as shiny as the twinkle of a fair wavelet when it glistens in the sun.

* * *

When I first saw it, it was on the silent, smooth and shining sea. There was a glow about it, a quiet white aura that filtered out from its sails and its body. The air was poised and still. The effect on me was of peace. I was calmed in every part of my being. Down into every nook and cranny of me poured a serenity and a tranquillity which I had never known, and which I doubt few have ever known. It was as though the aura I was seeing was itself, flowing towards me, incorporating me into

the nature and meaning of itself. There was certainly no fear because of the ship. To the contrary: the peace was bringing with it a welling joy, and a comprehension somewhere down in the depths of me that was making me almost insane with ecstasy, I fear to tell you of that you lest you will class me as one with the insane, but when you feel peace and joy together you wonder whether there is more that a man could wish for or hope to have in his life.

What happened next is again the substance of a vision, and beyond explanation. Time and again I will have to use words and phrases like "beyond words", "beyond description", "untellable", "indescribable", and so on, but do not let the statements make you familiar with what I say, so that the impressions are lost upon you. If the vision could be contained in conscious human words, then I doubt it could have been a vision.

No, suddenly there it was—the brilliance of the glory above me, and below me, and around me. To this day I do not know whether that glory flowed out of the skies, and up from the sea, and across from the full circle of the horizon or even from the land on which I stood with its long shore stretching out beyond sight. I do not know whether the glory flowed towards the ship, or from it. Perhaps it was both, an oscillating, reciprocal movement which defies examination, and must rather be felt. Glory there was: of this there can be no doubt. Not mere brilliance and iridescent radiation of light, but a richer fuller thing typified by such light. There was substantiality and dignity and honour and serenity

about it all. It was as though the whole beauty and splendour pulsed through every atom of the universe and flowed over into the three sails, and then from the three sails was borne out again into every atom and molecule of all being, investing it with a dignity and honour that had always been its true mode of being.

You cannot see such splendour and remain unmoved. As for me, I wept and sobbed and cried and laughed. I bowed on the sand, and I worshipped and shivered with joy and had a sense of abandonment to it all. I do not need to say this was most uncharacteristic of me. There may be some who are created this way, but that is not my temperament and even as I did it I had a sense of misgiving. For I am not by nature religious, and at that moment I knew it had little or nothing to do with religion, anyway. I was simply aware that this was a realm of experience not normally known to me, and to be honest I revelled in it. Far from taking away from my humanity it seemed to add to it, or better still to shape it into the humanity it had needed to become. I leave it at that.

The glory, the coming of it, and the going of what was the reason? I do not know. It came. It stayed. It pervaded and filled. Then it left, withdrawing as the flow does from a fading sunset. Then it was gone, and the calm and the stillness took over and reigned again. The most I could sense about it was that it was for me. It was to prepare, even train me for what I would yet see in the vision.

* * *

After the going of the glory the ocean came alive. Its glassy stillness was broken with the fussiness of reviving waves. They gleamed and glistened like wet diamonds flickering across the wide waters. Little waves grew and flourished until these were wider and higher, and the sails on them began to bow and dip, and even toss. The sails themselves were filled with a translucent light, and whilst there was no breeze, in fact none whatever, I observed a strange phenomenon within the white canvases. There was a soft breeze vibrating them, and the breeze seemed to issue from the forrard-sail. In fact, it began to belly outwards, filling up of itself with powerful breath. Then I noticed for the first time, consciously, the strange nature of the prow.

The body of the ship seemed to flow towards the prow which itself was shaped like an ancient pike. Not being much at words I cannot fully describe it. It was smooth and rounded at the base, where it flowed into the hull, so that the hull in fact flowed into it, and so the prow was one with the ship. If you speak of it as a masthead, then that is all right. Yet it jutted out thinning down from the thick base until it was lancelike, sharp and pointing, so that its tip was as a long needle. It pointed into the sky and the distance, and even beyond them, and made the ship appear as though it could in fact pierce beyond the dimensions normally known within the universe in which Ave live.

As I studied the prow I saw a strange thing happen. The forrard-sail bellied out with a powerful inspiration, or shall I say, expulsion of wind. Out of

this expulsion emerged a large white bird. It shot out into the sky, exactly along the line of the pointing prow, and hurled itself into the blue heavens, and at its moment of hurtling the ship thrust forward, following the line of the prow and of the bird, and in powerful movement they made towards the horizon.

It all took me by surprise. In fact, I was stunned. I suddenly knew I would not bear that ship to pass

beyond my ken, or for me to be bereft of it, and I found myself crying out with great pain. My arms were stretched outwards and forwards, as though that in itself might recall it or retain it, or hold it back from its venture. However, I could not withhold it from what it was about, but the weeping kept pouring out of me, as I stood on the shore with the waves rising, and the wind from the racing vessel blowing back into my face.

CHAPTER THE THIRD

The seer continues his descriptions of the strange vessel. He is caught up in the sense of time-before-time, and is transposed to the beginning of this world's time. He hears' a soundless voice from which issues all things that are. He is deeply moved by the relationship between the sails. This, to him, is a new factor in his experience.

The strange thing about that ship was that the farther it went, and the more it should have disappeared it did not in fact diminish in size. Nor did its distance take it from me. In fact, although I did not go with it, I was always present where it was. It was as though it were taking up its position, or some kind of a stance, in an appointed place, preparing for some great event which would soon ensue. My premonition or intuition proved to be correct for soon the ship ceased sailing, and the bird hovered above the vessel, and the wind ceased from within the forrard-sail, and the waters became calm. It was after that that everything happened.

What, in fact, did happen? That would be difficult to explain. The calm was a calm that a man cannot know, and I doubt that he could remember it, try though he may. It was a calm which I can only call before-time. "Before-time" must assuredly mean "no-time", and that is beyond our comprehension. If there was a "no-time" which was before the "this-time", then I sensed it was not a "nothing-time". It was not an era when all was static or

dreaming such as is a dream-time, in which nothing is and also nothing is not. In fact, I discerned (rightly or wrongly: who can discern?) that it was an era (so to speak) which was setting or forming the eras to come. I must say that this was my impression and I have no proof for it, but then we do not think in terms of proof or disproof when we are in a vision. Yet I sensed it was the time of the-coming-of-all-things, and I had to leave it at that.

I said it was not a static time, a time of passive no-being, for in that era the sails were strangely alive. I saw the mid-sail suddenly heighten and flourish towards what I would have called the sky, and then go beyond it until I knew it was beyond all I knew, and the great yearning to fall again and worship grew within me but I stared until the strong tears came into my eyes, and I was crying out again in that wildness of adoration and not at all knowing the reason for it. The great sail became a living, white, palpable, and powerful thing, and the whole nothingness of everything about me seemed to strain in its intent to emerge and be, but more than that I cannot tell you.

What I can tell you is that a soundless voice went out from the mid-sail, and the sound of its soundlessness stunned me, so that I lay where I was, whimpering. The shore was no more, for all had dissolved, and on what I lay I did not know, unless you could call it substantial cloud or upholding wind, or something. The soundless voice was like a strong edict, issuing everywhere, and having its way so that at any moment everything was going to burst forth, foolish as such a statement may sound. Yet it was the after-sail which took my attention, breathless and wondering as I was. It was the after-sail which seemed to have changed in size and quality and properties.

* * *

The strange translucency I had seen before seemed now to possess this sail. It had heightened as to the height of the mid-sail, far beyond seeing, though not beyond sensing. If one may describe it as such it had moved towards the mid-sail, as the mid-sail towards it. Now in this "no-time" (or, "before-time") the three sails seemed as one, although each kept its own discrete being. However, here there seemed a leaning backwards of the mid-sail, and a leaning forwards of the after-sail, and they were one across the other, that is to say, as one sail. This was a strange event, but its results were even stranger. Yet before I tell you of the strange results I must describe also what happened, almost at that point of happening with the mid-sail and the after-sail. It relates to the forrard-sail.

The forrard-sail became excited. I don't think another word would properly describe the happening. It became excited, and its canvas vibrated and its material grew translucent like the mid-sail and the after-sail, and it also leaned backwards and became one in shape and appearance as the mid-sail and the after-sail. That was indeed strange. It was as though the three, having become one, or having manifested their inherent oneness (I really cannot say which) were now about to manifest the power of oneness. I don't really know why I say it like this, but I must put it this way since this is how it came to me in the vision.

In that oneness something came into being which never was before. The something was everything, whilst the everything was the something, an entity in itself, and the reflection and the expression of the unity of the sails. You may call it love, or you may call it something else. I do not know. I only know it came into being. What was not before now was, and it was through the unity of the sails, but it was the sails also, each sail, and all the sails as one. That is the way I must tell it to you.

As for me, I was no longer without breath. What I had seen I had seen before me visibly, and yet within myself. Although I was stunned I was most conscious, and now I rose and knew that what was before me was mine, or at least it was for me, and I was for it. I sensed that whilst the ecstasy was gone, the joy had vanished and whilst the intensity had faded, yet the peace had remained. It was in that

calmness I waited for the next event, for I sensed there would be an event, and I knew it would be born out of the no-time, the one-being of the three sails, and the light and power of the after-sail, and the wind and the wings of the forrard-sail, and my intuition was correct. The next thing began and then the others followed it.

The waters which had been and now were not, were the waters again, only not as they had been. Darkness had swirled around the gleaming ship, and the sails shone strangely from it, and the bird took flight into it, following along the course of the soundless voice, and leaving in its wake a brilliancy of light which proved to be too much for my following gaze. I had to withdraw, but the impression remained. Flitting and flashing, darting, swerving, ascending and falling, the great bird made its way, always keeping in the beam of the pointing

prow, and in line with the shape of the ship.

I saw the light growing out of its path of movement. I saw the darkness swerve away and go beyond where it had been, until to my eyes it seemed it was no more. A strangeness settled across the waters, and then they began to emerge as an ocean of life. They seemed charged to the thin skin of the surface with living beings, new entities with beautiful powers. The land on which I was standing, and from which I was peering began to be as living as the ocean. I swore that had I turned my head I would have seen the flowing sails of the vibrant ship, moving also across the land, but then I knew this to be foolish because it was before me, rocking slightly on the life-charged ocean. I did not discharge the notion from my mind, but also dared not look. Not even in a vision do you dare to know all things, and, more, to understand them.

CHAPTER THE FOURTH

The seer is entranced by the vision of the man of all times. The man appears to emerge from the three sails. His emergence causes a sweet joy to be born, for from the cleaving of him emerges his own fullness. The seer is caused to tremble at his first sight of the evil thing. This thing intrudes into the realm of the bright bird and the shining sails, and the man of all times. The seer is shocked and grieved by the conquest of the man but warns his readers against withdrawing from the truth of the vision.

I can recall, powerfully, at this very minute, the strange and powerful emotion that began to grip me. It caught at my throat, and so much that I lifted my hands to prevent the pain. Now it was not so much pain as an intensity of ecstasy such as I doubt a man could sustain. For a moment he might sustain it, but then that moment would seem as wide as all time, and the degree of intensity would be beyond what the human organ is capable of enduring. At the same time it would have been wholly intolerable for me not to have known or sensed the thing which was about to happen, and to happen right there on that ship.

This is the foolishness of a vision. "Vision" as a word means, surely, something which you see, and of course it is. But sometimes you see with some organ within you. You may extraject that within-sight, and form it into some figure or form, or even

symbol, but you have to see it within, and what I saw within, but not without, was the man. I say "the man" for I know not what man he was, or whether he was in fact a man, for I have never seen a man like him; I mean like this visionary man.

He was at once the man that-is-now, the man-that-will-not-be, and yet the man-that-is-yet-to-be. It was all very curious. It was bewildering, but it was also entrancing. My inner eyes were glued to what I could not *see* upon that deck, but what I could *feel* was there. This was the noble and regal figure that emerged from the sails.

"Can a man be the reflection at once of the three sails? Can he intrinsically and extrinsically reflect and show that from which he has come? Having come, must he again be withdrawn into his origins, or will he too, as they, be discrete? Will he have a destiny of his own, even if never apart from the sails

which gave him his destiny? Is it his destiny, and does he have part in it, or is it imposed upon him? Is he merely the palpable expression of their choice?" These were the thoughts that raced through my mind and excited me beyond my telling you. I doubt not but they have come to your own mind from time to time, and the truth behind them is what has driven men to madness, or aggression, or even into life itself.

All I know is that the man of my inner sensing was there, though not seen, and I am sure he was not the brain-child of my mind. I hope not, for if he were, then the vision is wrong, and I must abruptly cease from telling it. If I cannot tell it then I will have to endure forever the sharp pain which must come from a vision which is false. However, I do not believe it to be false. So, then, let us go back to the man of the past who not being now, is yet to be the true man.

* * *

What I now tell you will be no *less* strange than all things up to this present happening. It was the sudden lull in all things. The shining of the waves was suspended where it was. No twinkle of light-kissed waters continued, but the twinkle of each wave remained unchanged. The waves themselves were not as frozen but as suspended. The ship also did not move, although you sensed, as before, the hidden quiet power, though without visible movement. A calm spread across all as on a day when the sun is warm, and the air glows, and every sensation

of the body is dreamy supineness. This was the time before the new joy entered, and the song arose.

Let me make it clear—joy was already there. This, however, was a new joy, and a joy which the songs of man have tried to encapsulate, although with no great success or finality. It was as though the regality of the man was divided. He became a cloven thing, and yet, out of somnolence in this cleavage he found his true being, dreaming and knowing the dream to be life. Thus his cleavage being healed, he himself clove to that which had come from him. I do not rightly understand what I write, but what I do know is that the song I heard was of indescribable sweetness, but it was no cloying sweetness. It was a triumphant sweetness, a strong shout of loving joy.

Following this happening the waves broke out again, and the twinkling and the laughing and the dancing of them, and the happy turbulence of their movement, and the breaking of the surface by the creatures, and the white bird wheeling gloriously, and the bending of the sails, and the swaying of the earth on which I stood, all told me that the event was a fine event, and a good event, and an event of immense importance.

More than that I cannot tell you.

* * *

They say, the moderns "after the ecstasy, the agony". I am not too sure that that was what the ancients said, although it could be so. I am not convinced that this is how it is, at least not in terms

of fate, for what I learned concerning the man was that there is no fate. Hence I did not anticipate even the ecstasy. I did not know what the joy would be which came winding out of the sky, from up there where the sails had pierced and commanded it. It was a joy like a great whirlwind inverted, bearing downwards and not upwards, bringing vital and powerful joy into the time of awakening from sleep into life again. You must be content with that inadequate description.

So caught was I in the idea of the joy that I scarcely saw the beginnings of that coiling monstrous thing which swirled its way across the waters, darkening as it came, but darkening things from the brilliance of its irradiation. At first I had not seen it, but when I did I know I recoiled with horror, and with the enormous sense of foreboding which sickened me within. I wanted to cry out a warning to the vessel with the sails, but my pitiful voice would have been as the under-sound of a tiny laplet.

The horror grew as I watched it insinuate its way across the waters, flashing as light in one moment, and being the darkness one sees from the light in another moment. I stared, appalled and frightened, wondering at the real strength of the white sails and the ship with the pointing prow of purpose. I trembled, thinking of the contest between the two, for there was a faith of fear—a perverted dread of this thing and its power—within me. That was when I came closest to thinking that there was, after all, the fact of faith.

* * *

I saw no man, and the death-wraith of beauty also disappeared, but, as it were, into the bowels of the ship. I tried to feel again, in my depths, the regality and the nobility of the man, for I knew that whilst being man alone, he was not alone in his manhood. I do not mean there was woman also, for she too was with him or within him. It was that all men—a whole race—linked up behind him, man upon man, upon man until you could not see the last of them. They all faced the brilliant peril which has come near, and I think they were fascinated by its beauty, and intrigued by its great understanding of all things. Those things included the white sails, and the masts, the bird and the prow, but then they also went beyond them, and for myself I had not thought there could be a beyond. That "beyond" must mean what the sails and the bright bird truly signify.

* * *

The new silence was a dead silence. It was not the quiet and tranquil joy of the no-time (or, beforetime) silence we had shared. It was as the silence of death. I simply do not know what happened, there on that ship, but within me the knowledge of regality wilted, and the enormity of lost sovereignty spread like a frightening pall of complete darkness.

The sails stood stiff and firm. The masts pointed silently upwards, and prow sternly outwards. The white bird hovered as though suspended in its place,

and the whole ship was frozen upon the waters. The waves had whimpered out to flatness. The horizon seemed, to my fanciful eyes, to have dropped, and the creatures of the deep withdrew from the surface, burrowing down, at it were, so some subaqueous refuge.

Silently as it had come, and perhaps even more silently, the death-white thing withdrew in reversed coils, across the surface of the water. My whole being trembled with horror, and within I retched

and retched, and felt the terror of this new and deadly triumph. I know nothing, for I had seen nothing, and yet I understood everything, and cursed, wishing I had never seen the vision, and in the secret heart of me I kept crying for the time-that-was, and which, I believed, never-again-can-be.

You may, if you wish, withdraw at this point of the vision, but I counsel you not to do so, not even if the great anger should take hold of you, or the great hatred move you to terrible depths.

CHAPTER THE FIFTH

The seer senses the loss of the man's regality. The coiled evil leaves behind it an abject darkness. Nevertheless, in his sense of the vision, the seer sees that the event portends ultimate good, and not ultimate evil. The sails and the bright bird bring this' message in their own strange manner. This' revelation is followed by the sorrow of a tragic happening which involves the letting of blood. Even so, the seer is again comforted by another happening of great compensation. It is the sweetest of all human cries, such as when a child comes into being.

The reason why I both warn and implore you is that with the withdrawal of the coiled thing, there was no withdrawal of darkness, its darkness. In the same moment as it withdrew there was an eruption of darkness, a dreadful swirling of folds, like a deadly curtain being drawn across the scene, and behind the curtains all plunged into irreversible blackness, the deep night that presses up against your eyeballs so that terror grips you in its smooth coils; you smell the dread pungency of its evil.

What made it so fearful for me was that I had the deep impression of nothingness. Purpose had shrivelled away. Simple being was a mockery, and the goals one had had now wilted, diminished, disappeared, and in their place was nothing. Perhaps there was something, and that a faint, mocking cry from nowhere, telling you it was all vain, or puffs of wind that promised, but when you grasped at them they fled between your fingers.

Through these swirling mists of darkness came a terrible sight. It was that of a castle which had been beleaguered. I do not know what battle may have taken place. I heard no cries, not even the lonely cry of the dark birds as they wheeled across its derelict battlements. Huge dark apertures gaped like the wounds of a ravaged citadel. Mists wreathed and wound about its broken towers, and the glory that had been a fine edifice was now only darkly silent, and its silence was tired and futile.

After this vision came other things. The same darkness had spread across the waters, so that all that I had previously seen—the ship and the ocean—was blotted from sight. I thought it a strange thing that whereas the horror-thing—the evil coiling creature—had withdrawn, yet in its wake darkness became even more fearful and it was in fact, regnant. I scarcely dared think of the loss of the ship, and the defiling of its sails, and in the

darkness I put my arms around myself and whimpered like a lost and lonely thing. Strangely enough it was not for the ship I whimpered but for the besieged castle, the derelict monument of what the man once was, or rather, would have yet been. It was about that that I whimpered, and my whimper whispered out in the night, and trailed weakly across the waters.

* * *

I deeply regret the fact that my story of the vision is often interrupted by the accounts of my feelings. I resolve to tell you only the details and leave you to work out your understanding of them, but the curious fact is that I was involved in the vision, part of it, so to speak. Hence it is not easy for me to separate the vision and my feelings within it, so you must bear with me. Perhaps you may realise that the vision had its reality for me as I lived and moved within it, and it is possible that my sensations, discernments and intuitions may be a valuable part of this description. I will demonstrate what I mean.

The next scene, if you can call it that, was of the darkness clearing. When it cleared the ship stood as it had been, sails set stiffly, masts pointing rigidly heavenwards, and prow sternly thrust out, the white bird hovering above it, totally motionless. Now my feelings come in here, for if there were a mean creature in that vessel (or on the land behind me) I did not see him (or, it: or, them). What I did feel was the tense silence. By now the darkness had

been banished, and the white ship was regnant again, and nothing could impinge upon it. Yet I had the distinct impression of a waiting silence, a hiding quietness, a secretive concealment, an immobility of fear, and it all centred about where I sensed the man to be. Now this may parallel in your mind a sense that many have in their lifetime of those things to which they look back, and from which they also look forward.

I mean that I knew this was a moment around which all moments were destined to revolve. What was happening there, and which I could not see, was to decide, not only for the man but for all whom I had sensed stood behind him. They formed a long line stretching beyond my sight and understanding, a line which of itself was most important. So I waited upon the intuitive discernment within me, wanting to know the mind of the sails, and the direction the ship would take.

Then, in a moment, the bird became unpoised. Keeping still within the line of the prow' it rose high and fluttering, as though from its wings it were dropping a power of purification which would neutralise the darkness.

The mid-sail glowed with something which I took to be not only light, but love, that is, a gleaming, glowing affection. The after-sail seemed to beam out what I can only call healing, a surging power that reached me, even on the shore, and I felt its clean thrust through my being, and I knew the death-white wraith that had coiled across the waters

had no lasting power, not, anyway, like the eternal power which was within the sails.

The forrard-sails filled with a sudden surge of wind, and the vessel almost turned on its keel. The waters churned, and white spume spread outwards where it was, and I heard the soundless cry of the mid-sail, pointed to me, and indeed to everything as it made its pronouncement. What the form or the words of it were I did not rightly know, but the living organic substance of it I do know, and to tell the truth I have often heard it repeated in the sayings of men, and the writings of the ancients, and even of some of the moderns, and I know it is a voice that penetrated that day, and has never been finally lost, perhaps because of the substance of its message. The message simply was that the phantom evil would find its doom, and the true battlements of man would be once again raised, and the derelict castle would again be a place of joy. More than that I cannot say, and it is more than enough for any person to believe, and I doubt that many can.

When I thought the ship had set sail, it had not. Its movements, and its motions, and its charge of vibrancy were for other things. These were for the things of joy and laughter, and they related to the cloven man, who having been cloven had then cleaved to that which was cloven from him. He who reads may only understand because he has himself seen and known this thing. On the land and the sea the things lived and cavorted and knew the joy, but in fact their joy was to be short-lived, for something

of the evil of the wraith had not been purged but had entered into the midst of the joy like a spine into healthy flesh, or a silent wail into the careless laughter of a happy throng of joy-makers.

At that point the ship began to move, or, one might say, thrust itself through the waters. I saw no person or thing on that deck, but there was an upthrust of darkness, a cloudy blackness through which there were spurts of crimson red, like sudden shooting flames. Then, out of that darkness a crimson flare, which sent a blood-red sheen across the waters and the low lapping waves, until it seemed to be a very sea of blood. Whether it was blood or not I cannot say, but the ship moved hastily and hurriedly from it, and its keel rode high, as though it wished not to even touch it, but rather to fly over the surface of its waters.

When I remembered the tranquil peace that had been there at the ceasing of "no-time", and the commencing of the "new-time", then I felt an ache because of this terrible happening. To be sure there had been darkness then, yet no hurtful darkness, and no evil within it, but only a kindly, covering darkness until the time should come for revelation. The darkness which was now spreading had first been bred within the sharp shining of the coils of the deadly evil. It had remained, lurking after the going of the slayer, as though slaying had remained in the air, and the crimson of it was glowing in the very waters themselves.

* * *

One thing I omitted to tell, at the time of the cleaving of the man, was the sweet cry I had heard, and which I must call the feminine, though in calling it that I may well be misunderstood. This too, in some way, came out of the sails, but it was a cry of delight, a cry of sharing with the power of the sails to bring being into being, and then for it to share in that being, until it, too, in its being was also discrete. However I must not pursue this line of thinking but tell you I heard the cry again, after the soundless voice had spoken and told its judgement.

This cry was thin and piercing, high and aloft, but filled with intolerable sadness such as poets seem often to discover in the spirit of man, or out in the inconsolable wild places of the earth. In its pain it was beautiful, but strong, thin lines of suffering made me shudder, and I withdrew within myself, for there are some things, even in a vision, which you cannot bear to know, for to know them is partly to bear them.

With this cry there came another, not at that point of happening, but at another point. As I watched I saw the red glow in the depths fade away, and a new surge of white came up through the waters. There was a clean greening, a soft freshness which pervaded the waves until they broke out in caps of purity and crystal whiteness. The things within them and below them tumbled and rolled

and cavorted, and I knew the thin cry of pain had gone, and a new requited joy was welling up. I will tell you about it.

As I tell you I will not say that all the pain had gone from the former cry, for the new cry still held a faint note of it, but it was a cry above and better than the former sorrow. It was as though with the feminine was the masculine, with the mother-cry was the father-cry, and behind them both the strong, soundless voice of the sails, not only the mid-sail but the other sails also. Yet the cry itself was wholly human, if I may put it that way, for the only cry we can truly recognise is that which is human.

It was not the cry of the sweeping gull, flighting it towards the cloud, nor yet the warm domestic twittering of the small bird, feeding its young or covering them with warmth, nor yet the thrush in its bursting joy, nor even the piercing, regal note of the calling eagle, but it was the sweet sightless sound of the lark, winging away beyond the ken of all things and free in a world of its own. I discerned the strange phenomenon of the background of the soundless voice separating from the cry, and the masculine note also fading, and simply the full, pure song of the feminine rising and falling, ascending and descending. And the joy of it was for what was to come out of the fruit of her sorrow, and the fruit of her joy.

CHAPTER THE SIXTH

A new action presents itself to the seer. It is the sudden fast movement of the ship of the shining sails, and the advent of the small ships. There is, to the seer, something greatly amiss with the little ships. They are little more than imitations or impersonations of the true ship. The seer speculates somewhat upon their meaning and concludes they are empty of meaning, but not of foolish, mind-diverting imitation. Refusing to contemplate them, he sees the true ship return, guided by its' white bird. He is amazed to see that the ship has, also, passage upon the land.

It was then the ship began to move. It followed in wake of the bird, and it moved according to the living prow. The wind it needed burst out of the forrard-sail, and the dignity and honour of it in kingly, masterly movement came from the mid-sail, and the desire for its movement came from the after-sail, and abaft all this the sea rushed to aid it on its way, and the life of the ocean applauded and exulted. Within moments it was gone from my sight, leaving me astonished, and also inconsolable, for I had now come to sense that without the ship there could be nothing for me, although in its presence I could never conclude any matter in my mind. It both comforted and confronted me.

To tell the truth, after the pure music of the call which had dropped and filtered down from the unseen heights I had begun to have a sense of well-being and to believe that forever all would be well.

So quickly I had forgotten the intrusion of the shining coils, snaking towards the ship, and disappearing within. I had forgotten the terrifying darkness that had happened, and then, later, the bleeding of the waters. I had forgotten the song-cry of intolerable pain, and the vision I had had of a derelict castle, and faded glory it had shown.

These things now came tumbling back, for a phenomenon was appearing before my eyes which both puzzled and frightened me, and yet it ought not to have frightened me, because, in another way of speaking, it cheered me considerably and even brought an element of intrigue and curiosity. I speak of the matter of the little ships.

Before I proceed to tell you about the ships I must tell you the strange feelings which registered in me prior to their appearing. It was the unnatural look of the sea, for one thing. I mean where there had

been cool, translucent depths, these depths were now murky. Where the deepest parts of the ocean had had a solid green look about them, the look was now of a thick blackness. Again, where the little waves had laughed and danced (so to speak), they now seemed sluggish. Mind you, there was movement. I am not denying this, but it was a pulling, tugging movement, and yet at the same time sluggish. The waves gleamed, but they did not sparkle. They shone, but they did not gleam. The cool, wet diamonds that had sparkled as they rode the wavelets had gone, and in their place was a sightless sheen. You may understand what I am saying. At that time I wondered whether the ship had left because of this phenomenon, or it had happened because the ship had left. I could not truly tell.

And now I must tell you about the little ships.

I am ignorant as to whether or not you should say "boats" and not "little ships". You must excuse a seer who is at the same time an ignorant landlubber. However I call them little ships because they were, for the most part, exact replicas of the ship which had gone. Nor is that strictly correct since only some of them were exact replicas of the former ship. They were the ones that had three sails, but for the most part they struck me as imitating the true ship, or, even, mimicking it.

Some had two sails, some had one. Some had no sails at all, and yet they scudded through the oily swell of the waters. They capered, and dipped and moved, and even cavorted. They went up and

down, and in and out. There was a ceaseless weaving, in and out, to and fro, of all of them, and they certainly caught the eye, although, to tell the truth, I was uneasy about the whole thing.

Take for example this sense of empty, pointless fun that seemed to tumble up out of the depth, and set the small vessels cavorting even more. Their weaving in and out became almost heady. It was at once pointless and heady, foolish and fascinating, and I frankly wondered about the whole thing. It seemed to me that my complete attention was demanded by them, and when I gave it I felt foolish, as though I were wasting valuable time, and being diverted from some very good thing I had begun to know. It seemed as though I were being quietly weaned from any other idea than what they presented, but when I tried to grasp the one they presented it was insubstantial, and even non-existent. It were as if all this weaving and cavorting must be wholly without point, and I found that difficult to believe. So I watched.

As I watched a terror began within me. At first it was a mere tremor, like an imagined internal disturbance, but its movement gained ground, and terror grew. I saw that the cavorting and tumbling and actions of the little ships was at once without purpose and yet with much purpose. It was without purpose, because it was empty. It had much purpose because it was intended to divert a person's mind from the true ship. There was enough of the true ship (in each little ship) to assure the watcher that he

was in the realm of ships. Also, all the little ships, collectively, seemed to add up to the whole ship. It was as though the whole ship had been shattered or fragmented, and this flitting, flirting flotilla of small vessels, were it added up, would again constitute the full vessel. This was a terrifying thought, and I will explain what came to me as I pondered the matter.

It was this:—Every small ship is a substitute for the large ship. No one has lost the large ship, for he can compound it of all the ships, and each represents some aspect of the variety within the whole ship. They are all parts of the gamut of the entire ship. The thought that frightened me was that if the large ship were fragmented and now constituted this flotilla, then its essential unity, as an entity, had been fragmented also. This was no mere abstract thought. If it were capable of fragmentation, then so was I. To the degree it was fragmented, so would I be.

I suddenly saw the horror of the little ships. They took away from the dignity and honour of the whole, and they beguiled me into the perverse fascination of fragmentation.

Before you say, "He has gone now beyond the vision. He is analysing and dissecting, and complicating its real issues", let me say this: "What the true vessel is I am not, but what the true vessel brings into being, I am." I mean, "I am not that vessel, but without it, I am not." I mean, further, "I am not, and cannot be what I may truly be, that is, without

the vessel." And, may I add, "Without the bright bird." I know this is very abstract, and so that I do not divert you from the concrete things of the vision, I will proceed to describe it as I saw (and, felt) it. You must pardon my personal interpretations, but they came to me as part of the vision, and as part of understanding it. Please forgive me.

* * *

I had not known, before this, that essentially terror has no real and substantial basis. What had been taught me concerning the destiny of the universe, and in particular the destiny of man, I had only learned through the vision, and not elsewhere. Hence it was a stunning surprise to know that the little ships were not real ships at all! I could see that were they to be real, one would have, then, many decisions to make concerning them, such as choice of them, devotion to them and relationship with them, especially if you go on the ship-principle of the three-sailed ship.

I mean that if the large ship had three sails, and especially with the properties which were theirs, then one must also give similar credence to the small ships. Supposing, then, they did not have those properties, i.e. the properties of the larger vessel. Yes, suppose not! Then one would be caught in with lesser qualities, smaller comprehensions and so little actions of living. That is how it appears to me.

I am not sure when the flash of understanding came to me that these were not true ships, but in fact were unreal. They were phantom ships! Their actions were meaningless and unreal. However they were imitations of the real, or, as I have said, a mimicking of the real. Hence they were to be viewed as pathetic. I know that in a vision you can only see and understand certain things, but I had the feeling and sensing that in time and history many were deeply preoccupied with the antics and actions of these little vessels, seeing them as pleasurable, diverting, interesting in their various forms and patterns of diversion, and most acceptable because on the one hand they were not that great ship, and on the other close enough to it in appearance and principle to give the viewers the sense that they were participating in the real thing.

I am afraid that it is here we will have to leave this subject for, in the moment I knew the ships to be fraudulent, I decided to ignore them, regretting the time I had devoted to them; and I suppose one always regrets the waste or loss of time. At the moment I had decided to despise and ignore them I saw the white vessel again. It was coming, and, to my utter astonishment, with all sails bellying—so wind-filled it was—it was making in my

direction. Indeed the prow was set, its direction almost directly pointing at me, and above it, its wings appearing to be enormous, was the white bird, and looking as though he had invisible threads attached to the vessel below. It seemed his power was drawing it with ever-increasing pace towards where I was, and in fact when it was almost upon me it slipped by, almost, but not quite, touching me, and then it was gone, and to my utter astonishment was sailing upon the land!

Sailing upon land! Yes, this was true. I supposed, as I stood there, having turned to watch it go, that there must have been some canal or river or waterway on which it moved, and perhaps that was so, but I saw it in the midst of the fields, gliding and moving under the power that urged it along. I was both surprised and thrilled for then I realised that in the purposes and plans of the ship there was no difference between land and sea, and that in fact all of the earth was under its aegis, and that included me also, for which I was wonderfully glad.

Now I awaited the outcome of its being on the face of the land. I was further cemented in my belief that ultimately there is no cause for terror, although, to tell the truth, I was yet to see terror in some other of its forms.

CHAPTER THE SEVENTH

The seer bemoans the fact that some are deluded by the vapid little vessels. He is glad that on both land and sea foolish forces are receiving judgement. Meanwhile a matt appears' before him, much like himself. This man is confronted by a strange but wonderful appearance emanating from the mid-sail. The seer seeks to sense the nature and person of that man. He then enters into a long discourse on the nature of the appearance which he defines as "the glory". He concludes that such glory is needful to man that he may be truly man.

There are some elements of the vision which I was not able to follow. To me it was as though some unseen chronicler called the attention of his hearers to himself whilst he talked, and demanded deliberate silence so that he might be heard and understood. It was as though, in his talking, the silence he required did not eventuate. I mean that his hearers were so amazed at what he said that their tones of wonderment, and their astonished talking amongst themselves quite covered up the main statements of the speaker. Even more, their astonishment was concentrated on the secondary issues rather than those which were primary and significant. In addition, I was somewhat dazed by the events I had recently witnessed so I must confess that the impressions I received in this chronicling were quite confused. Some events and details stand out clearly, but I am at a loss to place them in their true

sequence, or even to describe them fully to you. I can however give you some of my impressions.

One of the impressions which runs through the accounts I seemed to have heard is that of the serpentine evil I had witnessed at the ship, as it sought to subject the masculine and feminine elements of the regal one (or ones) in the depth of the ship.

Far from departing from this ship, its sails, and its intentions, the wraithlike evil seems to have clung firmly. Its impressive display of the flotilla, too, seemed to have gained its adherents, and sadly enough a considerable number of such. I wondered at that, for having seen through its fascination I imagined that others, likewise, would have been disillusioned. Far from that happening, however, many had given themselves most happily to its impressions, and as a result had taken on many of

the motions and acts of the small vessels. They, too, had become impersonators.

There is one account I remember dearly. I am not saying that in the minor details I could not be wrong, but this one consisted in some form of judgement which came across the land as well as the sea. The main impression I gathered was a sense of the ship being above all things, and so being the despair of the things which had been subjected to its actions. On the one hand they did not care to be subject to it, having long before rejected it. In fact they had declared it to be no longer in existence. "If", they said with scorn, "it has ever been in existence." On the other hand they pleaded at a desperate last moment, that it should not exercise its prerogatives, which were to destroy that which was evil.

I cannot rightly say, though I fancy I am correct, what were the conditions which preceded the disarray of these forces. I gathered, at the time of hearing, that they were doing little other, on land, than what the small vessels were doing on sea. That is, they were very busy about something, which, when analysed, amounted to nothing. At first you would be inclined to censure the use of the power of the ship to put a physical end to this pointless activity, but I know now how deadly are such things, and I have no trust in the little ships. As I explained before, pointless nothingness is what hinders us from attaining the true goal, and which I take to be purposeful sovereignty of being,

although, when you ask me what that is I will be hard put to it to really explain.

I suppose I mean the search for true identity, as though one believed that identity was purposed from the era of no-time, and was to be fulfilled in the era of the time-to-be. If this pointlessness was not their cause of destruction, then I cannot think of another. As I have said, I heard some of these things indistinctly, but in the case of this one I think I heard distinctly, even above the murmurings and fussy dialogues of other hearers.

* * *

Leaving all the sensings aside, let me tell an event I actually saw, though, of course, in the vision. It was what may be called "the appearance", although there are other names which I shall later use. The appearance came to a man. The man himself was to me a simple man, but so much was he like me that I laughed, and laughed happily. Where he came from I did not, at that moment, rightly know. I did know the source of "the appearance" for it emanated from the centre-sail. This you may find difficult to believe, as I suppose, did the man himself, but he was greatly moved. In fact he seemed, at the point of confrontation to change from what he had been, into what he was purposed to become.

This man, in this vision is one who will remain long in our thinking, and, I dare to suggest, in the thinking of all the nations of our planet. In him, in

one sense, lies the key to what we are, and what we will be. Thinking over the event I can now see what I did not consciously sense at that point, that is that he was very much like the first man I sensed to have appeared in the ship. He had more than a little of that original regality, the regality which the coiled evil had attacked. That first man had been a man-becoming. This other man, gazing at the appearance, was mild and yet even more as one becoming.

As I ponder that day I can see more and more why the appearance had to confront him. Mind you, if I keep describing and interpreting the event I will go beyond the terms of my commission as a seer, so I desist. Yet I must add that that centre- or mid-sail had a power and property, which is so essential to all men that without it they can never be what they need to be, and what, so far as I know are intended to be. I do not claim this to be so, as though it is irrefutable, but I think it to be so. I also hope it is so.

This mid-sail had no more affinity with the sail afore or aft of it, yet I seemed to see that the sail aft of it had its being only in the sail afore it (the mid-sail), and then, correspondingly, though not equally, the mid-sail had its best and essential being *in relation to* the sail abaft it. Thus when the mid-sail or its manifestation or representation (or the sail itself) stood before the man, it was that in some way this man stood in similar, though not exact, relationship to it as did the sail abaft it. I am hoping my description is not obscure. I mean the glory of the mid-sail was reflected by the after-sail, and that the

man before whom this glory appeared was himself some reflection of that glory.

Before pursuing this matter let me inform you as to some of the history of the man of whom I speak. He was, to tell the first bit, from the issue of my visionary man, the first man sensed within the ship. Somewhere back he had come from the woman, though not through her on the side of the darkness and the blood, which was directly linked with the white-death evil. No, it was on the side which flowed from the song. That song, away up in the vaults of the skies, filtering down to its wondering hearers, was the song of love. (I am not speaking of love as do the small-ship people, the love which is diverting and pleasant but in the ultimate pointless). Yet true love, I am told, never exists apart from the ship. I partly understand that mystery, for it means to me that love has a promise for its end, the fulfilled discreteness of each creature of love, and the knowledge of the sails, and the possession of the ship, and this is not a little thing.

This man came out of the issue of love from his fathers. It is sad to report that in some generations they were greatly diverted by the little ships, and to tell the truth there had come to be amongst them small vessels of devious diversions. I mean they were not white in imitation of the first real ship, but had gotten to themselves colours and shapes which were greatly diversified. At root and core they still were vessels, albeit brilliant imitations, but they had captured the patriarchs of this man.

The mystery I cannot explain fully is that he grew impatient with their playthings and when a voice called him from them he lost no time, but was away from them. What finished them forever was the glory or "the appearance" which came before him, and I must spend time and detail in telling you of that glory, for it was no mean thing, and unto this day is no mean thing.

* * *

If you have paused on any day, a warm, quiet day when the ground is vibrant, and the trees rich with life, and the birds are deliberate in their telling, then you will hear some of the glory. If you traverse continents where it is dry and desert-like and harsh, and you see the salt bush, the little flowers that hide in the dust but are a world to look into with an enlarging looking-glass—if you travel across these and look at the rounder boulders of the near desert, or the harsh hills of the uplands besides them, then you will have seen some of this glory.

If you pass over lush pastures, and wooded groves, and forested mountains, and if you see falling waters over crags, and rushing torrents through the mountains and the gorges, and if you see the long, swift rivers in the jungles, and the broad, blue lakes where the volcanoes once burst, or where the hills settle down to their eternal plains; if you see these then you will see something of the glory of which I speak, but then it will be only a speck of that.

Much of the glory, at the right moment, is hidden within a man. That is correct: it is hidden within a man and a woman. Look into the eyes of a woman at the point where she has conceived life and carries it calmly and proudly within her body; then you will have seen more of the glory. See it in the eye of a man when he has regained his lost nobility and you will see much of what I am speaking about, but see it in the eye of the power to which man belongs, and yet which man himself is not, then you will see it all.

The old seers saw it as visual radiance, or as swirling clouds of brilliance and beauty. The special seers saw it in the knowledge of holy love. They saw it as the wisdom which is impeccable but kindly; perfect but gentle, lofty but tender and intimate. This is what that man saw as he was confronted by the sail. I say that the very heart-beat of that sail reached out to him, and he knew the glory.

This is not to say that glory did not terrify him, for it did. But it was terror that killed foolish terror, or, if I may say "little-ship terror" for that is petty terror. When the little ships grow deadly, and pursue their former lovers and erstwhile admirers (for they are jealous and lustful for admiration) they use the power of terror until their victims plead for mercy and resort to sickening mock-worship. This kind of terror seemed pale and insubstantial against the strong, stern terror of the glory, but then with it was that tender quality of which I spoke.

For me, if not for the man, that revelation of terror was very close to visual, as the seers had seen

it. It swirled about me in such abundance of light that I whispered inwardly to myself that I could never again live without it. Yet it did not seem that way to the man. He accepted it all so calmly that I felt some inner indignation grow, but so foolish did the indignation seem that I presently grew ashamed of it, and left it, for the worthless thing that it was. I knew it was the regality of this man which made him accept the splendour very naturally, and also very simply.

One day, I know, I shall write a separate account of that part of the vision, telling the details of this man, for he caused me considerable wonderment. However, for the sake of not wearying those who read, I shall simply recount the hope that the mid-

sail planted in his breast. It was this; that all that was on the land, and all that was on and in the sea would one day be gathered into his possession and so be his.

Put like that it may sound strange and even mercenary, as though the sail were communicating an arrangement upon conditions. Yet it was not that, for the promise was not simply to the man alone (or to his woman as well), but it was this total promise to each who was a true issue of the simple man. It goes back to my exciting discovery, of which I spoke before, that true nobility of man, once recovered and made full, is the gift of the white sails, and the secret of the whole ship. He who knows will know what I say to be so, also to be true.

CHAPTER THE EIGHTH

The seer is greatly interested in the issue or descendants of the simple man, the man who saw the glory. His issue or seed the seer wishes to call "the clayman", and he has sorrow in his heart for the children of this clayman, albeit the glory of the sails is given to them. He explains that sorrow can, nevertheless, bring to understanding, and he continues his narrative in this respect.

When next I saw the ship it bore the issue of the man, and I saw this issue with great astonishment. I do not say, simply, that the nobility had declined, for I saw little to tell me it was the issue of that person. Because I had had occasion to travel with him (though unseen) in the highest event of his life, I assumed that his issue would carry the knowledge of the mystery of the sail.

Well, to put it a little obscurely his issue did carry the mystery, but yet he did not. If you can speak of incomparable jewels being hidden in rough, dried mud, or coarse clay clustered around to conceal these priceless things, then this man was that. He did not at all know the mystery of what he possessed, and had it not possessed him he may not have pressed on to fulfil his earthy desires or live to see these earthy desires transformed to a higher level. To give him credit he did press on, and a great gift

he obtained as the result of his dogged intuitions and earthy desires. That I must say for him. Also because of what he was at his beginnings I call him "the clayman".

To retrogress to that day when his ancestor had discovered the full secret of the sails: as I said, I witnessed the event. What, in things of the sea, or in the natural functional nature of a ship, one sail means to another I cannot tell. Perhaps they mean little and one sail can be disposed of without affecting another, but in this vision of mine they were so much of a unity, that each lost its identity, and ceased to be an entity, that is apart from another. I must add that this is surmise since one was never apart from another. If then I refer to a man as a sail I am saying he cannot be without another sail, especially if that be his issue. Hence the song of intolerable sorrow that welled from the woman at

the time of blood, and the song of unspeakable joy which came at the hour of her timeless issue. In this way I saw what the child meant to the man, and how the child understood the man, as the man understood the sail. I speak now in a riddle for it was not only the man understanding the mid-sail, and then the meaning of the after-sail, but it was the child understanding the man in regard to himself, which is the same mystery, and so he must understand—whether consciously or not—the truth of the sails, especially the mid- and after-sails.

Now I must leave that part of the story, and tell you of the issue of the clayman, the earthy vessel whose inner part concealed the glory he had coveted, and who later attained the nobility, and saw what was beyond, over the other side of the ocean, but not outside the ken of man. It is an interesting story no doubt, but also a very sad one, and until today its sadness remains, and I am not anxious that I should bear any of the burden of its interpretation. I simply tell you the thing as I saw and sensed it.

* * *

If you leave the vision-history and go into the time-history of man, then you will see some fearful things and you will be reminded of the vision truth of the death-wraith, that coiling evil which attacked the battlements of man and brought him to dereliction, that is to say as a hulk of a ship bereft of its sails, and so also of the beauty, and the motion, and the direction. This is, so to speak.

The point of my saying this is that what is in vision-history is no less in time-history, but its meaning cannot be made dear in time-history, for there men speak another language, and no few of them are bemused by the vision-flotilla, although in time they do not literally see any flotilla as such. Hence when I tell you that this clayman had his issue in time I am telling the truth, and not just vision-truth. I am telling the truth that is in time.

In vision, however, I saw beyond the time-facts of the suffering of his issue. Since some of the history of the man from whom he had issued was known to him, I assume that he coveted the jewels he hid from his family and his enemies. And this he did, but the very possession of them caused an unconscious division within his own children, some going this way, and some going that. At least one, if not more, far exceeded him in nobility and stature, although none in his understanding of the treasure, for the treasure was, in the ultimate, the possession of the ship and its sails, a treasure which had been promised to no man but his ancestor, and yet to all men who lived in the nobility of that ancestor, for he was the man who had seen the glory in its actual appearing. He had also seen it in the person of his own child. Yet, strangely enough, out of that child was to come the clayman of whom we continue to speak.

The sufferings of his children and his children's children, and their children are written plainly in annals of time-history and you may go there and see them and read them if you will, and any man of

heart will be deeply grieved, but to me the true grief shows in the vision of them, for they were offered what their great ancestor had known, but this seemed only as a little ship to them, when often the little ships seemed as the great ship to them, and this was a most curious subversion of reality, or to put it more bluntly, even a perversion.

I think I have to say that the clayman gained such nobility that at the end he understood much, if not all that his forefather had understood. He saw the end-time when the ship would be complete. That is to say, when those who were to come aboard would do so. This would be before the grand sailing, when the ship would complete its voyage and come to the place of its true destination, bringing all aboard on it who had understood the message of the sails.

It is fair to say that the great ancestor—the man who had seen the glory—had on one occasion failed to understand the true power of the sails. Perhaps he did not know of the former sail out of which comes the wind of itself. Nor, perhaps, had he heard even the silent beating of the wings of the great bird, which we might even call the spirit of the sails. We do not have to call it this, but it approximates much to that description. Had he heard he might not have acceded to the false light which once came to him.

He acceded, and in these years much later his progeny also acceded to the same principle, as though it had been buried down, deeply, in his seed.

It was this accession to no-truth, to which they owed some of their suffering, and later they owed

more than enough to it. With this statement I will proceed to the suffering which was theirs.

* * *

You will surely be able to tell me where nobility really lies, and what constitutes regality, and you will surely tell me that perhaps suffering—more than any other one thing—is essential and required for the gaining of nobility, and I would agree. I have seen, however, that where there is disbelief regarding the three sails, or belief regarding the little ships as being authentic, that there is then great bitterness derived from suffering. The little ships have nothing to say about it, and they ignore it, so that man must make his own decisions. If he has not seen the great ship upon the ocean, and watched its white spires grow in glory and beauty of intense purity, then he will know very little, for the spirit of him will be tiny and hidden away in the cloisters of his inner being. The man who has suffered much to see the ship, or because he has seen the ship, and has scorned the minor craft as petty and *useless*, it is he who will derive much from suffering.

As for these children of the clayman, I know not how to speak of them, for of them some gained nobility, and some perished in the midst of the glory, for they did not have eyes for glory, and indeed did not see it, although it was with them if

they had willed to know it. It had been better that there had been no glory among them, for then they would not have perished in that way.

I think I grow a little weary of this detail as doubtless you also are doing, but am bound to tell you lest the truth of the vision be lost in the parts that only show the glory, and not the cause for its tenderness, kindness and care. Also I might miss on showing the yearning of the mid-sail for the people of the man who had seen the glory. Why, that very son (and his progeny), the clayman, became as the after-sail to the mid-sail, and when I say that I speak of the deepest of mysteries. Never did he say of the man to whom he had showed the glory that he was as that clayman, for he gave to the clayman, a special honour, and a special love, and he gathered up the seed of the clayman into the man himself and clothed them about with his glory, notwithstanding

they did not understand, and that few of them knew enough to perceive the mystery and the splendour of the white ship, and to bear visitations of the bird itself, and to understand momentarily the purpose behind the choice.

I leave it to you to know that their suffering brought them to where they could now fulfil the promise of completion. I mean by this that they could become full in their own being and understand the mystery which would release them from the trite ways of others, and their preoccupation with imitation things, and the pathos of mimicry, and the bondage of worshipping that which would bind them rather than liberate, and demand (in slavery) rather than give (in liberation).

This is not the end of the suffering. It is the story which leads to the true suffering, out of which the fullness of the vision is discovered and known.

CHAPTER THE NINTH

The seer comments on the power of the sails, especially the forward and rearward sails'. The former sail has greatest power within itself, especially against the little ships, whilst the latter sail shows regal abilities. The three sails' become as one. He also meditates upon the nature of the hull, and then of the ship itself. In understanding he prepares to tell the heart of the vision.

I wish now to go back to the ship, for the last we spoke of it was when it came on to the land, and seemed as much home there as in the sea itself. My story of the man to whom the glory appeared on land has taken me from the ship itself, and I wish to speak of some of its mysteries.

I had mentioned, before, that the length and breadth of its sails could vary at any point of happening. For example, the mid-sail was the one which seemed taller than the others, and this is the way of most ships, even if not all, as you will agree. Yet I have seen the ship when the forrard-sail stood tallest. And I must say they were great moments when it did. At that point great affusions of the wind would sweep away and beyond the ship, and even tempests and tornadoes would be born, and the fury of them would thrust through the land and the sea, and the calm would be broken and with the wind would come the rain, and often the hail

and even, from the lightning, fire. Then the wind and fire would be one, and there would be a burning and a purging such as you might never dream could be so. At that time the sluggish spirits of men would awake, and some would go on a rampage of action, fit to wrestle with the highest mountains, or to depth perilous deeps, or do exploits which man does not contemplate in his ordinary hours.

In those hours the foolish little ships would totter and titter upon the huge waves, and slip between the chasms of them and be lost, or appear upturned and looking foolish and awry, or some would sink suddenly into the depths and remain there, never to arise. These times were called "the times of the bird" and a great purging would go on, and the sail would seem high, towering more than the spires of a great cathedral or the vast peaks of the mighty mountains. The sail would glow with white glory, and shine

with its own inner translucence, and it would seem at that point that the two other sails would nod and sway with their masts, as though glad for the special hour or happening of the sail at the prow.

Other times it would be the sail abaft the mid-sail. You may say it would gain its wind and freshness from the prior sail of which we have spoken, and yet it is truer to say it had its power from both other sails, and also a power of its own, and so it too, grew, and there was a high glory about it, such as when a prince is seated upon his throne, and his kingdom is known and acknowledged after he has fought and battled, and gained the ascendancy. At this time the sail would flourish and its whiteness seem fairer than ever, and its translucence give forth a tender and rich glory. At that same time the little ships would dwindle and shrink, and grow tiny and be near to disappearing. These were times when the events of men would change, and a new sense of power beyond their tiny politics and their minute imaginings would grow. I have to say that vast kingdoms would become unseated, and mighty princes would be brought down, and a new understanding would grow for a time that power was not from princes but, in fact, from the very sail itself. I mind that these were rare times, but I also mind that at the last this shall be fully known, and not only in vision, but in truth, where men stand or fall at that crucial hour. Then the sail will be the high sail, and so high that all will marvel.

Of the centre sail I scarcely dare to speak. I have a happening to tell, later, where the centre-sail bends over the after-sail, and so much in unity and *tenderness* that man is too bewildered when seeing it, to understand, and he will think that even in a vision this cannot happen. So I may speak of the sail not becoming large, for it is always that, but of it diminishing, until it becomes as small as a man, and as small as a tiny fragile insect, and at that point of *smallness* there is nothing which exceeds it in height or breadth or inner quality. This is the central sail of all.

* * *

Also I have said little or nothing of the body of the ship—its deck and its under-deck. I have simply mentioned its keel, and spoken at some length of its prow. I have said nothing of its crew, nor of its personnel. I have only said that the hull is not there simply to hold the masts and the sails, but it is there because the sails will have it that way, and have it so that they need it that way.

The ship itself is a mystery, and soon we will understand, if only in part, the mystery and the greatness of the mystery. For example, I cannot tell you it is composed only of boards, for you will not believe me. If the sails are living, then so must the whole structure be, and in that you are right. However, the ship in its body, its deck, its entire hull lives only because of and by the sails. Without the

sails it is as nothing, but with the sails it is the living ship. Even then it is a mystery.

Part of the wonder of the ship is that in the no-time it was a ship, yet not complete. At the end-time, or the time-to-be it will be the full ship, and if you like with captain, crew, and other personnel, but to look at it as in the vision there is no crew to be seen, no captain upon its bridge, no seamen upon its decks and no travellers within its depths. This is the way of the ship. Yet at the same time all who have seen the glory and understand it, or are in the true way of understanding it, have part and place in that ship, but *how* this is, is also a mystery.

Let me tell you that at the time of the end of no-time and the beginning of the this-time, the regal creature which came to be stood on the decks of the ship, and moved in its depths, and knew the secret of the sails. In the hour of his cleaving he felt the

serenity and joy which the mid-sail projected for him, and he revelled in the fruit of that cleavage for he knew no fear, and no trace of darkness as yet had fallen upon him. You could say he was not only on and within that ship, but it was part of him as he of it.

I cannot say he was father and founder of that ship, but I can say that *with the sails above him the ship was below him*, and, *with the sails above him he was part of the ship, and it part of him*. I can say that in the last time this ship will be where the sails are, and the coiling horror which came to disturb will be unable, ever, to gain an entrance. In fact for it the nature of the ship will be the cause of fear and terror and destruction. The whole ocean and all the land will acknowledge that. Having said these things I must tell you about the ship, and the sails and the last times.

Book Two

CHAPTER THE FIRST

The seer tells of the activity of the bird in inspiring certain ones to tell his words. Such words were to counter the influence of the little ships, and the cult of the same. Such a cult had even made inroads to the people of the simple man. The seer enlarges upon their sufferings because of this, and also upon the invasion by the little serpents. He concludes with a vision of a special day when the evil sails and serpents will come to destruction.

The simple man who had seen the glory, and also that later child, the clayman, and the progeny of the clayman, all knew the last times were coming. That was their view—vision or no vision. They knew the mystery of the ship, whether they accounted their knowledge highly or not. They knew the story of the first sail. They knew the story of the mid-sail. Also they knew the story of the last sail.

The story of the last sail had come to them through many avenues. Mostly it had come to them through the great suffering, and also through the flying, over them, of the great bird. Yet the bird, on some occasions alighted on them, and even amongst them, and those were the times of the great telling. When the bird alighted, he generally alighted unseen to all but one of the clayman's progeny, and that one would be inspired to give the great telling. Out of the great telling came the hope, and the hope was always linked to the last days.

I must also take you back to the heart of the days of suffering. You will know that in many parts of the earth there are people (or, peoples) who enshrine the little ships in their hearts. They have of course elaborated on the little ships as they once saw them for these little ships, as such, do not hold people for very long, since they do not do for any man what only the great white ship can do. So these elaborations are enshrined in the hearts, minds and thinking of men, and often in outward temples, although these are not as successful as the inner shrining. Where these elaborations obtain there is a great growth of culture about the cult of the little ships. I mean that the little ships form the heart and core of such peoples.

The people of the clayman, or the people of the true ship, when taken from special suffering and being trained and prepared for the liberty of glory, themselves confessed to a deep fear in their hearts.

They were not as yet fully prepared for the mystery of the sails, which after all requires much of a man, as he of it, so they hoped they might know something between the old (the little ships) and the new (the great white ship and its sails). This was not permitted, but in pity for their weakness the very ship itself moved with them over the earth. Day and night it was with them, and thus they were bound to become people of the ship.

The distressing thing is that they often ignored the ship, or, even worse, they became familiar with it, seeing it, yet not seeing it, and the end was therefore worse than the beginning. Hence, whilst the ship cannot be said to be removed from them, even at the point of their greatest suffering, yet the glory of it went from them, because they had in fact begun to dilly-dally around the other ships, the little ships and their various cultic elaborations.

I will say little of the great punishments (the further sufferings) which came upon them, but I will tell you the cause of the sufferings. They wished to have a ship which was not the white ship itself, yet a great symbol of that ship. This seemingly profound idea, when formalised became a source of great horror and destruction until they too could no longer abide it. Suffice it to say that ultimately they hunted out the elaborations of the little ships, and the little ships, as well as the symbol of the ship which they had themselves prepared, and finished them entirely. They had come to know the danger of the little ships, and so they destroyed them. I am not

saying every enshrined vessel was destroyed, for that is the harder, more difficult, destruction. Anyone who has enshrined such a vessel will tell you of his own intimate problem in that regard.

What is not easy to say, and difficult to describe, and quite pitiful to be described is the invasion of the little serpents. These, in their being, were not strong and virile and as death-dealing as the death-wraith itself, that coiling horror who had once slithered across the water to the home of the regal and the noble. This invasion was very subtle, for there were not outward shrines for the ships of the flotilla, but the secret shrines within some men gave them a place to dwell. I do not say they bred there, but I do say they gained nourishment and lived in their own sort of enjoyment on their hosts. As parasites they drained the energies of those they inhabited, and besides this they preyed on others, but they were careful in their venturing, and only here and there were they recognised as emissaries of the full, coiling creature itself.

* * *

It was said that in the last days, the days of the bird, and the days of the sails that the coiling horror would be destroyed and even banished from man's memory. There was also talk of man attaining to his former honour and dignity. It was said by some whom the bird had visited, that there would be an honour and splendour even beyond what the first one had known. Some had it that the glory would be

seen by all, even beyond the great ancestor (ie the simple man) who had calmly accepted the message of the mid-sail. Some of these things were said as truth, and were to be believed, whilst others of them sounded like extraordinary rumours, but in fact they had the ring of truth, so that there was great excitement, and no little attending to the truth the

men of the bird had given out in their communications. It was also said that out of the sails would come one who would talk to men in their own language, but because this was a mystery it was only little understood, and in fact scarcely believed.

It was scarcely believed, that is, until the unseen visitation of the bird.

CHAPTER THE SECOND

The seer speaks of a great mystery, namely the after-sail, and the sufferer who would come from it. He also speaks of the bleeding which comes to men of the white bird from the coiled serpent. This is because the bird forespeaks the doom of the same serpent. Also the bird has intimated that such victory must first bring suffering such as has not hitherto been known. This, he explains, is because the evil thing becomes' vicious in its determination to control all things. The seer quietly tells of the new woman, and the birth of her child.

I have to tell you that it had been said there would come a day of the bird which is much like saying a day of the forrard-sail. In that day the message of the forrard-sail would be clear and strong, and no one need seek the mystery through other channels, but prior to this day would be the day of the after-sail. Out of this sail would proceed the sufferer, and men would understand something of him because they too had suffered. Yet, as I have said, there had to be a hidden day of the bird before its full and overt day was announced. This was one of the things I saw in my vision.

Also I must tell you that from my vantage point I noticed just prior to the day of the latter sail that there was great movement in the ship. If you can speak of sleeping timbers of a deck or silent sides, a drowsy hull and a drooping keel, then you may do so. The prow that day, however, seemed more

intent than for some time, and the body of the vessel began to exhibit much of its old vibrancy, whilst the sails were filled to fullness, straining away from their masts, and I saw the wide wings above descend and then float across the land, and I also saw the secret alighting, which for a time was not noticed.

It was noticed, however, amongst the true ship-watchers. They knew the motions of the bird, and they saw its silent activities, and they were filled with anticipatory joy. They conferred amongst themselves, and there was one especially who knew this bird more intimately than any to that point in all happenings, and he began, at the instigation of the bird, to talk of the time of the latter sail. His sudden intrusion upon men also caused great anger, so much so that he was marked out for death. Also I must tell you that the bleeding of any man of the bird was a common thing. The days of bleeding had

not yet ceased, and in fact were to increase. Even the day of the latter sail was to be marked as being a day of blood.

Not all were angered, however, and in fact many, if not most, watched eagerly for the actions of the bird, especially as he was moved to complete them through the man who knew him so well. There was a great gathering together of the descendants of the clayman, the descendants of the old father who had seen the glory of the sails and who knew the meaning of the ship. In the vision I knew the time of man was now drawing very near, and the heart of me grew strong, whilst my eyes misted with tears of expectation, and I remembered the feminine cry which had first ascended on high and then had fallen, dropping portion by portion on to the wondering ears of the listeners below.

I knew the time of joy was drawing near, but right at the point of this knowing I swear I saw, almost hidden, the gliding of the coiling horror, and I remembered the ocean of blood and terror began to penetrate my joy. I wanted to cry out but knew that a seer can do nothing about his vision, and that the vision was for the telling of all things.

* * *

An ancient seer has said that whilst the coiled serpent hates beyond all things that noblest of earth-creatures which is the man, yet he hates even more the power and being of the sails, and if possible would attack and destroy that. This is a venomous

hate, yet the most misplaced and evil of all hates. Where the white ship goes its power also goes, and it is the power of glory, and not of horror. Any fear it may bring (and it does), this fear is for cleansing and not for crushing. Hence the ancient seer had said that the time of the serpent would clash with the time of the bird and the time of the after-sail, and he could not but be right.

The first attack of the white-death was upon the one who knew the bird more than any man hitherto. This dark creature-thing sent out its poison from its fangs so that the man would come under the blooding, and so he did, as in the ancient times which I had seen. I imagined that again there would be the darkness and thrusting up, and from its flames so blood-red that the whole ocean would be aglow with that dreadful colour, and I looked to see the event. Again I could hear the former cry of sorrow, but to my amazement I saw the ocean glow white, and the light on the horizon rose flaming not with blood-red, but the soft rose-pinks of a new day, and the pulsing throb of a new life promised.

I was deeply puzzled with this, knowing that in some way the evil-death had failed to take a victory. Nor could I understand the gentle singing that came trembling across that morning. Also it was at that point that I saw light flowing out of the after-sail, and the glow of it was unearthly and very beautiful. So wonderful was its gentleness that I felt the tears dropping quietly from my eyes, and when I looked at the fierce, dark evil it had receded to something

like a pitiful worm, and I almost expected it to curl away and die, but the mid-sail had more for it to do yet, so that the victory and the secret of the sails should be known in all the universe, and with it the triumph of its great care for the children of the ancient father.

I further watched the work of this miserable but revived worm-like thing, and I saw its fangs attack the new woman. The old loathing and sickness came upon me, as I felt the puerile evil approach her. Either she did not see the thing, or her gaze was so firmly upon what she was seeing that she did not protect herself. I do not know. I saw a flash of instant glory, a shaft of brilliant light, and the worm-thing diminished and curled, rolling away from the beam of the splendour, as though in it it would perish altogether, as undoubtedly it would, had it come into that shaft of pure brilliance.

The mystery of the after-sail, and the birth of the woman of the child I cannot explain though many a seer has taken this for his subject. At the time of birth there was glory which had once been with the people of the clayman. It was the glory which the ancient father had seen. It was the glory out of which the first regality had come. It was the full brilliance and splendour of the ship, seen at its most heightened moment of being, but I knew that the tremors in the sky, and the ceaseless thunder of joy,

and the cascades of golden singing were for the fact that the old and ruined battlements were going to live again, and the broken and gaping apertures be filled with the shining windows, and the ancient nobility was to be restored, and the living ship was to become what had been destined for it in the no-time, and the triumph of the sails was to be emblazoned across the reaches of the universe. I knew everything that has breath would rise to acclaim the final triumph, and to rejoice ecstatically in the victory.

I knew all this was being acclaimed, but my heart was heavy, for I knew the secret of the suffering. That was part of the telling of the seers within the vision, and they too had shared in the suffering. They knew the mystery that only the suffering of the three sails would destroy the poison of the white worm, and set the universe free. They had planned it thus, and they knew their call to bring it to pass. I must say, nevertheless, that I had not realised, not even then, that it is the power of the suffering which restores the diseased, and makes new the thing grown old, and revives that grown weary, and gives fullness to that which has faded beyond the measure of any other restoration.

My heart was heavy for the suffering to come, and close to swooning. Not even the great joy which I had witnessed was able to revive it.

CHAPTER THE THIRD

There is now much action, the seer sees, in both the ship with the sails, and also with the death-serpent. There is a grim preparation by the untrue glorious ones to bring about the defeat of the child of the woman. However, the child-become-man is now ready, and he is inducted into leadership, and given power to fight the evil thing, though only at this point with the weapon of words'. In this he succeeds. Great joy herewith is manifested in vision-time, and heartened the man goes on to bring new hope to those who have lived in oppression from the great white worm.

In time-history the grand things are but snippets of happenings in vision-history, whilst often that which passes by unnoticed in time-history is the most significant in vision-history. I observed that the coming of the child was scarcely noticed, and even today would be basically unnoticed were it not for the suffering that broke open the red scar of mankind, and set the old pain throbbing from the renewed wound.

I mean that whilst the men of the little ships were going about their business, and the spawn of the white worm were gnawing away at the flesh they hated, the ship was vibrant with action. The white bird wheeled over, time and again, and often it would swoop as though mad with excitement, and the sails would fill afresh and I could almost hear the sound of the ship as it flickered its sails against the day and sped out to and beyond the horizon.

Within the ocean there was a growing awareness, a rising to the surface of all things beneath, and a powerful movement of its denizens. Sometimes the skies would be filled with murmurs, and the ceaseless beating of wings, whilst on the land, the hills and plains and the valleys would crowd together as though taking their places in some terrestrial grandstand, which, at a moment would change to celestial, and all its viewers find themselves in a new dimension of viewing and applauding and rejoicing.

All over the universe there was a peering and a looking and a crying and an asking, and there was joy mingled with the horror at the answers of the great ship. That vessel in coming would go again, and in going it would come. I had never seen the sails so bend backwards, and so lean forwards, and even at times I saw a great palpitation amongst them as though power was working and working,

and would suddenly break forth, and would create exploits of unimaginable magnitude.

I knew why the creation was straining at the whole business, and I knew that its eagerness was for the old time of happening to come again, and the new time of promise to be fulfilled. It filled me with unimaginable alarm. I knew time-history enough to know that nothing of this magnitude had ever taken place, and that such a strange and mighty happening was reserved for the end-time, and so I trembled lest the end-time should come prior to the great happening of the woman's child.

Across the joy would come great shadows, and their magnitude also loomed large. I mean the sudden expansion and swelling and growth of the death-thing. Its blackened coils would glow with the ancient death-sheen, and the stench would rise and choke the nostrils of the true created things. Fire and darkness and gloom and misery would pour from it until vast areas of the earth were infested. If the creation scurried to the places of watching and audience, so did the fiends of the white worm. They left strange habitations, and filthy nooks and crannies, and bent and gnarled and filled with loathsomeness they hastened to the places of looking and watching.

More, even, than them, I feared the glorious ones. I mean the evil glorious ones, and not of course the pure glorious ones. Somewhere, even in the no-time they had taken their splendour from the sails, and had been given great powers. I have been told they

had the plan and scheme of the sails delivered to them to fulfil, and this they were willing to do, but the most glorious of them all had changed the plan. He sought the breath of his own sails, and the very sails for himself, and in his own thinking he had changed the route on which the ship would travel, and he had made new and glorious places for the life and majesty of the celestial ones. He had despised the ship and its project for the lowly of the earth. His anger had first been splendid, then furious, and finally stern and rigid, against the sails and the holy ship.

He had decided to destroy the dream of the time-to-come, and make all the splendour to be in the now-time, and to control it at and to his own behest, and to make superfluous and foolish the simple actions of the three sails and their ship. So he had called out the glorious ones and they had gone on their work of devastation.

Seeing these glorious ones pass by, hurrying as they were, too, towards where the suffering would be, I was stunned into heart-sickness and defeat. [had boasted to myself that the terror would not strike again, and that I would not again feel the breathlessness of heart illness, but again I was in its throes. The scorn and the haughty looks that shot towards me, all but consumed and burned me. I did not know that when faith sees a brilliant one it sees a loathsome worm, for faith is not deluded by mere brilliance. So then often the lowly worm which faith sees is the true and glorious and shining one. This is

the acceptable spawning of the quiet sails, and the true fruit of the silent bird, arching as it does over all things that live.

I did not know that these things were being reserved for the time of suffering, and so I waited, bleak and wan within, facing the prospect with dreary mind and bemused feelings. Fear made its way along my veins and froze the joy and suspended the sight which had penetrated the vision. The pall of gloom hung over the wide universe, and I saw all things as only silent, and despair simpered its way like a foolish wraith, passing in and out, draping its doubt and faithlessness on every mortal thing, and hiding the bright shining of that which is truly true.

* * *

Before the time of suffering there was no little joy. Once I saw the sail rise up, and then flow across the land, and in one place cut a swathe and bow down across where the bird had gone. This time the bird had littled down to a gentle, wee thing, and it had cradled itself on the head of the woman's child. That child was now strong and stern and upright, and the brilliance from his humility dispersed much of the evil I had seen over the land about him. In many the small worms of the white worm wriggled and itched uneasily, and they would have crawled from their places, but they needed them in which to hide. From them this light approaching was a white horror, and the voice that came from the mid-sail as it bent over the earth was no longer soundless.

I stirred at the words, and then my heart leapt for a joy I had never known. Not the joy at the great beginning nor ,at the beauty of the woman's song, nor even for the splendour and the wonder of the ancient glory of the man-creature nor the glory that the great man-father had seen, nor the miracle of the clayman become prince of his people. All of this joy was *surpassed* by the utterance of what I had known to be true but which I scarcely dared believe.

Now it is proclaimed. Those near the man stood stunned. As yet they could not know. Only the child of the woman, and he raised his praying eyes until the beauty of them shone out. The white bird used its powers to take him to a place of preparation, and one suited for the coming of the coiled evil. Here this man would be seen as he truly was.

Yet for all the terror of the coming struggle I could not stifle the joy within. Around me the things of the ocean and of the land were shouting as though the battle were not merely joined but complete. What they, too, had suspected they now knew. Had the voice not spoken? Had the mid-sail not articulated? Had the bird not come and from it had there not come, to the man, all the power of the wind? Had not there come from the third sail, and as the third sail clothed in humility, the new princely power which would trample down the shame and ignominy and crush the worm, and again purify the earth, and drain away its deadly pollutions?

That is why the hills skipped, and the mountains thundered their applause. Out in the ocean

the living things rose to the surface and walked the waters, and the true glorious ones came to meet them, whilst the little ships slipped under a passing squall that had been made, and hid and cowered in fear.

In the appointed place the man and the bird shared together the struggle to come. Where humility walked in simplicity the child of the woman found the truth of that enormous strength. There was no fear; none at all.

This is not what the evil thing saw when it came. It could scarcely conceal its contempt. But then it had missed the whiteness of the bird, and it had not heard the strong beating of wings, and it had also missed the love of the man, as he heard, time and again within his spirit, down in the warm, loving reaches of his heart, the affirmation of the mid-sail.

Perhaps he remembered the days of the ancient man-father, and the secret that one had come to know. Even with the inner knowledge that I had concerning the secret just revealed, and also the knowing that the bird was there, that terrifying picture of those broken battlements, and the wreathing about them of the dreary mists of degradation and defeat—all of this came to me so that I had to fight in order that I might not be overwhelmed with sorrow and heart sickness.

I need not have felt so. The man had been brought to powerful truth. He had laid aside the great powers of the after-sail, but he had been given

a rich supply from the resources of the bird, and these he used well. The ancient and soundless voice had come to him with sound, and each of the sayings he used as a whip to scourge the thing before him. Splendid it may have appeared, and its brow stern with authority, but the man refused its enticements, and the inducements, and high glory it exhibited. His eyes were set as sternly upon the purity he had come to know, and the opponent before him found him inviolate.

It was then the chuckling broke out. High chuckling to be sure, which at first was a twittering across the creation, and then a soft giggling, and then a high crescendo of chuckling until this grew to laughter, and finally it was a huge thigh-slapping roaring of joy and joviality, until all the universe rang with the reported victory, and the hills threw their heads back and shouted the wonder of it, and the timid things gave sweet sighs of relief, and the intense joy swept across the ocean like a riotous squall, pressing everything before it, and the skipping and the dancing, the embracing and the laughter of all things was beyond the use of happy and joyful words. This was a fullness, and that of relief. Assurance flooded in like flash-floods after the years of dryness, and things crowed and called and roared and thundered with their voices from every vantage point, because the matter was settled.

If ever I have seen blood anger it was in the haughty beauty of this high one who had left his guise of the coiled and hooded evil. He went striding

across the time world he knew, his head held high, his eyes blazing. However it seemed, as he went, that this was a disguise for the defeat that was his. I cannot say he lowered down into a loathsome worm, or reverted to his coiling, darting, striking self, but I knew his anger foreboded the dark hour of the time of suffering, and my own joy sobered, and I longed for the joust to be finished, and the whole living universe to be freed for ever.

* * *

As I had sensed, the spawn of the worm could scarcely hold their places at the sound of the man's coming. Something of the strength and nobility of the life of the sails went out ahead of him. Nor did the bird leave him. Always its power was there. This was the power the spawn of the viper most dreaded. They saw his eyes blaze at every creature made obscene. If a person bowed to death in fear he became angered, although it was anger mixed with pity, and pity that flowed from love. That much I discerned.

If it were a woman bowed with the weight of sickness or inner guilt then the child of the woman

would touch that one with his power, or the power of the bird would flow out across, and then the air would be pure and fresh again, and incredible joy would seize the watchers and grip the listeners, and send them hurrying home to tell their domestic world, and their local world, or even to leave the ties they knew and tell everyone, as though a totally unknown element had lately come into their ken, and made its new home in their world, reviving as it did an ancient nostalgia the race could feel for times lost. In some it was a new fresh hope born for a world they had never known, but yet an era which they would soon know.

Behind all this was the sense of the suffering to come, and the great sorrow which would attend it, and I know there was a quietening of all things, and even an apprehension. As for foreboding, I cannot say, since this did not appear to me to be in the creation. It was, I say with sorrow, within my own heart, and I suppose that right up to the very end I will never believe with final faith. I marvel that the white ship should choose a creature like me to which to reveal its glory.

CHAPTER THE FOURTH

This is the time of the great-suffering which the seer, with others', has so feared. The grown child tarries for a time of transforming experience, as though equipped for the struggle to come. The seer sees his' momentary acceptance by the people of the clayman, but this' is short-lived. These very ones wish him to the great-suffering and for his' part he goes as it is necessary. The terrible event happens, but fearful as it is the seer sees with joy that it is' the event-of-all-times', and he sees' that, in fact, it is the time of true love, and that this' is the true meaning of all things', and in particular the full meaning of the sails.

Only one thing I would recount before the great suffering. It was the day the glory swept out of the sails and into the child of the woman, and of the ancient father. In this glory the man looked as man had at the beginning of this-time. This glory was stunning, as also it was beautiful. Not just the shining and the glowing and the translucency of it, or the nobility and the regality, but the committal of it. It was committal, not just to its present transformation but to its coming disfiguration. There was not only the splendour marking our coming triumph, but the beauty of quiet obedience, and simple acceptance of the role to be played.

After this he went to the place of suffering, saying that beyond doubt this was the point and place where he must suffer. I knew him to be deep in his understanding. Many, including some of great wisdom would have dissuaded him from this course. Their great wisdom did not embrace the full truth of

servanthood and humility, and the depths of man's pollution by both his own will and suasion of the evil thing. Only the kind wisdom of the three sails could spell this out, and only they could know the one remedy. Had there been others or another, doubtless they would not have used this one. That they did was the proof that there was no other.

Prior to the suffering joy broke out again, not only in the creation but in those near him. You could call it—if you would—a strong prophetic joy, although I scarcely know how to handle that one word, "prophetic". Yet they were seeing him as king, and they were saying how this would be, and in a way they were right. Indeed they were correct, altogether. although in fact they did not rightly know what they were saying.

They had their brief hour of this kind of joy and triumph and even ecstasy but it soon died to a whisper, dwindled down to a faint, tired utterance,

and then vanished as though that old mist of despair had shrouded the truth so that it appeared as an inert corpse.

Soon there would be the scaffold, the pain, and the depthless suffering.

* * *

We have been told that the whole of the things of evil knew in a trice that they had triumphed. Smarting from their recent bruising, and enriched in their ancient cruelty they came from every corner. Out from under covers they crawled. They hurried like compulsive lemmings to the central place of meeting. They flew up high like some vast carrion crew. They swarmed over the earth like some mocking mites of a plague. The high and haughty ones came with lofty scorning, but the anger beneath burst out into sulphurous expression. Around the glorious head swirled and moved and flocked the unspeakable pollution, and the ribald mirth, and the obscene utterances and accusations. The stinging hatred, and excruciating perversion of the truth bore in upon him in the great suffering.

Not only did evil despise him, but the great good of the earth. Within me the ancient rebellion also stirred and I whispered gentle prayers towards the great sail and by reason of the hovering bird, that I might see without bias and hate, even if I could never see without tears.

After the mocking and the screaming hate, and the deafening ribaldry came the quietness. The glaring evil could not penetrate the iron wall of

holiness about him and the deep pity of its love. They could draw no answer from him, no response equivalent to their hurting. It was not that he did not hear it, and that every accusation was not a barb, nor every vituperation an excruciating sting-it was! It was that his holy love opened its arms, as indeed those arms were pinned wide, and in them he embraced the filth and pollution, the suppurating evil of it, from men and fiends, from foes and friends, and took it to himself to both hug and destroy.

None could rescue it from him. It was as though a great maw opened within him and into it was poured the stain and the shame, the guilt and the degradation, the convulsions of sorrow, and it disappeared and was covered over.

As I have said, even the vilest thing fell silent, baffled and defeated by this unspeakable power, this simplicity of love, this tenderness of acceptance, this gentle glory of wounding.

The ocean stayed in utter silence as though suspended from all motion. The land bowed its head as the darkness came swirling in, whether to choke and confound or to cover the shame of it all, I do not know. I know there was the shame of the creation which would destroy its nether sail, and deny its creative power. I know there was disgrace to cover which words will never embrace or tell. The whole enormous world of evil fell into that maw of love, and was taken to its exhaustion, its destruction, its extinction. Even while it pitted its blows against him, and battered at the inner citadel of his pure

mind and conscience, he let the strong pure waves of his love flow across it and still it for ever.

* * *

It was then I looked at the ship. Stark steady it was, and no movement. What I had not seen was the white centre sail move backwards until it covered the rear sail. I cannot deny that it bent down and covered and sheltered and protected and hid the smaller sail within its great self. But then I must say that at the moment of highest anguish—that moment of suffering—a terrible thing happened. It was as though the sail sprang apart in horror, and down through the body of the vessel the great rift suddenly appeared. In my horror I thought the vessel was divided and one part falling away from another. I screamed within and looked away.

There was a sound like a mighty rending, and when I looked back, fearful, I saw high flames shooting up, and a stupendous roar, and a ripping and cracking and the sound of terrible tearing, and all the sky grew black, and the flames leapt high, and the ship swirled and swirled and swirled, turning on its keel like a mad thing, until I was giddy with the swirling, turning movement of it, and my heart was so sick with pain that I was nigh to a mortal retching. I turned away, breathing with a hot, dry breathing and sobbing so that there was a tearing sound in my own chest. I had to turn and look again, and when I did I could not believe what I saw.

The white vessel was riding on the waters with a serenity I had never seen surpassed. Its white shining flowed out beyond itself, flowing out to all the creation. When I looked for where the crack and the rift had been there was no sign that it had ever been, and I felt like a man in a dream, when the dream has passed and the terror has gone, and unexpected joy presents itself.

When I looked back to where the sorrow had been there was nothing but a white shining. I tell you I was not too late for those last whispered words, and they were a repetition of the truth, the real truth of the sails, and they sang into my heart, and they printed themselves on my mind, and I knew what was the true glory of the white shining out there on the water, and the sheer serenity of the simple sails.

As for the evil and crawling things—they were gone. I knew that place of suffering towards which they had hastened for their ultimate triumph, was, in fact, the place of their defeat. "Compulsive lemmings", I had said, and so it was true. Where they went I did not know, nor cared to know.

One thing I did know. Love was pouring out from where he had been, out of the place of the deep sorrow, and the great suffering. It was also pouring into me, until I was filled. It kept pouring, spilling out of me, and across the land, even into the ocean. It kept overflowing, and I thought that the supply of it would be enough for the whole world, and even beyond it and in that I was correct. It was enough for then, and for the coming-time, and for the time-yet-to-be. In fact that love must surely be for ever.

CHAPTER THE FIFTH

The seer is swept with wonder as he beholds the rehabilitation of the ancient ruin. He discovers that there is no need to fear the castle will again be derelict, for its newness has come from the victory of the new death. This new death is the source of life for those who understand the mystery of the sails. All this prepares the seer for the day of the man of the sails, and the day, also of the bird.

Some of the things I saw in my vision were, so to speak, in right and proper order so that one thing followed naturally and generally beautifully upon the other. In this way great understanding would come to me. At those times I would forget the peril of full-telling and I would want to be out and away to where men were, and to halt them in the marketplace, or to hurry into their villages and even the tiny hamlets, after the manner of the ancient seers. I wanted to stand aglow, arms raised and let them know the wonderful things I had seen, and not let the vision be dark in any way, but whether it was the mystery of the sails, or the power of the bird, in each I was prevented from doing so, and I surely understand now why it was.

One vision, or one part of the great vision which came to me was the restoration of the great castle. I came upon it suddenly, and when I saw it everything was bathed in a great light. At the very first sight of it I became breathless, and very much it

was as when a man beholds for the first time the beauty of a woman, and in particular the woman he has come at that point to love. It is not a temporary breathlessness he feels, but a tightening of the heart, a constriction of the chest, whilst the blood pounds through, and he can hear the great thumping of the organ of life within him. Its throb is almost unto death. That is what happened to me when I saw the castle and its setting.

One sight of it and its very picture swam before my eyes, for the eyes themselves watered and filled and misted and dripped with tears of sheer joy and delighted happiness. I would have thrown myself on the thick green sward of grass before me, but I could not take my gaze from what I saw. The castle stood, whole and complete. It stood firm and calm and serene. It flowed out a rich new tranquillity such as one might take an eternity to acquire, and when one does an eternity seems a short space of time and none too much to get this to one's self.

It was the impression of full might, and strong impregnability which flowed out to me. As I looked I knew it was as though that castle had never been violated. No one peering closely would see the tiniest touch of restoration. Here was no cement made to match the hoary and violated areas of lost stone, and no stone placed back which had lain apart from the ruin on the ancient sward. I do not say it was new, nor was fresh, but I do say it was whole, as though it had never been ravaged.

This was one of the times when I did not fully understand the vision, but then I did not feel the need to do so. I simply stood and watched and watched, feeling the joy rise and rise in me, and then letting the tears flow freely as they would. My gaze roved hungrily over every beloved part of the great structure—its masonry, its windows, its towering peaks, its rugged battlements. Without doubt you must call it noble, and you could not but feel its gentle but strong reality, and you knew that the man was again the man as it had always been intended he should be, and as had been planned in the quietness of the no-time (or, the before-time).

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For a fraction only of time, and at the point where my eyes had misted most, I saw the castle as it had been in its derelict state. This glorious sun, now pouring in a golden riot over it, and the deep strong blue of the purified skies above and beyond it was also changed. The cold dank mists came

swirling about again, and the dreadful sunken eyes of the gaping apertures looked out hollowly as do the vacant eyes of a rotted skull. The wretched, ragged battlement, chipped, smashed and exploited, all filled me with a sickening sorrow, and everything was heavy with me, and I even made a weary protest, as though I could have no more sorrow and must immediately be done with it, when suddenly the eyes cleared of their mist, and the blur washed away, and there, unchanged, was the castle and its native splendour.

I did not, as at other times of joy, dance and cry and hit my thighs and go twirling about with joy, but I stood staring with quiet gratefulness. The vision was true, and not only for a moment, and the sudden curious reversion to the old sight buttressed my knowledge of what had happened. It was then the meaning of the vision came so clearly, and in this case, being part of the vision I am at liberty to disclose it, but then if you are a person of this vision you will already have guessed.

You will know by this time, even in this very moment of the happening that the renewed castle is the victory of the sails over the death that visits the man. The ancient snake with the shining coils, and the deadly sheen of the white thing upon him is what they call "the might of death". He it is who can send the strongest man quivering, and who can visit him in his sweetest and strongest moments with a trembling and a paralysis by suddenly giving him the sight of the death.

Often when it does not seem to be the death-thing, but the life-thing, you will see an earnest and even wild look in the eyes of a man or a woman, and when they love most the things about them, they feel most the dread and clever insinuation of death. One sight, even though subliminal, of the shining coils, and the old memories return, and a man will pant and breathe hotly and fall to weeping because of this mere thing.

The great castle before me—that mighty rearing edifice, that noble gathering of inviolability—gave the lie to the serpent's fang, and to the horror of its coils. Somewhere the evil thing lay mortally wounded, and however powerful it seemed in its horrible jerking and flowing and coiling and uncoiling, these must surely be the death-throes of a once great and powerful enemy of the sails, the ship, and the man who would rise to steer the vessel to its ultimate harbour.

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At that point the vision changed, although it still had to do with the castle and the defeat of the white-death, and the renewal of man in his original glory. It was the complete silence which came over me as the castle was blotted out from sight, though not from being.

I stood alone within the place of a great and steady peace. Such was the silence that whereas I would expect to hear at least the thump of my heart

within, or even the blood rushing through the tiny arteries of the ears, there was not even this sound. It was not, then, a dead silence, but a living silence. It was not the silence in which fear breeds because of the unknown, but it was the silence which gives birth to understanding. You could, of course, give it the name of peace, and you might be right, but I was quietly and happily astonished as its true name came to me—death!

I have to say this death in which I stood was not my own, not particularly, anyway. It was death which covers all, but at this point of happening it was his death, the death of the child of the woman, and that knowledge again reduced me to tenderness and many tears, although they too, because of the place, remained suspended within my heart, not even reaching my eyes.

The flash-back to the manner of death came to me, and the serenity of the man who had come from the after-sail, as he cried, without reproach, and with full confidence to the sail in the centre of the ship, a sail that seemed to hover above the happening of the great sorrow and suffering, and even to partake in it. I knew in a certain moment of thought that although this man had died he had never died. It came to me that he had killed the death of the white-wraith, and had expunged the power of the white worm, and had opened a door which had been fast-closed in all the time-years and vision-years of man's history. It was a door into which you entered quietly, and through which you passed with

suspended joy, so that the peace of it flowed through every part of your being.

Out of this action and motion of the suffering man had come the rehabilitation of the castle. When a man passes through the crucible of the great sorrow, and is purified in the bath of the deep suffering, then he gently comes into the peace of death which is in fact the peace of the new life.

As I knew this, and was pondering it, and being filled with the gentle and tender wonder of it, the quiet mist lifted, and the noises of the day flowed again about me so that I heard the songs of birds in the trees and bushes, and even the lark again in the high sky. I saw the sun fall down over the rugged shoulders of the great castle and on to the green trees, and into the hearts of the opened flowers, and even dappling the lawns where shadows and sun met together.

Then I understood something of the sweet triumph of the song of the woman, falling out of the great heights, as when a bird ascends beyond the sight of man, but not beyond his hearing. I understood that promise, when it is true, is enough to make a man endure millenniums of pain, and to strive through the adverse roughness of all happenings, until the sight of the promise—in its fulfilment—comes into view and he knows that what the white worm has said and done is a lie. It is the silly lie of the foolish, cavorting, simpering, tittering, tottering ships of their shallow ocean and their make-believe seas.

Even the terror of death and the parallel fear of life is shown to be a poor and shabby thing, a threadbare deceit, and a foolish illusion.

* * *

I must confess that when one sees things in a vision one translates them into the actions and principles and accomplishments of the time-world, and thinks that that is that. That, however, is not that. For example, where in time does the renovated castle stand? Is its regeneration at this point in history or beyond, or in fact at no point in history, although in the reckoning of vision, or the happenings of the ship and the sails it is both here in the now-time, and also beyond in the time-to-come? This is where the confusion comes, so that it is best not to translate things out of the vision into time, even though this is what one does naturally. The ancient seers were patient in this respect and did not try to accomplish such translation, although here and there they may have exercised some gift of interpretation. For the most part, they told their vision and left it at that.

What I really mean is that seeing the castle, and knowing that death following the great suffering was no longer death in the old way, I concluded that we had entered into a new and different era. Now in fact that is the truth, for this is a different era and it is also new. Yet the old era is still with us, so that

man may seem to have one foot in the old and another in the new, or to change the description, a man may live in the new but the background of the old is about him. Likewise a man who has lived in the comfortable illusion of the old may be disturbed by surprises of, and from, the new. This may greatly reduce his enjoyment of the old and also alarm him fearfully. Of these things I was, at the first, ignorant, but I have been made fully aware of them, and seek to be most cautious concerning them as I move about in the time world.

Also I must confess that I thought at any moment it would be the day of the bird, and the day of the after-sail, in a sort of clear and magnificent triumph in which there was little memory of the white worm, and no action or interference from it. Again I have had to learn that this is not so. All of this will

only be in the-time-which-is-to-come, but which has not yet come, although all the time it is coming.

I say all of this by way of explanation for in fact the day of the bird suddenly came (and is), following on the heels of the day of the after-sail, or the day of the new man, that is the day of the child of the woman. These two days are really the one but they have come, and yet, in a sense the white worm is still with us, and the little ships are not yet wholly banished, and some of them even exercise their ancient fascination and beguile the sons of men. Something, too, of the clayman (that is before he became a prince) still exists in many of us, and I am troubled by these elements from time to time.

However, I will now proceed to tell you of the vision especially in relation to the day of the bird and the day of the man of the sails.



Book Three

CHAPTER THE FIRST

The seer now comes to see, in his vision, one who is called "lord of the sails". This lordly one tells of an era that has almost come, which will be under the bright bird. Indeed with the special coming of the bird all things change. Now it is clear that the people of the new man are the people of the ship. The seer sees how each sail has its part and operation for the whole ship. This is what constitutes the true unity of the total vessel.

This man of the sails they gladly called "the lord of the sails". They also said he was (or is) the lord of all things. As I had seen the castle vibrantly alive so that no stone was cold and dead, so this new lordliness of man was put about by him after the calm death, which itself followed the great sorrow and the deep suffering. By these things he was now acclaimed lord, and nothing of the evil could touch him, nor for that matter those who claimed themselves to be with him and in him. In this sense it was the day of the new lord, the lord of the sails.

At some point, during the time of their first loyalty, the child of the woman had spoken of the white ship, and had said, quite serenely, that in the coming days they could be part of this ship. Whether it was to sail or remain in harbour, or cruise about here and there I did not fully know. However the idea of a master on the ship, a governing ruling lord, so to speak, was quite strange

to me, but also exciting. That others should join the ship, which had always been full and yet empty since you never saw what was there—was also mystifying to me, but then, since you do not literalise the things of a vision I had learned to be content.

What I have to say is that those who followed the man, and who were pleasantly surprised (I really should say hugely astonished) at his creation of the new death, these now gathered about him again, obviously thinking of a renewal in relationships. They also thought that the old happenings would again happen, but they were told very clearly that although he was lord of the sails, yet the day of the bird had also come and they must gather for this day, and then go wherever the wind of the prow-sail would take them. To this they agreed, so great was their faith, and so buoyant their spirits following the success of the suffering and the new death.

They acceded to all he said without difficulty. It was at that point the great happening came to pass.

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The day of the bird came in with a happy, holy rush. In a time of waiting the men and their women also, had pondered the success of their leader. Whereas, hitherto, they would have felt bereft had he gone from them, now, curiously enough, they felt joyful at, and because of, his parting. Also they awaited with joy the coming of the bird. They had no idea of the direction from which he would come, and the manner and mode of his coming, but I gather they did not greatly care. However, when he came it was with great and unusual signs.

I doubt whether they saw all the signs, but something of them they glimpsed. To my sight (in the vision) it was as at the beginning when no-time had just ended, and the great bird had swooped and rushed across the dark ocean. That was the time when the soundless voice went out from the mid-sail, and the time when power also went from the after-sail. It was such a time, but whereas in the beginning of these things there had been nothing, it was not at all like that at the point of the coming of the bird.

I saw the tip of his beak, pointing to where we were, and also saw he was poised so high as to be hidden from them, and that when he came in that powerful rush, the sea flattened, and even the ship rolled from port to starboard, and starboard to

port, and a wonderful light grew from a pin-point to a bright, intense aura and burst in flames and spread over the ship, and on to the sea, making a blazing trail to the shore, and then up and over the waiting ones.

At the mere touch of this flame, and the mere edge of the sound which reached them they sprang to life. They were no whit behind all my understanding, but their eyes blazed with the light which had enveloped them, and their whole beings glowed as though at last they had become the spirit they intrinsically were, but had not known. They seemed to exercise new powers, especially of understanding, and I knew assuredly that the day of the bird had fully come.

I meant to point out that the bird and the wind were one as they came, and also that out of the three sails leapt a wonderful light, it being the blaze which reached the waiting ones as the bird also arrived. Not, even, that they saw the bird, or if they did, they were not obsessed with the fact. They suddenly had been given the full secret and mystery of the sails, so that it was no longer a secret, and the presence of the bird assured that they would, on the one hand disclose the light to those who would receive it, and on the other conceal the light from those who would not receive it. I saw the old principle obtain again, that for the dark the light must be kept dark, and this is both a protection and a judgement at the same time. I imagine also that this is how it will be until the end-time comes, when

all things will be revealed no matter how terrible they will seem for some who will no longer be able to shield their eyes or mind against them.

* * *

What I had not known was that the day of the new lord, and the day of the bird, and the day of the ship were as one. The bird was about revealing the secret of the new man, and giving hope to those whose minds were fixed only on the hidden terror, or the decrepit castle, and the death-that-was-to-come. Those who received the hope came into the same understanding, and not a few of them received the blazing eyes and the clear minds, and they came into full possession of the secret, joining, as they did, in the day of the bird, and bowing to their new lord, and spurning the little ships, or casting from their own hearts the things which had been enshrined there.

What still puzzles me, and its puzzle is only by way of vision, for I understand vision-wise; what puzzles me is how' the ship itself could be the ship, deck, hull, body and all, keel to prow and starboard to port, and yet at the same time be the very people who had been wrought upon by the bird. At one moment they were on the deck, standing boldly and poised in victory, and the next moment were as the very boards, the planks of the deck, the substance of the hull, the living material of the entire vessel, sails and mast excluded. Yet the truth of the mystery was certainly coming to me.

I am aware vision-wise that this ship is the people of the sails. This is what it has always been, and so whether the people be seen, or not be seen, or whether they be few or not few, so the ship may travel hither and thither, and so it may enlarge or diminish. So far as I could ascertain all the people of the sails were contained in that one first man, and yet not all that were in that one man were the people of the sails, since some had come to espouse other sails, such as those of the small ships, and the elaborated ones within the shrines of hearts or minds. I saw too, that since the day of the new man, all the true people of the household of this ship were those who were in the new man rather than in the old, that is the first one. There may be some who will easily understand this mystery.

Also there is the principle of the movements of the ship. This is a principle which needs expansion. Doubtless across the ocean and also across the earth, the ship will be required to move and assist and even pick up those who are in dire need, so that at any moment it may find itself in an unusual emergency, and so move rapidly to fulfil that need, and give aid as required. Understanding some of this I could see the usefulness of the ship.

Perhaps what impressed me more than anything was the *livingness* of the ship. Its planks and boards, its deck and under-deck, its hull and hulk and prow and keel were as living and vital as its masts and its sails. I knew of course that it derived all its life from these very sails and their masts, and from each sail

there was a particular quality or characteristic which was given it. Whilst the three, corporately gave a general dignity and honour to every living part, yet each sail gave out from itself a particular contribution also. Hence the overall care and concern seemed to come from the central sail, as though it protected and corrected, instructed and provided for, and as though it were anxious to bring every living part to full pitch, and, you might say, full maturation. At least this is how it seemed to me.

The after-sail seemed to contribute another element. It too protected all below, but in the sense that it urged it on to action, and to reach a certain goal, and to follow the lordship which issued from that particular canvas, and I can say this, that if any part or member of that great vessel appeared weak, or was rubbed from the strain of the voyages taken, then the amount of protection given was greater than previously. Also, let there be so much as a whisper of intrusion (or, invasion) from the

former coiled peril, and this sail set itself with dignity and firmness, and was prepared even for battle.

The sail situated near the prow kept up its own intrinsic rush of wind to give life to the various members. Also it seemed to distribute various powers to the components of the vessel, When these were all given out this seemed to make the whole vessel even more of a unity, but then a living unity, and not the mere aggregation of all the parts. Also the vitality of the ship, and its eagerness to follow the unchanging direction given by the prow was very much connected with this sail of the bird. Also the bird of the sail related deeply to all the parts, individually, and the whole corporately, for it would hover, with piercing eyes over the ship, protectingly, warning away every intruding thing, and even, in some eases, attacking that which came near it.

That, so far as I understand it, is the use, nature, and purpose of the ship.

CHAPTER THE SECOND

The seer discovers new and strange properties of the ship, especially those of the sails'. The true people relate to the sails, and, through the sails' to one another. The lord of the rear-sail takes command, and calls his new people to venture across the world with the ship. They are to help release others, under the power of the bird, from their fear of the old-death. The seer hears an interesting conversation concerning the use of the serpent-fiend.

There were other times when I looked at the ship, and found it a hubbub of persons, activity, noises and lights. This was generally when it was putting out to sea. The strange thing about the vessel was that it was never unseaworthy, but often would pause a long time in harbour, then this activity would begin, and in a flash it would have darted away across the ocean. Then I would have no knowledge of where it had gone.

To return to my point about the figures on the deck, or emerging on to the deck or going below—these were all people of the sails. They particularly liked to gather around one sail or another, and as I have observed before, from the vantage point where they stood a sail would seem larger than the others. It seemed to grow' until its top peak was lost in the skies, and beneath, on the deck, those around the sail would rejoice at the greatness of the sails. I have even seen the little ships buzz unhappily about

the vessel, trying to draw attention away from the great sail (or, sails), but such efforts were in vain for any one day seemed to be the day of this or that sail.

The most wonderful time was when all the sails were at their normal height, and held to their normal size and the people gathered about all three and gloried in the beauty and the power and the meaning of them. Also they understood the placing of the sails, and the inter-relationship of the sails, if you may use that term. Then it seemed they were more themselves, each one, and more the people of the sails corporately. So they would rejoice greatly, and sing, and give warm exhibitions of great affection to the sails, and then from them to one another. These seemed the times of greatest harmony, although, to tell the truth, that harmony, as such, was not always apparent.

I noticed as a general principle or phenomenon, that after all these times of special harmony and

rejoicing that the ship could scarcely bear to stay moored, but must be up and away, be it at a cool, clear dawn-time, or even a late evening-time. In fact at any time it seemed the wind would suddenly blow fiercely in the former-sail, and then its power would extend along the ship, and the people would take it as a signal for preparedness, and the next thing it was up anchors and away. I have to be honest and say I never actually saw an anchor, but then the ship seemed to have the property of mooring itself.

Now I must tell you about the first launching in the beginning of the era of the bird, and in the days of the new man, the true lord of the people, and of the ocean, as also of the sky and the land. That was a grand launching.

* * *

It was one of those times when I saw the deck crowded, but also it was the very first time. There, below the after-sail stood the man, the lord-man, the new-man. It was as though he had stepped out of the very sail itself, just as the bird often seemed to emerge from the prior sail. At his emergence there was not much talking or speaking, but only a quiet rejoicing at his appearance, and that because he seemed so noble, and to me had all the lines and nobility of the old-castle-made-new. Seeing him, that was all I could think of. He stood on the deck, and if you speak of the master of a ship, then it was he. If you speak of the captain, then it was he, and

if you speak of the one who steers the ship and makes out its course and keeps it to it, then it was he.

I gathered there was general confidence and no little happiness, as he spoke to all and encouraged them, and gave them commands, and ordered them to be about this and that, and in no time the vessel was leaving. What I do know is that he had told them that although this very ocean, and that very land belonged by certain rights to the three sails, yet in another way of speaking it had to be captured for them, or, as you might say, recaptured.

At that they looked grave, but the spirit of adventure was in them, and they were off to tell the universe that the days of the coiled evil were finished, and that all men could leave his service, if it were to that they were bound, and they could come under the regimen of the new lord, and be happy and secure with him. Also they need no longer fear the former terminal terror of the white-death for it had been wonderfully replaced by a better thing. In fact every man, would he desire it that way, could lay down any burden he had, and find the liberty that men ought to have by joining the new people of the sails, and learning the mysteries which kept them in peace.

To do this they were advised they must terminate their links with the little ships, and the various branches of this flotilla where they had set up centres upon the land. It would be best to destroy these centres and in their places set up centres where an understanding of the sails could be

taught, and if they really cared to do this then the bird would come with his powers and aid them in their new' venture.

I saw on the deck of the ship that those addressed by the lord were filled with a great joy, and had an intense earnestness to carry out this great project, and I thought they would quickly fulfil it, seeing what a great project it was, and I could not but believe that wherever they went, be it on land or on sea, they would certainly woo men quickly from their loves and replace those with a new and more invigorating passion. I was soon to learn that such a voyage and venture does not easily succeed just by the mere going, and the mere saying. It requires more than that.

Also, had you told me in those early days of the new era, I would never have believed that the reverse of their hopes could also happen, and that there would yet be enough power in the little ships to entice men back to them, and even give to them a great and fierce passion for the emptiest of foibles.

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What I had not known was that when the first great voyage was undertaken that it was to be under the aegis of the new lord, but that he would not be present. You may say he stepped back into the sail, or that in some unknown way he had become physically absent whilst yet being present, though mainly in the person and action of the great bird.

As I have said there was no lack of power for sailing since the prior sail in particular was able to supply that in great abundance. However, the bird went before the vessel and whilst they kept the prow in the line of the bird, there was no bother and they were anxious to keep it thus. Also the ship kept its living and pure state because kindness of great dimensions flowed out of the centre-sail, and they felt its continuous protection. They were amply supplied from the latter sail with all they needed to surmount the difficulties which the coiled evil and the little ships sought to bring in their way. Yet, as I have said, I wondered why the lord of them absented his person from them, and preferred that they, rather than he, make the conquests and fulfil the mandate of the voyages.

Another matter which I found strange, both on that first of journeys, and even at all times was the power which the evil worm had, even in spite of the great-suffering and the deep-sorrow. I had genuinely thought that from that time onwards his powers were broken, and indeed this was what the new man, and later the bird had indicated. I saw however, that it still retained great powers, and I was saddened by that. Had I not overheard a chance conversation between two of the deck-hands I would not really have understood. As it is I can only recall the substance of what they said, so I pass that on to you.

The first deck-hand was talking in the vein in which I have just written, but the other deck-hand

rebuked him, saying, "By all means go on believing that the lord of us has conquered the coiled evil and his foul offspring. Believe that and never cease to believe it, and all the power of the evil will be gone." The first answered that believing or not believing could not possibly make any difference to the actual facts. The other nodded in agreement. "That is so," he said, "but the facts make the difference to you when you believe them to be as they really are." This the first could not yet see so that he pursued his point. "Either this man, as lord, has conquered the evil," he maintained, "or he has not. If he has destroyed the evil, then it can no longer attack or even affect us."

Again the other agreed. "I think your problem lies in not fully understanding what has happened," he explained. "This lord of ours took away the power by which we were formerly held, mainly the power of conscience to accuse. He has cancelled out this accusation. By this the white worm had its dreadful power, for our consciences thus were manipulated by him. Now he has nothing on which to work. However, unless we exercise faith, we will agree with him, and fall under his power." The other deck-hand was quick to see this, and most grateful. "Even so," he said, "I have yet another difficulty. It is this: If the coiled evil has been

defeated, then why is he still abroad, and by virtue of what may he exercise power?"

The second deck-hand was a man of wisdom. "Be sure of this," he said, "that the victims over which he exercises power do not know what we know, and that is why we go to tell them. You will see many pitiful creatures released, and you will greatly rejoice at their relief and happiness when they discover the truth. At this point his power will cease over them." He looked at his brother deck-hand. "My friend," he added, "the rest is a mystery. For some reason, our lord wishes to use this fiendish creature, perhaps as a shepherd may train and use a wild dog to keep his sheep in line. The wise shepherd may use him, but never will he trust him."

The first deck-hand marvelled somewhat, and then he said, "You are saying that this white worm would have no power except it were given him, and given for certain purposes which he must fulfil." The second deck-hand nodded, and I know that he marvelled at the sudden wisdom now come to his friend. I too marvelled for I saw that there is nothing under the sun which is not for some purpose, and that the lord of the sail has great control over all things. Previous to this I had not seen that he uses all things for his own purposes, and none uses him for its special designs.

CHAPTER THE THIRD

The seer sees' the first journey commence, amidst joy. with power from the white bird. He senses' the journey does not proceed, uncontested, but that evil is seeking to hamper it, and thwart its purposes. In reaching land for the first time old people of the sails are discovered. To them the new people of the ship seem greatly radical in their ideas and manners, and so they are not received with joy and acceptance. An incident of no minor nature causes somewhat of a stir and results in some of the old people of the ship changing to the new system, whilst others become fixed in their opposition to it. The seer watches with sadness the conflict which ensues'.

Now as to the first journey. They were up and away with a great rejoicing from the deck, and a great amount of singing and laughter and certainty of success, whilst before them went the white bird, above the pointing prow, and the spume rose high with the great speed of the vessel, and the ocean and the sky were clear so that nothing stood in their way. This journey seemed, to me, to approximate to the very day of the bird itself. It was as though at that time the old people of the sails, or some of them, had become the new people of the sails, and that becoming the new people of the sails they had found a new era of great freedom, and no little fulfilment. Hence as the ship sped forward the commands of the lord were rich and fresh in their minds, and they, too, minded as to when they had seen him release many an oppressed prisoner of the

white worm, and had seen him drive many a minute but troublesome worm from the hearts of suffering and demeaned persons.

What they did not see on this journey was that the white worm went before even the white bird. Not being practised, they could not see a bubbling line left across the sky, tracing out where the evil emissary had gone. They did not know that messages had been sent in relay, little ship to little ship, and that with fiery zeal, and a desire to prolong their existence, messages had been flashed from shrine to shrine, across the whole network of the evil system. Sometimes even thoughts may be flashed from mind to mind, and this was the way they were working.

Whilst down below preparations were being made to bring a great host aboard, up in the sky and

through the line of little ships, another message was being passed on, which completely escaped the personnel of the white vessel. It was not missed by the white bird. The lord of the latter sail was also hearing and making his plans, but the workers on the ship, all unknowing, were rejoicing in the victory they knew must come to them.

Some leaned over the rails, looking at the foolish cavorting and tossing and turning of the aimless little ships, and many a laugh they had at their expense. Some, however, sensed the mischief amongst them and said so, and whilst they were not actually scoffed at yet they knew they had not convinced their friends and brethren. They too, in any ease, were novices at this kind of work, and so they had to put their intuitions and discernments away, and give themselves to the general unity, for they knew unity was their best defence against evil, and their best offensive weapon to win any battle. They knew the things of evil could not cope with the love that here flowed out of the sails and into them all, and they too felt secure both in this knowledge, as in this experience.

It was shortly after this that they came to their first place of land.

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The land itself was at first most unpromising. Where they had come to shore, under the guidance of the white bird, there was a long and lonesome

stretch of sand, a beach without features. It is said that little that is attractive could be found here, so they pressed on, and in no time they came to habitation. They were utterly surprised at the people who lived here for they were, themselves, the old people of the sails.

They had travelled so far, that they expected to find new people altogether, and they were disappointed. Nor did they know the white worm had done his work very well. This old people of the sails knew more about the sails than even did they, and as for the ship, why they considered it was their very own, and were greatly surprised to hear the men of the ship speak in a somewhat different language, and with an enthusiasm that they had long ago forgotten or set aside or come to despise. For this reason, their words, when they uttered them, were received with something of patronage, and a gentle smiling, and even with pity which was most bewildering to them.

This sort of thing went on for some days. At nights the new people of the ship would gather together to discuss the matter, and to seek aid from the sails and the bird, and to implore the absent lord to assist them, and doubtless their requests were answered, for this was, later, proved. Yet at that time it seemed they were not heard, for the old people still persisted with their blindness as to the true nature of the sails and the ship, all the time averring they knew beyond or other than what these proclaimers told them. It seemed that nothing

would happen until on the third day they found a poor man in a very sad state. You might even say he was riddled with the little worms they had so come to hate, and to give the people of the land their due they had no love for the worms either, and so they were quite amazed to see this man cleansed of his worms in as much time as the new people gave them order to go, and they went without so much as a fight, and with little more than a hasty wriggle.

The effect was quite electric. The people immediately began to have differences. Those who had been greatly wrought upon by the emissaries of the coiled evil felt a threat to themselves in the action of the new people. They had no liking for such worms, but some had lived with the fear that they too might have, here or there within them, such a worm. Maybe only one, or perhaps two, but should it happen that they are driven from them then the humiliation of the act would be intolerable.

There was another section of that group which had a great worship of the mind. Long ago they had formed their own (though un-named) society, where they gathered together to examine minutely the papers and writings pertaining to the ship, the sails, and its voyages, and they had devised a great and interesting system, in which, to be sure, everything fitted with every other thing, and it was an incontrovertible and irrefutable system, and many wonderful nights and hours they had spent, whiling away their time in this most pleasurable occupation. When, then, these people came with new

ideas about the ship, and most radical concepts of the sails, and most disturbing demands from their new experiences, they represented another kind of threat other than that of the worm "suspects".

I know that much of this may sound humorous to readers, but it was no humorous matter. I have, from time to time, lived in fear that my own understandings will bring me into great trouble, and although I am prepared for the new death since I saw its nature, I have a fear that I might be cut off before the vision is told, and the story has run its rightful course, so I cannot join in the general laughter over the worms and the cult of the ship which the latter objectors had created. Such matters were highly dangerous.

What I do know is that a great outcry arose immediately, and out of it began a battle which on the one hand disposed of some of the ship-hands, precipitating them hastily into the new death, whilst others, that is to say of the new ship, began to learn the great art of warring, though they had no love for killings and the like, and in fact never took part in that manner or kind of operation. You might say that their warring was without bodily violence.

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There was also another incident which happened. I cannot rightly say whether on the land of the barren shore that this man was physically ill or not. His affliction was a matter of vision and so it may well have been an illness of the mind or spirit. I

do know that for some long time he had slipped out of the affairs of life, so greatly hampered was he by his affliction. Because of this he had been reduced in his income and finished in beggary, and even there he had little spirit to beg or receive from any even the amount he needed daily to live.

I do know he lived for many years in despair, and then even despair was reduced, and he became inert as a creature, and so oppressed was he that he was little more than a worm in the dust. I imagine that the flight of the white bird over those shores may have raised hope in some, but I fancy that in this ease there was little or no hope, although when the men of the ship passed him he made some motion towards them, as though requesting help, and immediately they were alerted to the fact that at least someone recognised their new powers to liberate, so they gathered about him, and power went out from the bird, through them, and the new lord was standing in their midst, unseen, so in a trice the man was recovered from his melancholy and his disease, and his utter hopelessness (in this respect in those times past the worm had done its work very well). I gather from the uttered sentiments of the ship-dwellers that they hated the obscenity that surrounded the man, and in this they were very much as their master had been. In any ease, he was cured, and this caused a great furore in the land.

It was not that anyone objected to the man being cured, and I fancy that many of them were genuinely glad. It was just that the cure was put

down to the credit of the power of the sails, and the power of the sails was rather a subject for the ancient cult of the sails, than for immediate presentation in the midst of the people. You might even say it was the exclusive interest of an intellectual elite! Some of this elite group even took the action to be offensive, as though these men had come to tell them what they already knew, and it was, to use an old proverb, teaching their grandmother to suck eggs. It needed only some wit to observe that apart from them (the ship people) no one was actually sucking eggs to start the very grandfather of a row, but no one said that. Nevertheless there was high indignation, and it finished up that the elders were called in. They had been looking at things from the rear, but they were pushed to the front and felt their duty very much as elders, and that they should make pronouncements and make them weighty at that, which they did, and the outcome was that the group which was opposed to worm eradication, and the group who wished to keep the sails-cult for evening entertainment both combined to bring a sort of judgement on the men from the ship. They were all for hustling them back there in a trice, but others objected.

The others said they thought the man out of whom the irritating infestation had been cleared, as well as the man into whom the power had gone, and who was now very vibrant, and seemed to be able to cope for himself in life, that these men had had a remarkable experience. They opined that

there were many others who could do with such a help, and they thought the visitors should stay, since they too, were people of the ship. The hubbub grew so great that the men from the ship decided to return to their vessel, which they did, and they stayed there for the night, only issuing out when they and the folk on land had broken their fast.

It is also a fact that that night they had a conference with their lord, who, although he did not become visible, communicated with them from the sail by the aid of the power of the bird. He told them to stand firm in what they were doing, and not to be intimidated, so they returned to the land, following breakfast, and found plenty of people waiting for them. Obviously overnight the agents of the coiled evil had been doing their work, but then so had the white bird, for throughout the night his wings circled over that place, and power beat down until one group they greeted was fairly shining with joy. They had also taken the renewed man into their midst, and the man who had become freed from the worm impurity. To be honest, they had commenced a group of some sort, a sort of sub-group of the new ship people. Their manner of life had many of the marks of the people of the sail.

Before describing the subsequent events that took place, we should spend a minute on the problem that faced the sails-cultists. To be fair to them it had not occurred to their minds—not, anyway in many years—that the ancient sails still had their power to effect marvellous happenings, and create astonishing

events. Somehow, in their delvings and studies they had missed this very simple point, and to be fair, they were not only amazed that such might (possibly) happen now, but were even horrified, for it undermined their whole system of thinking, as also the life they had structured according to their studies. They also found within themselves such reservoirs of fear and anger and hate, that had they admitted to these, then it would seem their years of study had produced very little, if anything at all. So you can see their dilemma, and it appeared to them that the ship people were deliberately taunting them. The worm-agents were also putting up a pretty good show—though secretly and insidiously—in order to save their own bacon, so to speak, and so the situation became very complicated and feelings were rising very high.

My own idea about the matter is that certain of us have what is called by the moderns "a world view", and it has taken us some time to acquire this, and to fashion it to the point where we are secure in the knowledge we have obtained and the system we have structured. When another comes with some strange power (in fact the power of the bird), then we cannot abide the shattering of our well-composed plan, and our anger becomes uncontrollable. This is because of the loss of our (imagined) security.

To this I would add another observation. What possessed these people from the ship was not, primarily, the power of the bird, but the successful

accomplishment of the lord when he had gone through the time of sorrow, and the great-suffering and had defeated the deathly evil in the making of the new death. Since that new death was in fact the new life, they were trying to tell these folk, and they partly regretted the immediate happenings of the liberation of these two men from the obscenity of doleful disease and worms. These were without doubt needed healings, but since they issued from the lord who had suffered they ought to have pointed to him alone. The new people wished simply to impart this message concerning their lord and observe the relief of their hearers. Yet as the old people of the ship had, many of them, treated the child of the woman, so they were now treating them. They were not listening, or they were hearing something which was not actually being said, and in this mind their anger grew and grew until some became menacing and others drew weapons to rush upon them.

Those, however, who had come under the power of the bird because they were simple, and their wills

were ready for what was helpful to them, these called for peace. This seemed further to infuriate the opponents of the new men of the ship, and at last violence broke out in terrible forms. I saw some of the men of the ship beaten to the ground, and in a short time they were inert and lifeless.

It was surprising how quickly the men of hatred disappeared after that. A few of the more honest elders looked ashamed and mumbled incoherently that this was not their idea at all, and I saw some of the cultists struck with fear, and I knew their cult of the sails was finished forever. I knew then that mere intellectual pursuits often die in the face of contrary happenings. I saw them stumble away in a sort of daze. Those who had been wrought upon by the bird, and who had come under the power of the wind, they alone were bright-eyed and eager. Whilst they had sorrow for the dead, and indeed mourned them, they took others into the cottages, and bound up their wounds, and used mollifying ointments, and they set food and drink before them, and afterwards went back to pick up the dead.

CHAPTER THE FOURTH

In this chapter the seer is greatly astonished by the reaction of some people and the response of others. He is encouraged by the outcome of the first venture of the people of the new white ship.

In the vision I saw that the dead were not there. Where they went I do not know. It was not that I was not watching, for I was. Yet suddenly they were not there and I who had never actually heard the sound of the wings of the bird—for they were always silent—can yet swear I heard a faint sound of their beating, and it was high up, away up where the song of the woman had first been heard before it began to fall, like waters which drop over fall after fall, breaking in final melody as they reach the earth. After the beating of the wings I heard the same glorious melody breaking out afresh, and then it also died and there was silence once more. Yes, the men were gone, and I doubt not they entered through the door of the new death, and were not afraid.

I was sure that the supernatural disappearance of the dead man, killed by the fury of those who espoused the cult of the sails, would cause a deep gravity to fall across the whole situation, but what happened was to the contrary. At first there was

relief on the part of those who had shared in killing them, and anger on the part of others who had had deep satisfaction in their death, and then a refusal by some others to believe they had ever died. The men or children of the sails were only faintly surprised, but it made no difference whatever to their boldness, except, perhaps to increase it, for they kept proclaiming the message of the sails and the ship, but these old people of the sails could not abide any new thing, and did not care for it to come from these new people. So their courage grew and burst out afresh.

What to me was greatly impressive was the change in these old people of the sails, that is those who had recently believed the visitors. They now had become new people of the sails and ship. They had such joy and jubilation, and could not but utter cries of adoration and bliss, constantly praising the lord of the ship, and thanking him for the release he had brought to them, especially from the fear of the white-death, and even death itself. Most of all they

praised him for the new flow of life that had come to them, and if they were not going around in the market-place, ablaze with their joy, then they would make their way to the shore to look at the ship and so break out in fresh praise, and excel their former bursts of adoration.

What heightened it all was the frequent coming overhead and around them of the white bird. With every rush of its wings and the wind and power generated by them, their praise and joy would increase marvellously, and their adoration and thanksgiving knew no bounds. Sometimes they sounded so noisy, and seemed to have so little control over their actions, that even I was troubled, and felt that they needed more of order, and less of this shapeless confusion. When, however, I would think of their lot prior to the coming of the ship, I would grow ashamed for they had had little joy, and their meticulous pondering of the laws of the ancient ship, or the oppression of their spirits by the cruel worms had not given them much in life.

* * *

Not a great while after this it was time for the ship to gather its people and to go on its way. The new ship-people of the land implored them to stay, or at least to wait a little longer until they had learned many of the new things of their life of the sails. Doubtless the leaders had not been slow in teaching and had covered many matters in the time of their stay, yet the local new people were insistent they needed help, and so some of the ship people elected to stay, and in their place a few of the new ones were given the privilege of joining the ship, and this they esteemed very highly.

The scenes of joy and sorrow (mingled) were unusual, and very moving to watch as they knelt on the long windswept and desolate shore. A mist of rain was breathing over them, but this they did not much mind, as though, in fact, it constituted some kind of a gentle anointing. Having sung the new songs they had learned, and having embraced, and shared their affection they waved, each group to the other, and in the mist the great white ship put to sea, and was lost from sight in almost a moment.

CHAPTER THE FIFTH

The seer compresses the passage of much time and action into a summary of events and principles. This is to do with the conflict between the ship-people and the ancient serpent. He gives a prognostication.

I must now hasten on or my vision will seem tedious to those who have little taste for detail or long descriptions of things which I know to be important, because they develop an understanding of principles. I have seen that some people first abstract principles from happenings, acts, and teaching, and seek to apply them. Others with less abstract ways of thinking are interested only in action, and acts in action. I do not feel required to satisfy both lines of approach since this is not the purpose of telling the vision, yet it is a fact that though many things are tedious they are none the less important for that.

Nevertheless, I will compress vast periods and eras of what I saw in my vision. For me such eras did not proceed tediously, for the vision, all of it that I saw came almost in the flash of a moment. It has, of course, taken years to understand it in detail. It is like a man who stands on a high pinnacle and looks across a great panorama, seeing into the vast distance, and spanning a wide horizon and perspective,

but must later go down and travel through the whole of it. Only then will he know it in detail. He will also tell you, if he is a wise man, that the detail is all-important, and that had he not seen it in its panoramic perspective he would not have understood it so well.

I must tell you that in that first era many powerful and wonderful things happened, much to the dismay and anger of the white worm. The ship sailed swiftly from land to land, and often, as the white bird gave it indication it passed through and over the land. Where it would stop there would be the joyful telling, by the ship-people, of the victory of the new lord, and the new power given to be part of this new man, and come under his lordship, and to know the same sweet affection and relationship with the mid-sail as he also knew and knows.

All of this was new and strange. The old people of the sail would often grow angry and would abuse the news, and those who proclaimed it, whilst others of them would weep for joy and astonish-

ment, and such belief of it would be borne in them that they could never un-believe it, or come under the spell of the little ships, or the cruel worms. Great areas where obscenity had long ago won its day were wonderfully cleansed, and the inhabitants would be almost delirious with joy. The same scenes where the power of the bird would be present, and the high ruling of the new lord would be apparent, all gave me the idea that soon the whole universe would be purged of its unclean elements and that this new people would possess the creation.

And so it seemed. If you can talk of the great ship moving forwards, rapidly, on a swift tide of enthusiasm, then I suppose that is how it seemed. However, we had reckoned without the dark side of things, and although I will not mention that here, you will realise that all the time the worms were biding their time in hiding, and the little silly ships were learning some kind of circumspection, and the hidden, wounded, shining snake was seeking to heal, and with its vermin offspring was waiting its full hour. As I said I must not anticipate that time.

I must simply tell you that each liberation brought joy that was almost uncontrolled. It swept people into a new and rich life on a high-tide or—you could say—a king-tide of expectancy. Long, desolate shores such as I have spoken of, now became places of fecundity. Palms and vines and trees—all ripe with fruit—made new and beautiful lines of vegetation. Many a hot and blasted desert became a place where there were cool waters, and

oasis after oasis so expanded that ultimately many of them met and merged and so made a new jungle or a tree-laden forest, and the people who lived by this richness scarcely knew how to relate to, and live in, such prodigality of good things, and happy times.

Also there was a new spirit of discipline, of government, and of laws. It was seen first in a home here and there, where parents found a new flush of love for their children, and the children although surprised at first, became delighted with the gracious care of their parents and responded with glad obedience such as had rarely been seen in many eras. Looking at it one was reminded of the deep devotion of the sails, one for another, and the special relationship of the mid-sail to the after-, and the after-sail to the mid-one. It seemed that the power was spreading out from the sails, and for that matter from the whole ship. It was spreading across the earth and having its great and useful effects.

As time went by and these children grew towards manhood further advances were made in domestic affairs, for they too taught their children, more by action than precept. Such grown persons were called to the oversight and eldership of their people, and so the laws of many a land were equitable, and in this care and concern exercised for them, the people themselves grew more tolerant and gentle. The old terror of war seemed to be far away, and the spread of genuine affection was a natural thing, and not, so to speak, affected.

Looking back at that era I can only say it was good, although doubtless many places had still not heard of the powers and pity of the great ship, nor had understood the mystery of the sails, and so they carried on their old traditions, either as old people of the sails, or just people of the little ships, or in some cases as sworn devotees of the great and coiled wonder whom they highly esteemed. Such areas were breeding grounds for the little worms, and to tell the truth they had to refurbish themselves and restore their numbers for their destruction in most places was very apparent.

* * *

When I think over this portion of time in which the ship operated I am sure you will not think it tedious. You will think it too marvellous to be

believed and of course you will be right. It was marvellous, and a matter of unceasing astonishment, but then when a happening never ceases to be marvellous and unusual and highly acceptable, it is then that its very marvellous being becomes the order of the day, and so it is accepted. Given a little more time it is not marvellous in the absolute, but only by comparison with what used to be.

Given a little more time most will forget what used to be, and they will look upon the marvellous as a matter of the every day, and will not think so highly of it, and in their familiarity, and with some loss of gratitude they will even think lightly of it. Whilst they may not despise it, they also will not highly esteem it, and it was for this attitude and this time, that the great coiled wonder was waiting. Naturally enough, when he felt it was his hour, then, in his ancient way he struck!

CHAPTER THE SIXTH

The seer now embarks upon difficult explanations. In this vision-history he sees the deep truth of the ship which is the incorporation of all people into one entity. This was the original vision conveyed to the ancient father, the simple man. He sees a man of some note and ability who comes to understand the ship-principle, and who in fact is one' with his ancestor, the simple man.

Before I proceed to the disastrous happenings which came from the coiled evil, let me explain one other principle. It concerns the new people of the sails. I must inform you that when the ancient father of the old people of the sails had been wrought upon by the mid-sail (and for that matter, though not so explicitly, by the other sails also), the mid-sail had communicated an important message, and it was that the white ship, with the sails, desired to incorporate not only the blood descendants of the ancient father, but all who related to him in their manner of thinking, so that they, too, would be as his children. This is a mystery, and years later the blood-children of the old man could not accept the idea in principle.

My reason for explaining this is that the lord of the after-sail had a deep desire to fulfil the wish of the mid-sail, and so incorporate all the peoples of the

lands and seas as members of the holy ship, and this very idea was one of great motivation for going into the deep-sorrow and the great-suffering. In seeking to be the servant of the mid-sail he also sought to be the servant of these very people.

This is also what the people of the ship sought to convey, but from time to time the vision was too much, even for them, and for a period they would retire into conference, or get to talking about the magnitude of the task, or they would even feel ashamed that they had ever contemplated such a vast task, and when that shame had spent itself, they would then be ashamed that they had not believed the original commands and revelations of their lord—the child of the woman.

I suppose, when you think about it, the real problem is incorporating all the dimensions of the ship, for as I have pointed out, this ship is most

unusual in that it can, at the one time, if it so desires, incorporate none, or one, or all mankind, not only those living now, but all who have ever lived, are living, and those who will live in the future. No, the problem is not one of the dimensions of the ship necessary to incorporate them. Rather it is the problem of the willingness of persons and people to be incorporated against his own will. His will must be gripped by love for the ship and the sails or he will resist incorporation.

Of course, had the child of the woman not suffered deeply and in suffering showed the love of the three sails, then doubtless no one would wish for incorporation in the ship. Also that responsive love of a new person would then be further increased by the actual renewal which he would experience.

I could talk much of this matter, and am greatly inclined to do so, but there is a difficult principle concerning which I must speak, because of the problem it raises, and it is that of people-consciousness or, as I often call it, people-prejudice. I have been given to understand that children do not naturally have this, but that it has been inculcated in them by their adult contemporaries. I am not sure of this, but the time-history of man shows that often one people thinks itself to be superior to another. I think perhaps each individual person desires to be thought well of, and has a sense of himself from the time at the end of the no-time, and the beginning of the now-time. Then it seems each man was to be a very special person. However, the

affects and effects of the time of the white-death seems to indicate that man, everywhere, is deeply down within himself, aware of failure and inferiority, so that he is hard driven to prove himself to himself. Hence, personally as an individual, and corporately as a people, men seek to deem others inferior in order to give themselves special airs and marks of superiority. Only then can each face himself and others.

Hence the ancient father, who knew the secrets of the sails, could see the marvel of all peoples linking up with him, and the mystery of the ship and its sails. Yet it is sad to say that not all of his people could understand this. The natural desire to be special and superior remained strongly with them and was an impediment to that knowledge. Nor was it confined to just one people. I understand that deep at the core of the deep-suffering and the great-sorrow was the attempt and desire of the child of the woman to solve the divisions and bring amity and essential unity to all races, so that having come from one origin they might return with joy to that original unity. As I say, I do not understand this mystery deeply, but I have a sense of it.

* * *

Pursuant to this mystery I must tell you one or more things which relate to it. Shortly after the first of the new people burst in on many lands, one of the old sail's people, a fierce protagonist of their order, set about to destroy the whole operation of the ship,

and of its sails. It happened that on one occasion the unseen lord of the sails stepped out before him, and did it in such brilliant glory that this antagonist of the new way was stunned, and suddenly discovered within him (and for all I know, without him) a fearful blindness. Being a sensitive man, and not expecting it from the sails he had claimed to know and obey, he had to have time to consider the whole matter. It was at the end of that (appointed) time that the great bird visited him, and into the depths of his being was poured love of such intensity, that he could never again go back to "the cult of the sails" or think in any way of the old ship. He became as fierce a protagonist of the new way as he had been of the old. I am minded that in this he was even more energetic than those he had joined, and, so it seems, in a quick flash he saw that what had come to the ancient father was now happening. He also understood that this mystery had been hidden

for ages, but for all who would see it, it was brilliantly plain.

In all these things he was not alone. In the first flush, following the happenings of the day of the bird, some of the companions of the child of the woman, and who had witnessed his operations amongst the old people of the sails, discovered that they had special powers. These powers were most needed for some were saying that the truths of the new lord had been lost with his going. On the day of the bird these truths were made very clear to this special band which was itself amongst the larger band of new people. There was great relief when it was known that the sail-and-ship truths had been committed to them in clear outline, in full principle, and in fine detail. From then on the new people had great comfort from this specially endowed band of men.

CHAPTER THE SEVENTH

The seer closes off this section of his vision by an account of the changing personnel of the ship, and indicates, nevertheless, the continuing action of the ship. He states, however, that changes in attitudes were preparing the way for a new attack by the forces of the cunning white worm.

Now I have to tell you something which is at once seemingly sad, and also seemingly joyful. The people of the ship did not live forever in this time-history or this space-place, such as we, at this very moment know livingly. From our point of view they died, much as had those men who were beaten into death. Some, of course did not die from cruelty but by process of age. Not one of these entered the old death, but all entered into the new death, which rightly speaking is no death, but entrance into the foreverland of the ship and its sails.

Just as each member could at once be visible and yet incorporate in the total fabric of the ship, so each could be, from the occasion of the new death, invisible and incorporate in the fabric of the ship. This is a strange matter. What, however, is the seemingly sad thing is their departure from the scene of action. What is joyful is that they simply gave a place to yet more new people of the ship, for

to all were given (and are given) wonderful gifts and powers by which to share their people-unity, and to proclaim the defeat of the coiled evil to the peoples of our earth.

It had to come to pass, then, that each of these great men, as also the one of whom I spoke (whose heart was set upon the mystery of the unity of all peoples, races and persons), died. That is, all entered the new death and became invisible to us, going on no doubt to an even richer experience of the sails and the ship. Nevertheless at their passing certain adjustments had to be made.

For example, the great ones had thought fit to set out certain of their understandings in writing, and these parchments were treasured amongst the ship-people, as though by them they would steer most of their future courses. Also the ship-people coveted and revered the logs of the great men, and gleaned much comfort and wisdom from them. In

fact, daily they pored over them. The major value of the great man's work was that they were able to bring together in one unity the history of the ancient father, and the promises to him (and all humanity), as also the consequent promises and messages of the men of the past who had been from time to time, visited by the bird. Their understanding of the old things was rich in the light of their understanding of the lord of the sail, and what he had done when with them. They, above others, could bring special clarity of understanding, and so their writings also were greatly treasured, and, as I have already said, by some they were deeply revered.

Nevertheless, as time passed, and the great men themselves were gone from them, and others carried on the same work, aided by the unseen lord of the sail, and empowered by the bird of the sail, matters in many ways slipped from their former state and nature. Some, even of the most enthusiastic of the new people, considered that the era had

changed. Whilst they doubted not that the lord of the hinder-sail looked with favour upon what they did, and the bird of the former-sail was never entirely absent, yet they opined that because the ship was there, and its substantiality was not in doubt, that doubtless the lord and the bird required that they map out the courses they would take, and that they should decide lines of action to be taken, and the manner and modes of operation.

This had the effect of breaking much of the former intimacy known between the unseen lord, the people, and the great bird, and doubtless much of the work suffered as a result. You could even say that many of the voyages were listless, and even had the sense of being forced, and rarely did a good enough breath of wind come to set them sailing as they had sailed merrily in former days.

It was precisely at this point that the changes came which aided the forces of the white worm who had been planning all the time to strike at the new ship, and the people of the sails.

Book Four



CHAPTER THE FIRST

A new attack begins from the forces of the serpent. The people of the ship have grown accustomed to the good life, and the terror of the snake has faded somewhat from their memory. New ways are planned by the coiled one, and they are no less than clever. Nevertheless, such ways do not take into account the great-suffering, and the dependent nature of all creatures upon the sails. Even the white worm has issued from those very sails, and now wishes to be as them, or even better.

As I previously described, the condition of men throughout the earth was becoming to a degree not hitherto known, one of human greatness. This greatness did not consist in pomp and splendour, in great courts and display of wealth, and in knowledge, but it was the greatness of a gentle wisdom. I have spoken of how families benefited by the teachings of simplicity of life, and concern for others. I mentioned how families had profited from the new ease and peace of mind which fathers and mothers had achieved, and by which also they trained their children, until that time when children also, having reached a desirable (and beautiful) maturation, went out to found their new units of families in their own homes. So the succession had proceeded, and so the peoples had made great progress, although, perhaps, their technology, and their other devices had been only

mildly progressive. It was thought that this new and wonderful way of life was so sufficient in itself as not to require mere technological advances.

It was at this peak of quiet accomplishment, that the unseen worms began to manifest themselves. They were most cautious, for they had been well instructed by the great worm and his consorts. They had been told never to question what was going on, but, as far as possible, to insinuate themselves into the minds of the ship-people, both on the ship itself, and abroad in various lands and islands where the ship-people had taught. They were simply to wriggle softly and cautiously until something like a faint question mark had been formed in many a mind. Where the question mark did not get immediately erased, they were to strengthen it. All that was required was the faintest of questions about "things-as-they-are". The suggestion was to

be, 'Are "things-as-they-appear-to-be" really "things-as-they-really-are"?'.

This done, they were to insinuate more such questions, and then, penetrating to the deepest part of man, and if possible right into the very secret-heart itself, they were to set up other questions, not only about the current modes of life, but such things as human fatherhood and motherhood, and the whole matter of familyhood. This would strike quickest and deepest at the secret of the sails, and soon bring division amongst the progeny of the new people. It would also have side-effects beneficial to the worm world. They could then effect a deeper incursion into the core of the people of the ship, and so wreak havoc in a quisling manner of operation.

That, unfortunately, was not all. The little ships had long been practising their manoeuvres. They knew one thing, and that is that if you wish to take the eyes of the devoted off the splendid ship, you must have something far more splendid than the ship itself. Yet how could that possibly be achieved? Surely such a thing was impossible, for those who knew the ship knew of days when its beauty was so irresistible as to blot out everything else from the mind of a person.

The ships, the coiled one, and the worms had long conferred on their new techniques and patterns which they were to observe. The worms were to seek to penetrate, as we have said, with their questions, and one of the main ones would be, "Why the ship at all?" They were to insinuate the

idea that it was dull, that it was part of a cult now virtually outworn. Its 'newness' had gone, and a person must look for something fresher and newer, and something also a little exciting.

Such a thing would be exceedingly difficult to suggest, and even more, to achieve success from such a suggestion, since the ship was always fresh and new and radiant with light. Also its powers were self-evident. For this reason the small ships agreed to a thought which had long been in the mind of the coiled one. They were to re-integrate into one noble vessel. Not a sign of difference was to be seen amongst them in their new corporate adventure. They were to out-ship the new ship, by being a newer ship! Also they were to gain some glory that would outshine the glory of the other vessel. Moreover, they must manufacture, from somewhere, sails which were even more winning and noble than the sails the new people had come to know and love.

Doubtless the task was difficult but every power of the coiled snake and his brilliant cohorts was brought into being. Day and night as thoughts passed through the mind of the serpent, his beady eyes gleamed, and his forked tongue slavered a little as it licked the fine scales about his small mouth. He had, in the long time ago, dreamed a dream of being the mid-sail himself, and this dream had never left him, and it had even tormented him. He had missed the fine point, covered by his illusion, that such a thing was not possible. Since he, with all other things, had come from the soundless voice and

had been given life by the strong wind, and even brought into being by the latter-sail and its power, then it was impossible for him to become as the one by whom he became! Since this simple self-deception covered over the impossibility he was sure his passionate dream would become a thrilling success, and already he savoured the acclamation and

acclaim of all men, and other creatures, as they bowed before him—the great one! With all his brittle brilliance and fascinating sophistication he could not understand the mystery of the great-suffering, and so did not know that the event of that suffering had sealed his doom, and he was in fact moving towards that ultimate destruction.

CHAPTER THE SECOND

The seer, with some horror, perceives the cunning of the serpent. A new ship greatly rivalling that of the other ship, appears before his gaze. With it are other ships which are those of the old flotilla. They have the ability to profane the pure mystery of the first vessel. As on the sea the new armada was captivating many, so on the land the little white worms—emissaries of the great white worm—were doing great damage. But for the white bird the seer would be greatly overwrought.

It happened, therefore, one day, that things began to change. Sensitive men may have felt it in a slight change in temperature. The atmosphere which had been warm yet fresh, now altered. A faint coldness permeated the earth, and here and there folk shivered, even if only slightly. Others looked up at the sky, or across at the ship, as though asking a question or looking for an answer. The inviting loveliness of the sea seemed to fade, and something of a cold, distant nature appeared in its otherwise twinkling joy. In fact you would scarcely have noticed it, and probably thought that in fact it was a momentary illusion.

It was not, in fact, as though there had been no problems in the land and on the sea, albeit the new ship had traversed much of its surface. There had been problems but most of these had been large enough to warrant them being tackled, and so they were tackled. The problems which now appeared were so tiny as to be simply faintly annoying, like a single gnat, or a stray mosquito, and with all the

other that was good they were scarcely noticed. Only when their number increased did people exhibit an unusual sense of irritation, and even begin to look at one another as though, other persons, and not the circumstance of the minute invasion, were responsible for the mild discomfort.

These things grew, but only at such a pace that you would be unable to define. Hence you did not feel greatly concerned, and even the mild dissatisfaction with the whole system of life could scarcely add up to a real complaint. Hearing this, the white-death glowered with a perverse joy, and uncoiled his vast serpentine body for the action ahead.

The real action ahead lay in two things. First of all was the appearance of a great new ship, of which I will speak in a moment. The second thing was the gracious flotilla which accompanied it. By the genius and ability of the serpent and his cohorts, these two things had been done. The flippant silliness, the arrogant idiocy, and the eternal emptiness of the little vessels had been replaced by something

of grandeur. Like a great mother-vessel with her children about her the new white vessel moved towards the peoples of the land. Then, with a poise and a grace they had not formerly exhibited, the small vessels followed. Even here, there was a difference in their shape, size and colour. More than one had combined in some cases to form a better and more shapely vessel, and it was against the background of the small ships that the larger one seemed so majestic as she moved forward. Her progress was made with queenly beauty.

What was most startling was the glow and sheen of the mother ship and the brilliance and lights of the smaller vessels. These played, one against the other, one on and off the other, so that the sight was not only generally impressive but had the most mysterious effect upon the watchers. They seemed strangely drawn into the heart of the flotilla, and of course the heart was the mother-ship itself.

Then there were the sails. Whereas in the new ship of the new lord there were the white sails and their steady and secret mystery, these other sails held no covert or esoteric mystery, but rather they were exoteric to an extreme. You knew' what they were intended to mean. It came through without mystery, but not without stimulating excitement. They spelled out what they were, and also what they meant.

To me it seemed like the unveiling of something which has its beauty in being veiled. It was like exposing truth to a half-learned person, or imposing full knowledge before the learner had time or maturity,

so that one could not use the knowledge in wisdom. The very exposure of the truth—the truth of the original three white sails—seemed to take away from the depth and wonder of the truth. I must be honest and say I felt the old empty sickness come over me, and I turned aside from watching the ship, and felt the old retching feeling rise to the surface. Also my eyes were blinded with tears, and one word kept repeating itself over and over again, way down in my secret heart, and it was this—"Travesty!"

And that was what it really was, a travesty.

* * *

On the land, and even in the original and true ship the little worms were busy at their work. Like secret, hidden, but not unfelt, vermin, they itched their way to some success. The question marks which had been dim and almost unfelt, now flickered with light and movement, so that the host-victims of the thoughts began to feel they had really asked these questions, and at this point of happening the questions came thick and fast.

As watchers gazed on the large, queenly vessel, and the fascinating flotilla of small ships, the questions would arise. "How does it happen that the ship of the unseen lord is only one, and why are there not many smaller vessels so that it is like a warm family? How is it that these vessels are so communicative, and not withholding what we wish to know? What if what they tell us is news even greater than we have heard through our fathers and the original great men? How is it that the ship of

our fathers stays idly by and does nothing in this invasion of its waters?" These and other questions arose, but the main one was the surpassing beauty and intimacy of the main vessel and its children-vessels. This was impressive, since it seemed to outweigh the main message of the mid-sail—of what we must now call "the older vessel".

Nevertheless it was to take more than demonstration to defeat the ship of the bird. The bird itself remained unseen, but I had become practised in *feeling* if not *hearing* the beat of its wings. I could sense its great circling above us, and something of the downwards bending of its wings as it sought to cover us. Yet I could sense nothing of urgency in its movements, and even when it came in sight it seemed careless about what was happening, and would soar to be lost in or above the clouds. Its uncaring attitude and its poise of calm reassured me much, because of the sickness I had felt, and the trembling which had come. Something like a cold, hard disgust had formed within me, but I took courage and understanding from the bird. This was not the occasion for passions and emotions, but for quiet faith and calm assurance of the right end of all things.

Now emissaries were sent out from the ships, across the lands. They proved to be silent and unseen messengers. The message of the three sails on this counterfeit vessel was plain enough for all to see. I expected that soon a great wind would stir the sails such as it had done in the white ship, but this did not happen. Later I discovered that had this happened the new people would have smelled the wind and known its origins. Had some great counterfeit bird

have winged its way into the sky, then the power that would have fallen from it would have been so immediately and clearly evil that all the lands would have been alerted.

For all their invisibility the unseen and silent emissaries were not inarticulate. They went where the tiny worms had first insinuated themselves. There, where the acids of the creatures had fallen, and where their small depredations had eroded the full defences of any particular mind, they gained their footholds, and so established their bridgeheads. They let vapours flow free which further eroded the sensibilities of their hosts, and gradually the dark work was under way, until it was established. From across the land, from the centre of this new gravity, came waves of invaders, following up the initial work of the worms and the emissaries. They worked to tie down the wisdom of the great men, and to induce amnesia of the promises once given to the ancient father. They devised a silken deceit to bind the mind against the very fact and presence of the true new ship.

At this the coiled serpent began its great uncoiling, and the wound he had received seemed but a superficial happening, and his great trunk unwound to show muscles of steely might, and strength to crush and kill the very earth itself. Way back of him, beyond sight, you could sense the uncoiling, and you could feel the frightfulness of the coming conflict. Then I looked towards the invading flotilla, and my heart began pounding, and my throat constricting.

CHAPTER THE THIRD

The seer is even more deepened in gloom because of the newer vessel and its flotilla. He sees the empty falsity of the whole matter, and fears others do not. Those of the ship indeed understand the non-reality of it all. Nevertheless across the sea and lands many are deluded, especially by the fact that the original and true ship seems helpless against this new and powerful armada. Finally the seer and indeed all men and creatures see a wondrous vision of a noble red serpent, so that men tremble. Above all this is a host of birds, and the beating of their wings encourages the devotees of the newer ship, and brings' fear to the true people of the white ship.

What I saw was a shadow flotilla. Reality had been superseded by a deadly counterfeit nothing! This I cannot explain, even although I seek with great effort to understand. As I looked, I realised that the ship was a counterfeit vessel and not at all true. Also the other vessels showed up for what they were—foolish, shadowy things, and not at all capable of truly representing reality. The large vessel, where it had been compounded of the smaller vessels was like a large puzzle of pieces put together, and where they had been placed, the lines showed, so that the effect was quite grotesque. Likewise it was so with the smaller vessels.

The dreadful sense of evil that came upon me, was quite overwhelming, so much so that the nausea returned, and I felt drained of spirit. The

sight was so ludicrous as not only to be horrible but to unman me, and when I think of that word then it could not be more appropriate. When I saw reality denuded of its truth, then I, too, felt like one who has slipped below the level of being a true human person. When, then, I looked wildly to see the true new ship, I almost swooned, so powerful and heavy was the incoming of the reality. The contrast, as I have said, was overwhelming.

It came to me like a sickening blow that what the vessels were about was to counterfeit the reality of the true ship, to seduce the minds of the new people, and then confront them with the no-reality as the reality, and the reality as the no-reality. This done, those who orientated to the no-reality would themselves become part of that system.

What at the time I did not know, but which I learned later, was that the evil thing was convinced this was indeed the reality. What he had built, or, rather, concocted he believed to be the truth. He had deceived himself by his own imaginings. Whilst acknowledging something of reality in the new ship—or he would not have imitated it—his pride had gone so far in its delusion as to believe the thing he had manufactured (I cannot say "created") was in fact the genuine thing.

What to me was terrifying was that I could see the ruse and understand the delusion but it seemed to me that no one else could understand. To me the incongruity was not only gruesome and sickening, but it was pitifully mean and wholly despicable. It did not appear in any way to be grand or imposing, but manifested itself as slimy treachery and pettifogging idiocy. All the time I was worried that I alone had seen the deceit, and that I would have to live with the sickening presence of it all. I was even more worried that others did not see the evil of this false vision.

* * *

Not so. As I turned and looked at the true ship I saw others crowding over the rails of its decks, and they were looking towards the central ship and the flotilla surrounding it. Some were pointing, and others were standing, hands upraised as though in frustration and contempt. It was then I saw the great bird flatten his wings and swoop across

their heads. They did not look up, but I knew then that the bird was creating winds that would blow away the deadly illusion of the mind until it was far out to sea, neutralised and harmless. From somewhere, probably the ancients, came a statement I had once read or heard, namely, "the renewing of the mind". This needed work was the task and power of the bird.

Thinking this over, later, I am convinced that it was the bird who had also visited me personally, and that this was not once but perhaps many times, for gradually the nausea faded, and I was able again to cope with the vision. Also I saw that the people of the ship knew the delusion as I did and that doubtless they would make their own plans, which of course was what they did.

The delusion of the white worm began to spread across land after land. Strange stories concerning the queenly vessel and its flotilla began to emanate, and it was impossible to prevent their spread. It was said that the new ship (now called in the rumours "the old ship") had been superseded by the *mother* ship and its *family* of other vessels. It was also said that the mystery of the sails was no longer a mystery, but rather the full truth of the being of each separate sail, and the full being of the three together had been revealed by the strange new ship, for it had disclosed all that men had wanted to know, and now the sum of knowledge was filled up and men could pursue their own way unimpeded by esoteric concealment.

The purpose of all this was to alter the true men and women (and, children) of the ship, the true people who had come together through the lord of the ship, the bird of the ship, and the uniting mystery of the centre-sail. At every passing over of the great bird, many of the small white worms would die and wither, even as they were seeking to fix delusion in the minds of these true ones. Often too the invisible emissaries would become visible, and just one sight of them, even a hurried sight, would convince the viewers of their evil and falsity. At this the emissaries would hastily flee, until some areas became denuded of them, as also of the worms, and the faith of the true-ship people would wax strong, and their indignation would know no bounds, so that they were eager together to gather, and to seek their invisible lord, and to do what was his will. With this would come great and strong emanations of the bird, until you could say there was a strong wind blowing, and its steady flow was a joy to these descendants of the ancient father.

* * *

You may remember one of the questions which the deceitful little worms wriggled into the minds of the ship-people. It was, "How can the ship and the sails allow such an intrusion? Does this not mean that the new ship with its flotilla must be stronger than the ship of our father? Why then does the lord of the ship tarry, and the mid-sail not send out its power to destroy these things?" This last, as I said

before, was the most insidious of all the questions, and I also had to beat it back and give it no play. As it was I would have been grateful had someone come along with an answer, but in these later hours I have realised that there could be no true answer except the one I have learned, for such could not have been given at that point of the happenings.

As if, partly in answer, anyway, to that question a great deal of movement began on the white ship. I could see the activity and imagined that preparations were being made for the ship to do one of its famous voyages of proclamation, as they were often called. Whilst there was busyness I saw no sign of anxiety or of frantic endeavour. Nevertheless frightening reports were coming in from many lands, namely that a dark pall and a gloom had been spread over many areas which hitherto had enjoyed great sunshine and light. Also it was reported that as a result of the uneasiness of some, many of the marks of the old ways of life were being evidenced again, such as irritation, frustration, and insecurity. The flow of questions was beginning to come overtly, and great doubt was being east upon the powers of the white ship. Rumour had it that the ship was now powerless, and that the bird had disappeared from sight, and was, perhaps, even destroyed. Such were the rumours, and they were not heartening to the new people of the ship. This meant that all things were in question, and that nothing could be certain, and this was most unsettling to them.

At that time also a portent, or a sign appeared in the sky. At the moment the darkness had become so thick that men could not see through it there came a brilliant flash, and great and triumphant roar. There, from east to west, from one horizon to another was a blood-red vision of a mighty serpent. Its visage was strong and noble, its head was reared in triumph, and behind it were long, smooth, continually unfolding, coils. I saw the vision, and my heart stood still. With all that I knew of the serpent I had never realised what splendour it had. It is said that no matter where you went, on all the earth, or even if you feared and hid in eaves that the vision penetrated even there. It was as though it were stamped indelibly upon the minds and memories of all creatures.

Its rich crimson blazed away in the skies, and out from it went a glorious sheen and a shine, and a wonderful glory, and the glory of it quivered into the black clouds which were its perfect foil, so much so that in many hearts the old worship woke again, even roaring into life. Some men and some creatures fell down and worshipped, whilst others felt a kind of madness running through their veins, and indeed every fibre of their bodies, and the old vibrations of fascination began to tremble into being. A new restless spirit went across the earth.

Whereas the white ship had begun its new journey of proclamation it nevertheless seemed pitifully inadequate against such splendour. As though to cap this brilliant coup of the serpent, at the

moment of its visionary appearance the whole flotilla broke into activity, and the sails filled out with a strange wind. Not one pair of wings was heard in the dark reaches of the clouds, but the ceaseless beating of an armada of birds, and from this flurry on high came floating down a new and strange power which again made the veins of the devotees burn with worship and wonder. In all this the new true people stood in bewilderment and horror, and some with no little fear. The flotilla had itself suddenly become menacing and aggressive, and the wind of which I spoke drove it hard across the sea, and also hard across many lands.

* * *

At its coming curious and weird things began to happen in many homes. It seemed that some parents became possessed with a terrifying hatred of their children. Often a wife would suddenly burst out in vituperation against her husband, whilst the children cowed back, bewildered and hurt. Sometimes a husband would rise to strike his wife, or the children would band against both parents. In some lands many of the elders began operations of ravage and cruelty against the people over whom they formerly had ruled in kindly ways. Here and there people began to build in pomp and splendour. In other places a cruel person would rise, either man or woman, to rule with dictatorial fierceness, and to extort time, possession, and labour from those caught under them.

Not only were these evils of great and unknown proportion, but also many of them were mean and fiddling and petty. Little stings of lies would attack a person's character. Small murmurs would invade a community, and in no time bickering and petty quarrels would arise. Small crimes, like the stealing of small articles, or the use of wrong measures for scales and the like would become the order of the day. Trust, which had been so general and so simple, now had disappeared, and suspicion was spreading.

Over all this the areas where the ship had never reached grew very bold. Hitherto they had had to be content to live within their own realm. Since the largest part of the produce of the earth was produced mainly in the countries where the blessing of the ancient Father had reached, it had been necessary for all countries to trade with them. This the people of these far lands had not wished to do for they feared the people of the ship, as also their strange ways and laws. Nevertheless they traded, and when they came kept their eyes open as to the special places and riches which the lands of the people of the ship had gradually accumulated. Deep envy and covetousness grew as they saw the ever-increasing prosperity of the ship-people, and they bided their time.

When, then, the great pall came, and the blazing vision of the great uncoiling one appeared in the sky, they sensed the time had come. Some of them who had been for long ages worshippers of the little

ships were delighted to hear of the renewed flotilla which had appeared in the main harbour of the people of the ship, and when it came into their sight, they were not only entranced, but seized with a deep and trembling excitement so that they could scarcely wait to hear the wishes of the new queen-ship which would lead them. They revelled in the message of the three new sails for these were an overt mockery, a sneering mimicry of the original sails and their way of telling this mystery both defiled and defamed it. So exultant were the people of the dark lands that they could not forbear to cheer and cry and express their admiration for the liberating forces which had come amongst them.

So the movement grew. Armies began to form to go against the people of the ship, and all the suppressed hatred of years was now a powerful force of motivation to defeat the ship-people. There was nothing considered to be a sacrifice when it came to equipping the armies and the fighting forces.

In the lands of the ship-people the aberrations of which I spoke earlier continued to manifest themselves. It does not take much thought to understand that the little gnawing worms had done their work well, and the sneaking, silent emissaries had used their powers of invisibility to delude even those who, on doing horrific things, had accused themselves of untold inner evil, so that they were ashamed to call themselves true people of the ship, and in this way were being alienated from the forces of the snake.

Also, and naturally enough, there were those of these lands, that is the lands of the ship-people, who had never been gripped by the message of the white sails. Some had been indolent, and in their laziness had not sought to listen. Others lived with a hidden rebellion which had never been quenched. They had lain quiet, so to speak, and had conformed with the manner of life which their countrymen espoused. Some even had displayed an enthusiasm for the whole ship teaching but this had been only in the mind and never in the heart. Yet others there were whose experiences never seemed to be sincerely their own, but induced by whatever was going on about them. They were people who seemed to possess the same colour-changing properties which belonged to the chameleon. All of these proved to be a peril to their own countrymen when the battle came to be joined.

As I watched these growing perils, the dissidence of formerly loving families, the belching out of dark hatreds, and the great rivers of envy and jealousy (so to speak) which began to flow across the earth, my heart sank for the power and smell of doom which was upon the land and the sea. At times I wished I had not seen and known so much, for then a victory would not seem impossible. However when you know that countless worms are burrowing into the minds, hearts, memories and persons of your fellow-creatures, and that invisible emissaries are spreading seeds of bitter dissension and treacherous hatred, then you wonder how any victory could come. This sense of doom is heightened especially when you know the ship-people are committed not to fight evil with evil, and are sworn not to take up counter-arms. How then, can they possibly win?

CHAPTER THE FOURTH

The seer, with faltering heart, continues his chronicle of the evil power, and the spread of its rule. With the coming of the false mother-ship and its flotilla of small ships also comes destruction. The seer sees strange things emerge from the three sails of this false ship, and would despair of the power of evil, but for the white bird.

Being a weak person by nature, and unable to depict suffering and sorrow in the measure that I see it, I take up this part of the account with faltering heart. Because I was in deep sorrow at the time I had to watch helplessly and could no more have told the vision than I could have, single-handed, defeated the serpent himself. As it was his vision left the dark pall stained with a deep glow of red, and it seemed his dreadful but proud countenance could not be blotted out, nor the memory of his brilliant glory be erased. It was as though a tattoo had been impregnated into the very being and body of the corpus of living things and they had to live with it, particularly so since this mark was indelible.

I might add, and most significantly, that when those of the flotilla or the dark lands met another, they would look to see whether that red vision had left its permanent mark upon the other, and if they found no imprint or mark of the sign their rage

knew no bounds, and they treated that other as something or someone to be destroyed.

By the same token, those of the ship looked to see, also, whether such an imprint was discernible, and where they saw it they had no hesitation in using the weapons which were theirs. At this point I hasten to say that their weapons were not physical, and the hurt of them could bring a man to his senses rather than destroy him cruelly. It could even kill the evil which was his. Sometimes it seemed to send him hustling down into his own darkness, and into the realm of the white worm. Nevertheless I must not anticipate what I am about, shortly, to tell.

The mighty day came which would be stamped forever on the minds of men had the serpent triumphed. It was surely a triumphant day, but for a seer to tell it is a task of the greatest difficulty. I have already pointed out that a vision has dimensions which our time-history lacks, as also time-history has dimensions which a vision lacks. The

trouble is that when you tell a vision people will either be taking it for useless myth, or they will be reading it literally, and making a ship a thing of actual boards and iron, masts and canvas, and they will forget that such a ship, at the very best can only be a sign of the real ship itself. Yet even in explaining this I may set a person upon a false trail so I beg your patience, and ask for your kindness as I seek to tell you of that most famous of all battles and its eternal outcome.

* * *

The ships came surging across the seas and the lands. Before them sometimes, but in the rear of them mostly, came the armies which had been formed by the foul reptile. The sails of the mother-ship shone with an unearthly sheen, a shine as from some depths of a lost ocean, an ancient white-green which glowed like the eyes of a deep-sea creature. Their luminosity was strangely weird, but most attractive to the minds of the serpent followers. Indeed for them it contained an unearthly mystery and majesty. There was something haughty about the mid-sail, as though it were beyond the others, and indeed beyond all things which exist. Its mast was held high as though the expression of the highest pride any creature has known which it is about to vindicate. From the rear sail emerged not an unseen but a visible prince. His mien was also full of pride, mingled with scorn and disdain for all but himself. It was as though he were the epitome

and expression of the mid-sail, and indeed he bowed deeply to it before he took up his place of command. The former sail began to express itself with great power, and I saw the sudden flash of dark and noble wings as a bird-creature emerged with great dynamic and exploded a power of wind that set the flotilla at spinning, swirling speed. However, the terrible stench which also emerged, and the dark stain left in the already darkened sky set all my senses a-quiver, so that I trembled violently, and found within me a deep and terrible hatred of the ship. I wondered also how I had seen it to be so pathetically an empty counterfeit when here it was proving itself to possess great powers, and indeed perhaps beyond any I had seen. I had the fleeting thought that even its counterfeit nothingness had been a cunning device to delude me and to deceive the people of the true new ship. Even so I could not come to accept that thought. Such deceit was too patent, too obviously absurd.

I watched the dark armies, coming at a crouching run, spreading themselves out widely, and moving in sudden short bursts of speed and wariness, and my heart sank. It seemed that the situation was wholly hopeless for the ship-people. Nor could their ship be seen anywhere. Yet the whole flotilla with total menace and grim aggression was sometimes leading, and sometimes following, the gathered armies of the great serpent.

The great serpent! Even at the moment of my thought I saw the mid-sail break and shatter, and

out of its depth flowed the monstrous evil. I saw the proud, glaring eyes flame out their triumph and victory and hatred. I saw the massive coils support the noble and terrifying head, and then came such a convulsion of those coils that the whole earth trembled with the boiling, threshing movement of them. Upwards, ever upwards went the mighty head, and the eyes flamed, and the white fangs gleamed in unearthly beauty, and suddenly, as suddenly as the blazing vision had been manifested, it all happened.

The serpent had no sooner loosed itself into full freedom, and flung its mighty body across the heavens, than a full-throated roar leapt loose from countless throats, and they cried the name, not of the serpent, but of the mystery of the mid-sail, for that mystery I knew, and had not thought to have ever heard it named. In horror I heard this mystery ascribed to the great snake, and again came the pain within, and the sickening and the retching, and the growing horror until I thought I would have swooned.

With that universal roar came the crashing err from the weird creature, as though all its desires had been fulfilled. It was a cry of triumph, as though it had wound its coils around eternity and conquered it with one mighty crushing, convulsive movement of its powerful body. It was as though the very earth had cracked open, and great molten floods of light had burst forth, so vast was the praise. so thunderous the glory. so affirmative the

worship of worm, and of emissary, of great supernatural creature, and wild, adoring human. I knew then that I had seen the complete negation of the truth of the pure mid-sail, the hissing, spitting scorn of the wild, proud thing which writhed around a universe not its own, and sought to make obscene a creation not of its creation. Its massive lust for worship, and its hunger for fulfilled pride, far beyond the telling of words, was the most hideous thing the universe had had to witness.

* * *

At the cry of the serpent, which was the cry of each heart grown to full-throated roar, the powers of this coiling evil gathered for their mighty onslaught, and like a hideous deluge of putrid pollution they flowed across the earth. They flowed over town and city, over hamlet and village, over every large place of living, and every isolated place of hermitage, until the stench of their being went into every nostril, and the poison of their bitterness penetrated into every living thing.

As I looked I wept. I was one with those ancient seers who had seen their people go down into shame and pillage and ravage. I did not err out "Why?", and I tried not to believe what I saw. but if ever I saw the triumph of evil I saw it there.

In the midst of my weeping came a strange long flash of brilliant white wings and a glorious bird.

flaming with light swept down until I saw the beauty of its glowing eyes, and I smelled the sweet warmth of its lovely body, and felt the caress of a chance feather that lightly touched my face, and all the sweetness and purity and fragrance of it swept into my nostrils and cleared my mind, and set my heart crying with joy. It was as though the evil were a fiddling, petty thing, a trifling irrelevant idiocy, and all its mighty asseverations the mewling of a faint and dying creature.

When I looked back at the carnage it was still there. There was the convulsive anguish of a world gripped in horrific evil, and there were dreadful

cries coming up both from victor and from vanquished. The first snarled out their hot, lusting hatred, and the second emitted loving cries to their unseen lord, but in some strange way it did not hurt me anymore. Words were pounding in my mind that "all is good, seem otherwise though it may", and whilst my ordinary intelligence was saying "This is not so; this is dreadful" yet my heart, with the effect of the bird upon it was crying out that I was truly assured all was good.

All of this happened—the bird, its flashing past me, and the cruel carnage below—in a moment prior to the vision of the lion.

CHAPTER THE FIFTH

In this portion of his chronicle, the seer sees the clash and conflict of the two powers, that of the evil, and that of the good. Not all the powers of the good seem able to stem the tide of the evil, and so the conflict is joined. Yet even in conflict, despair is not final. Something of great import is about to happen.

Before I tell you the vision of the lion I must tell you of the ship and its people. This was a strange happening.

I watched the massive and cruel flotilla of the queen ship come plunging across sea and land to devastate the people of the white ship. No sooner had the prince burst from one sail, the dark, noble bird from another, and then the mighty serpent from the mid-sail, than the smaller ships exploded into a flurry of terrifying action. Their previous weavings and cavortings of other days which had in those times looked so foolish and superficial, now became actions of devastating destruction. Seeing in any place one or more of the people of the ship they would bear down upon them and deal out sickening destruction and cruel annihilation. The great ship rode like a deadly and supernatural weapon of carnage, crushing all in its way and sending out poisons which polluted the air and brought death to the things of purity.

The massive armies were unrelenting and horribly cruel in their operations. They could leave nothing fair to survive, be it natural bird or beast, be it flower or foliage, and when they saw the light of the shining ones, the people of the ship, they were drawn as steel to a magnet and in swift action or terrible pursuit they dealt death to all about them.

Then the white ship appeared. It came steadily onwards towards the scenes of outrageous carnage. Its sails were held high, and its canvases were full-bellied from the powerful wind which drove it onwards. It stopped for nothing, neither indeed for friend nor foe, and as it came I saw it gather up its people who had not been destroyed and sail on unhindered. Nothing of evil dared come near its burning purity or stand in the way of its unflinching and pointed prow. Many an evil thing was destroyed by its swift passage over it, and the unearthly cries of those who were thus destroyed were unforgettable.

If the people of the ship suffered intolerable anguish at the stench and impurity of the snake-people, then even more did the snake-creatures know agony as the burning, holy thing came towards them.

You must not think that the ship covered all the earth in a single moment, nor that its path was wide as the universe like some miraculous swathe. Far from it. It passed from point to point, point to point, and this unswervingly, and all the time its own living leapt into its bosom, and its own dead lay where they were, for the earth was thick with them and their corpses were everywhere. Still the ship came on.

I saw then what it was about. It was about the other ship, the great queen and mother ship which was rampaging in its cruelty, and destroying in its madness, and upholding the vast dark armies who drew their courage from it. The white ship drove on an unswerving course towards it, until the other vessel saw what it was about and so sought to change its own course, altering tack, dodging as much as its large bulk allowed it, and its innate powers of ingenuity could aid it. Yet on and on unswerving as though it knew with surety that they would meet came the white ship.

As the snake creature and the dark men had cheered, time and again, the manoeuvres of the destructive vessel, so now the people of the ship took courage, and many of the wounded stood and cried with joy, some of them fainting into death even as they did so. Others raised their arms to the sail as

those who knew and gloried in the secret held within it. And the ship sailed on, not deviating, not changing its course.

It was at the point where it had almost reached the evil vessel that the strange event took place. It was at this point that the true prince stepped out of the hinder-sail, and as he appeared the great shining of his armour sent a brilliant light across the scene of terrible destruction and violence. With that brilliance everything grew still. My heart was trembling, but all my spirit had been stunned and I waited in such pain that breath could scarcely reach my lungs.

I saw that in the hand of this man was a great sword, but yet it seemed that it was not so much in his hand as it was in his mouth, a brilliant tongue of deadly shining gold. The brightness of it would send a man blind, and the sharpness of it was as a razor keened to the ultimate, whilst the shape of it struck joy into the hearts of his followers and sinking dread into those who were his opponents. Then power went out of the sword, emanating in lethal waves, and it seemed that near him, and about him, and around him the sword spoke, and its power leapt upon the evil that would approach him and stunned and destroyed it.

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As I watched I saw the great white bird flash out of the sail as though he had been temporarily contained within it, and as he flew high and circled

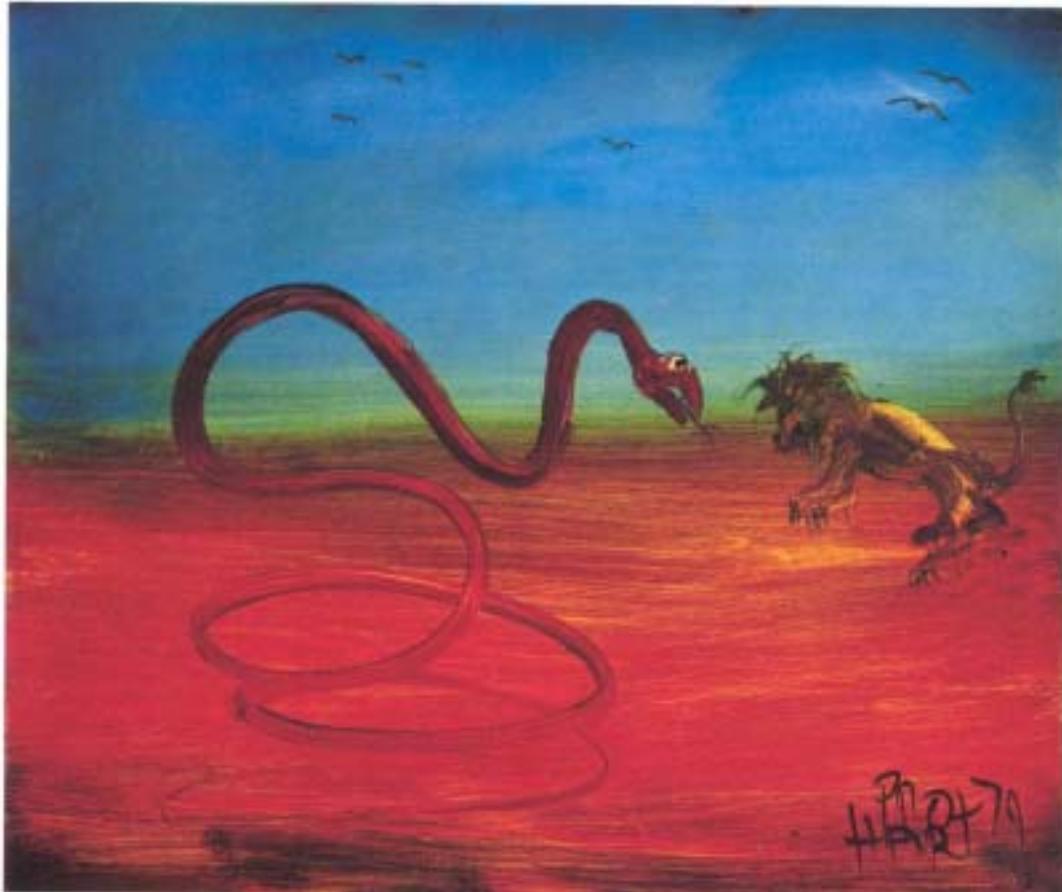
about it a great snow of glory fell from his wings, and as it fell it flared in tongues of pure flame, white and gleaming, dropping as molten purity over the scene, and the cries of joy which flowed from the true people, and the cries of dread and anguish which ascended as screams from the doomed were strange to hear. Both throbbed up as with an everlasting and unchanging throb, as though they were beating out the message of each of the recipients. One was the throb of glory and the other a drumming beat of shame.

My heart was pounding as I watched the centre-sail, for I expected that as the serpent had emerged from the other, so from this would emerge that which I knew to be the explication of the ancient secret. Yet I was also terrified. A high and holy dread was within me. My heart pounded as it had at no previous event. The blood ran hotly over my eyes, and powerfully in my ears, and my head was as though it was bursting with the intense joy that was about to come.

I heard the sounds of the carnage cease, and a great sighing silence envelop all things. Nothing stirred, and across the silence I heard the dripping of blood and I started, for it might have been another day and another scene of the time of the deep, sorrow and the great, the unreliable suffering.

Again I felt the tears cascade down my heart, and run into my bowels and I cried hugely within me for the wonder of the centre-sail. But as yet nothing emerged. Or, had it? It was as though a silence such as a human being has never witnessed came into being before us. It was so deep, so vast, so much beyond what we call dimensions that only the spirit within one could have any understanding of it. Even then it could comprehend only what it could contain and realise, only what was unveiled, and that would have been touching but the edge of this vast and beautiful manifestation. Did the centre-sail glow? Did a quiet light emanate from it, and then even emerge from it, and did that light move across that dreadful scene, and with its passing were the dead healed and the living rebuked? I know not. I know not. I know that as the bird had healed my fear so now the white silence brought me to bow before the eternal. More than this I do not know. What I felt, then in the depths, is contained within me, vision-wise, forever.

After this the noise dosed over again, and I saw the dark coils gleam in their blue-black sheen, and I saw hatred start up again, and the battle dosed as the earth was shaken with a conflict never before seen, and which never again can be its experience.



CHAPTER THE SIXTH

The seer opens up to us the wonder of the lion and the lamb. He shows the abject defeat of the once-powerful dark serpent, but though the serpent be almost destroyed there also comes the new form of evil—the black prince! Nevertheless the seer hears music of such quality and nature that not only is he cheered, but deep perception comes to his heart concerning the ultimate defeat of all evil.

Somehow, somewhere, back there in the polluted darkness the great serpent had withheld itself. Perhaps you might say "hidden itself". I know not. I know that its former noble head and its proud, wild eyes had now become contorted with hate at the sight of the golden prince, and it came bearing down upon him, but in the moment it sought to do this the white ship reached the counterfeit vessel and its sharp and unrelenting prow cut deeply into it, shearing it, and as it did this the serpent screamed in indescribable fury, reared up in horrible rage, and then bore down upon it.

It was at that moment the lion roared.

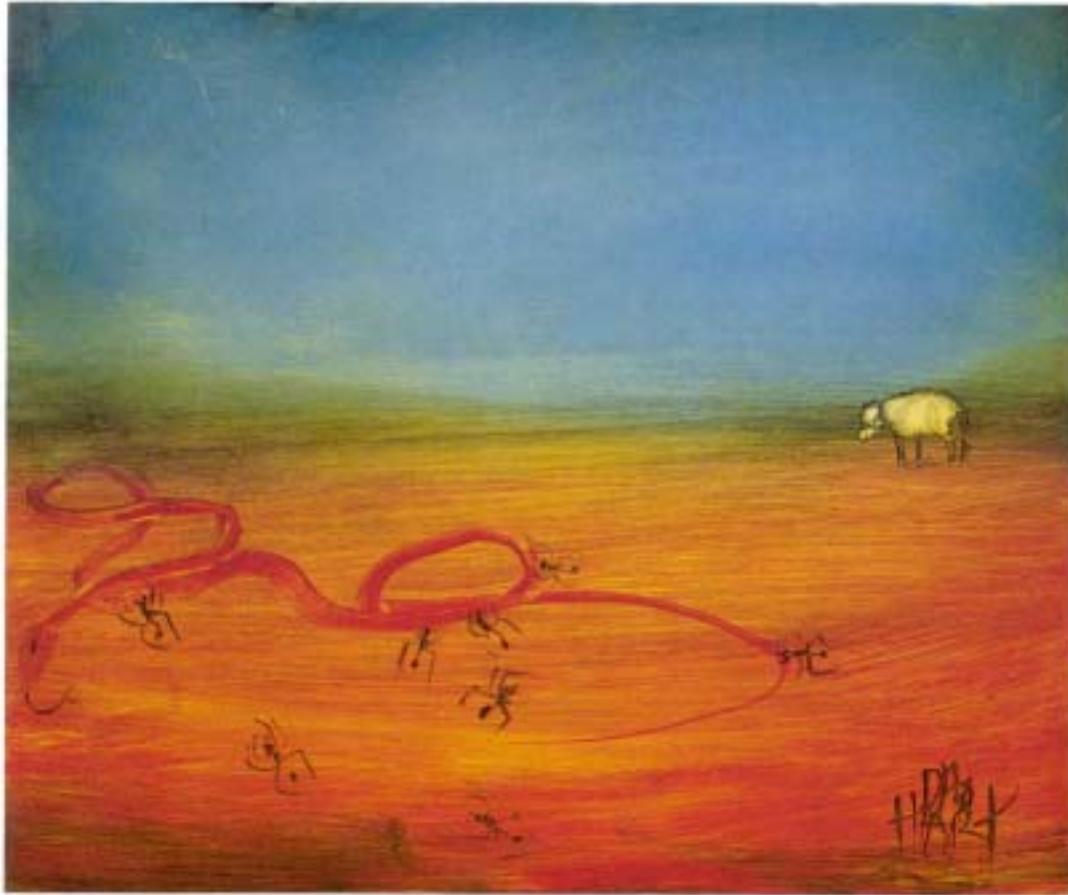
The lion! Where once the darkness had been, and across it had blazed and glowed the figure and symbol and person of the mighty serpent, now the sky was pure, shining in a glory of rare and translucent whiteness, as though the silence we had heard had made this holy heaven its own. And there, in a brilliant and beautiful glory of gold sat a great lion, its head reared proudly, and its eyes

casting out flames of pure fire, whilst its gaze was upon the evil coiled thing.

I saw the snake flinch. I swear I did. Its hatred did not decrease, but there was a hesitation. As it hesitated the white ship sheared the counterfeit vessel in two. The two portions went careering wildly about the scene, bringing destruction as they went, as though they now were two separate entities. If they destroyed people of the pure ship, so also they destroyed people of this spurious ship, and again the pitiful cries of carnage rose.

I heard the snarling hiss of the evil creature as it sped towards the lion, baring its fangs, and preparing its heaving coils of body to crush the life and the power from the thing it loathed.

A great cry went up from the white ship. It was a powerful cry of joy and adoration, for all knew that the prince and the lion were one, and that the lion would kill the evil thing that sought to destroy it. It was the lion who stood in the way of the serpent and his terrible lust and consuming passion to be the very truth of the mid-sail of the white ship.



As they cried the great lion stood and growled. Then its roar filled the heavens and the earth, and it shook its mighty mane, and it raised a frontal paw, and swept the air with a blow which, had it reached the evil thing would have destroyed it. At least so it seemed to me. Then a great and hateful hiss came from the shining coiled creature. It reared its head to strike at the lion, and in a moment was baffled, for the lion was there no more, but in its place a simple and gentle lamb. The moment was stunning for that great serpent could have gulped the lamb down in one snatching mouthful, but it was unable to know what to do. It drew back its head again, and the world seemed to hold its breath at what this pride-crazed and lustful creature would do.

I swear it, and I will swear it anywhere, and I will swear it forever, that as the little lamb lifted its soft and limpid eyes the serpent drew back with fear. I have never seen such terror as I saw in those eyes. It was as though the look of the lamb defeated the darkness, and the horror, and the depravity of that breathing evil. The lamb was not even bemused by the slithering serpent, and it viewed the mighty coils without any element of fear or dismay. In fact, there upon the white glory of the sky it gave a careless and happy skip, and as its tiny hooves flickered up I saw the fear grow in the eyes of the creature.

In the motionless silence of that moment the great serpent drew back its head again, and as it did the

lamb turned outwards to the serpent, staring at it again, and I saw with amazement, that the lamb had a great wound beneath its neck, and other wounds that I had not seen gleamed softly and redly. Then it was that the terror became complete in the eyes of the serpent, and with a rearing backwards of its head it twisted away, as though in mortal pain, and I saw the great body grow limp, and the heady fanaticism died out of the eyes and it slumped and lay as a quivering mass.

A dreadful sigh escaped the creatures and cohorts of the shining snake, and the weapons in their hands hung slackly, and the foundering halves of the great ship seemed to drift in sad aimlessness. The little ships had frozen into their places and the whole world was still.

Or almost. The great white ship of the true new people quivered with great dignity, and the honour of it shone out across the whole scene. The white bird above was motionless, and its wings stayed poised in their place. The centre-sail may have glowed more than on many occasions, but if so then I could not really say.

Around us lay the dreadful aftermath of a bloody war, and a time of hurt and hatred. I suppose I had hoped in that moment that the thing had finished, but I was wrong.

As the snake lay slumped in its place, the dark prince of the latter sail of the ship of the snake suddenly gave a terrible cry. This clarion call rang across the dark places and called out the echoes of

hatred which had not died, not even in sight of the lamb, and a growing roar arose, and everything which had frozen in its place came to life, or as you might say, to death, or, even, into the action of death. Bloody swords gleamed again and went into action to do their lethal works. I saw many people of the ship sink down and slip into the new death. Because of the bird and its loving revelation I did not weep but rather I rejoiced, for I understood with great wisdom the mystery of the new death.

* * *

As the prince had roared his cry to rally afresh, the lifeless snake made pitiful, movements, rising and slumping, and slumping and rising. It east weird and dying eyes upon the black prince which had come out of its bowels, and it seemed to pass on to it the hatred of which it had not repented, and the lust for which it had lived and striven, and for which now it was soon to perish.

With its look the prince became even more baleful. His eyes took on the same dreadful look as that of the serpent, and his hand went to his dark sword, and it gleamed with a sheen of hellish darkness as it flashed across the scene. It seemed in the one moment like a rallying gesture to all that was evil and cruel, and as a renewal of the innate powers of the little vessels. Even the parts of the large vessel began thrashing about, but such was more like the shuddering of death tremors than the power of continued action.

It was at that sad moment, when I had thought the defeat of evil an accomplished thing, that the white ship began to move. It was at first unnoticed, and, I assume, unexpected, but it moved with great swiftness and power, and I saw power come out of the three sails, and towards the true people of the ancient father, and of the mid-sail, and I saw them drawn in a wonderful way towards ship itself.

On the ship strange and simple music was beginning to be heard. It was like a song of single adoration, and a song of deliverance. It was the song of the people of the sails, and its beauty was indescribable. It was the music which sinks down into a person, and then, having touched some central place or chord, rises up again and flows out, having drawn the listener to become part of it and to share in its melody and to increase the praise and enrich the adoration.

The music itself had a strange effect. Perhaps I fancied the dreadful little ships to be somewhat stunned, or even paralysed, for at that point they seemed to pause somewhat in their awful work, and incline towards where the music was growing.

The black prince started a moment, until hearing it consciously his anger and hatred grew apace, and he laid about more than ever before and cried to his cohorts to come and finish the work, and this they sought to do. Nevertheless the3, seemed to work with a desperate frenzy.

The music went on, unabated, and the ship moved swiftly and purposefully, but never in haste,

never without design. It carried serenity as it passed. It was clothed with dignified tranquillity.

As I looked I saw the great white bird cleave the sky, as though it were a guide to the vessel below. I saw the prow point towards where the ship should go until all the world was covered and traversed. Upon its decks, and within the depths of its hull, and in its entire being the whole of the people of the true ship was contained.

Concerning the dead I do not know, for I fancy I saw them rise out of their states in which they lay, crumpled or contorted, stiff or doubled, helpless in slaughter or dignified in laying down their lives. Out of every state I swear they passed into the shining of the air above them, and followed above with the ship, and I shall be forgiven if my intuition proves to be wrong, but I believe the sweetest and deepest of all that singing came from them out of their new life, and their attained purity and freedom. I cannot say for sure, but in my heart I believe this was so.

Then came the moment when the ship arose. It arose from the earth. The prow pointed, lancelike and sure, unquivering and steady, towards the blazing light which was the very centre of the heavens, and the point where the lamb had stood, gazing with limpid and lethal gaze at the terrified rebel, the serpent, the evil, the loathsome white worm, and the mid-sail of the ship of evil.

While life lasts and even in the new life to which one passes by the new death I do not ever expect to

hear such music as flowed out of the great ship. It was a liquid melody, a flowing joy, a psalmody of rare peace. So rose the vessel from the earth, and even though it was from the earth and its prow pointed upwards and onwards yet I know for a certainty that the ship, untilted, sailed directly ahead. This is a mystery. It was no illusion that it was upwards, yet it was an illusion that what was above was in a different dimension from what was below. In the vision they were one, as though what was "up-there" was what was "down-here" and also what was here was surely there. This I cannot explain in terms of our time and space but I can understand it as a fact in terms of vision.

How then, can a vessel such as we have seen contain the whole people of the ship? That too is a mystery, but that was the ship, the very reason for all of creation, and the reason for the deep-sorrow and the great-suffering. Into that suffering went all that was rebellious and unclean, all the anguish that comes from man's failure and all the heaviness of the spirit of evil. Into that holy heart as though it were a pure and all-consuming maw it was taken, this total evil, and there it was immolated and destroyed, in order that only the pure should ultimately come forth.

* * *

I know of course why the serpent lost his power in the presence of the lamb. The wounds he had once

inflicted upon that tender sheeplet had been the way of the destruction of all evil. The snake had learned a wisdom. He knew that he had struck once, and that the quivering lamb had bared itself to that destruction. Also it had taken the destruction to itself, destroying it in the humility and simplicity and pure love which it knew and which it, itself, proved to be. The memory of that shattered the rage and passions of the evil thing, and he knew then that in that deep-sorrow and the suffering he indeed had been destroyed, and that all his lustful ships, and his prideful emulation of the shining white sails had been but dreadful illusion.

Even the battle he had fought had destroyed nothing, for the secret of the white sails has within it the truth that nothing can be destroyed which has been created but that, that which is not created,

and only falsely originated must go down to its own death. Also that which denies its created being must exist and die by its own denial. The rest must finally reach its glory and know its own fulfilment.

The dying serpent knew that all it had created had been for nothing, for so by its nature it was nothing and would ever be nothing, since unreality can never be realised. The bitter poison, created by itself, sank down into its own depths and rounded off the destruction. Nothing would remain which was originated from pride, and nothing could fulfil which was born of lust. By its own seeds of mortality, and its powers of corruption it would rot off the face of being. Only that which was of holy love could reach true fulfilment, and of this holy love the serpent had known nothing, since, to be sure, this holy love was the gentle lamb itself.

CHAPTER THE SEVENTH

The seer is tempted to falter again at the sight of the black prince's rising strength, but he perceives a new element of truth. This is that evil is parasitic. It cannot live of itself but must ever have that upon which it feeds, that is, the good. He is also visited by a very personal experience of the tender lamb, and this has the effect of giving him special and inner personal knowledge.

What of the black prince, and his shining armour, and the power he had taken or received from the dying and shuddering evil? At this point his wisdom was less than that of the foiled serpent. He carried within him the insistent madness of destruction. I saw him shake his shining sword at the departing vessel, and he stood, legs astride, his chest flung backwards and his face upwards, and he hurled accusations of cowardice to the rising, singing ship.

As well he might, for all the earth was his, and the gasping army of dark creatures, and the acrid mist that kept sweeping over the desolation. All of it was his, and so triumphant was he that he had put all things to flight that he would have mounted some celestial steed and pursued what seemed to him to be the hapless ship. He would have pursued it to its last harbour, and there he would have decimated it.

In his pride he strode through the mess, the confusion and the carnage until he reached that ancient creature—the serpent. He looked down at it as though he despised it beyond measure. It was unfortunate for him that he caught the dying look of the thing, and the horror of its deathness set him back apace. He started with dismay and a surprise that was not devoid of a certain horror. He did not understand the mystery, and as I watched the vision a deep sadness spread over my mind, for as yet I too knew not all of the mystery.

I thought with sorrow that this young prince, the offspring of this old serpent, would himself grow from the fledgling he was to the same proportions as this ancient creature. He would grow up into terrible lusts and full-blown powers and again a blight would spread across the creation. Then I thought to myself that it would not, anyway,

greatly matter, since all had been abandoned by the white ship whose well-fitted sails had taken it to its final harbour. I watched therefore, with less dismay as the mighty prince strutted with braggadocio across the long lines of the finished battle. He was receiving the adoration of all that was evil, and whilst many a one in those dark armies of men licked his wounds, or the crawling vermin exalted themselves above the places of the dead, I saw a nameless fear spread like a cancer amongst the remaining powers of evil.

I knew, in a trice, with vision wisdom, that evil must feed upon the pure and that when it is left to itself it is pointless. It is never a true thing in itself, but only something parasitic upon that which is wholesome. The whole pathetic truth swept into me and I laughed—without humour—over the predicament of the system of evil.

I do not know whether that new-born prince saw the truth at the moment in which it came to me, but I saw him hasten away from the presence of the loathsome thing, the great, shuddering worm, and I saw him hurry with long strides across the chaos and tragedy of a dislocated creation. He strode until he found what he was seeking, and with new powers he collected his army, refurbishing it with weapons, and making it keen for new exploits and promising it that it should destroy the escaping ship and all its members.

* * *

What of the lamb? Its tender beauty, and its unsullied purity caught at me so that I knew a deep yearning to know only what is pure. It seemed that the tears I had wept during my dream were nothing to what now happened within me. Such holy purity had been immolating to evil, scorching and searing and lethal to the great snake, while to the true people of the ship it had come as a gentle and healing balsam. The cool balm of it had called death out of corruption into changeless life. I knew that in some way the lamb was the true secret of the sails, the whole three sails, although in fact it was itself of the last sail. The translucent beauty of the sails and the peerless purity of the bird now became the very thing which entered me, and caused this wide yearning and this deep and healing weeping.

Before I had been timid, having a fear of being involved in the mystery of the vision, but something had changed, and I felt the great joyous sobs breaking within me as I cried to know the unchanging and eternal holy love. It was then the lamb appeared again, but especially to me and for me. Whilst the ship was plunging towards the soft rose clouds of the heaven, and a glowing celestial shore, yet the lamb was at once in the ship and also with me.

The swooning that came to me was not like a heavy stunning or the experience of a merciful oblivion, but it was a sweet and noble humbling of the heart, so that in it all I desired to do was to worship, and to lay the once proud and yet once inferior

person of myself before these loving, healing eyes. I was graciously permitted to look into those eyes as they also deigned to look into mine. It was in that moment I knew the full secret of the sails and I could not keep back the sobs of joy, nor quieten the heavings that resulted from this inexpressible love. I wanted to lie and lie before that one, and never to cease worshipping, as I also wanted to be out where the evil was and to take up shining weapons against it until all the creation was pure again, and this one was truly regnant with his rightful and permanent glory. I trust you will excuse the intrusion of this extremely

personal, and I am afraid, somewhat emotional (or is it sentimental?) expression of my own feelings. At the time it even seemed to be part of the whole, that is of the very vision itself, so that it is on this basis alone that I plead for its inclusion. Nevertheless I trust it will not prove unduly embarrassing for any who has chanced to read it.

We will now proceed to the end of these things, as also to see the wisdom of the sails, and the special wisdom of the centre-sail which not only allowed these things of evil, but in its special understanding used them for the good end of all things which it had brought into being.

CHAPTER THE EIGHTH

The seer's vision is drawing to an end. He .sees the true ship and its people move to a realm beyond the one of the lands and seas that he knows. There is a partial recrudescence of evil, and a final attempt to destroy all that is good. The seer is both alarmed and .surprised at the might displayed by the combined forces of the prince and his flotilla. It is then his turn to understand the inexhaustible powers of the white sails and the ship. Nothing can overcome them, but they overcome all things.

The lamb had seemingly disappeared, and the ship was plunging its way towards the regions of the beautiful. For the rest the earth had been desolated, and the armies of the darkness were reforming for their final attack, or so, anyway, it seemed. Yet I could not see what these things would attack. The humans who remained seemed low-browed and fierce creatures, whilst the seen and unseen elements which served the ancient serpent had a general mien of baffled and frustrated hatred, as though they sought prey to destroy, or upon which to feed, but were finding none.

The great shuddering serpent had not yet given its last and final throes, and it even seemed from time to time it would rise to its ancient dignity and renew its old powers. Once I saw the prince frowning over the matters he was planning and arranging, and by some instinct born out of former

relationships, he moved towards the dragon creature. It was as though to seek advice and aid, and he even approached those terrible eyes which were awful in death. This time the prince avoided their gaze, but as he drew near the body trembled with a quivering shaking that startled even the prince, and he put out a hand to touch the creature from which he himself had come. As he did a great shuddering seemed to pass through him, and it seemed that all the powers of this ailing creature passed into him. He stood upright, as though having consciously absorbed these powers. His eyes flashed and his whole being seemed to expand with dignity, authority, and purpose. Evil seemed to achieve its own dignity, and to exercise its own authority, even if such could never by nature of the ease have its fulfilment. So does evil hope to gain the ascendancy even where its own corruption prevents it from true

rule. True rule, I have observed, is a serving rule, and true authority is never itself unless it is, in its own ultimate, love. Nevertheless the black prince was achieving a glory not formerly his own. He had received the irrational and powerful pride of the dying thing, and with it an implacable determination to carry on the battle. What greatly troubled me was whether this passing on of power from one defeated power of evil to another could, and would, happen perpetually. I shuddered at this thought.

Even so, the great worm did not shudder and expire. It lay quivering, until I had unhappy apprehensions that it might achieve some perverse resurrection, but that did not happen, at least not at that point of all the happenings. Then the little ships took my eye and I saw their new and strange actions, for they seemed to have revived from their former operations, and the dread that had come over all things when the lion had appeared, and then, even more terrifyingly, the gentle lamb. Now they had again become vehicles of destruction for they were laden, everyone of them, with these glaring, virulent creatures of hatred, and it was amazing how many of them could gather in one boat.

I saw the gleaming of their weapons, and some of them shone redly from their former bloodiness. and others glistened whiteIy from their clear, untested steel, whilst vet others of them were dark and hideous shaped instruments, prepared for deadly onslaught and designed to be lethal to the utmost.

I confess to trembling again, and wondering what new evil was abroad. Then the startling matter happened, for the small boats rose as had the pure white ship and every prow pointed in imitation of the prow of the true ship, and with unbelievable rapidity they moved towards the mighty ship as its prow cut its way through the rose-coloured clouds and the saffron hues of the distant skies. With extraordinary speed and power they raced to intercept the white ship, and I doubt not they could have done it but for the other, and no less stunning, event.

* * *

As I have said, the clouds were soft and rose-coloured and the sky beyond a saffron, so that the two hues blended one into the other where they seemed to meet. It was the softness of the clouds and the sky which impressed itself upon me, for it was as though the harsh and callous things of our world, where evil had seared it into insensibility, were not known where this ship was moving gracefully, conveying in stateliness its people and cargo to the destination long ago fixed by the sails. Hence when these intruders moved rapidly to halt that final flight I knew this would be the end of all things unless they, the little boats, were intercepted.

It was at this point that the other event took place. It came from the soft saffron sky, for out of that golden hue broke a fair army. The leader of the

great force was seated on a white horse, and the animal was itself of noble lines. Delineated against that sky it shone with the same pure translucency which pertained to the sails of the true ship, and its rider, if anything, had a deeper purity of appearance. I was suddenly reminded of the regality of the first man, the one who had been in the ship, and yet the nobility was even greater, and the graciousness even more profound, and his head was held high, though with quiet dignity rather than haughty pride. As he rode he led, behind him, an army of men on white horses, and they flowed down from the sky, across the path of the intercepting little ships, and they not only defended the vessel against these creatures of darkness, but they deployed their animals and themselves, outflanking every vessel, and enclosing the entire force.

On the little vessels the visages of the evil ones grew grim with hatred, and fierce with the lust for killing. On some an unholy joy broke out, but on others a set and deadly anger, cold and implacable. They shifted the weapons in their grasp, and set them for battle. The look and smell of gore was about them, and they could scarcely contain themselves for the conflict.

As the white army drew near a great and terrible cry arose from the black prince for he was in the foremost vessel and he leapt out and trod the air of which he was a great and powerful ruler. Likewise others who had these powers leapt with him, and they ranged across the skies, becoming black and

defiling objects in the rose-coloured clouds. Like hard, foreign bodies they plunged across the atmosphere, the ships following fiercely on their heels.

Then they stopped in their tracks, and the small vessels halted also, and for a moment there was silence. In a trice the silence was broken by the coarse and hideous laughter of the dark army. They shook with horrible mirth for they had perceived a strange thing. They pointed at it and jeered and slapped their sides with unholy joy, for what they saw was true, and I must tell it though you believe me not. There was not one weapon in the hands of the army of light.

The black prince paused, looked about to see whether in fact there were some concealed weapon of deeper deadly powers than those he wielded, and perceiving none he raised his hand, pointed towards the oncoming army and plunged towards them. With screams and howls and horrible imprecations the army followed him and the deadly ships drove with unrelenting swiftness and accuracy.

The white prince was nothing daunted. He also pointed, and as he did the men on white horses deployed themselves even further, flanking out and out until they had enclosed the entire army of the black prince, and had encapsulated the flotilla of ships, and had formed themselves into a white perimeter in which everything evil was imprisoned. This further incited the army of the black prince to laughter of scorn and contempt and even ribaldry, and they turned outwards, as it were

forming a wide circle in which evil creatures, dark men and ready vessels were tense with murderous intent. They then began to fan out towards the encircling and enclosing perimeter.

It was then the fearful thing happened! As the black prince raced, or flew forwards to grasp at the white prince riding slowly, purposefully, and serenely on his shining charger, the dark prince suddenly threw up his hand to his throat and a great and horrifying scream rent the air. The entire armada of evil stopped, frozen in its tracks, and as though paralysed the deadly force remained suspended. I had heard the rasping cry of the serpent when it met the gentle eyes of the lamb, but if possible, this was even more awful.

I saw the dark prince back away, his eyes fearful, and he sought to withdraw to where his troops were. Some of the more aggressive urged him back to where he had been, and others pressed outwards until the line bellied out and then it broke with pressures from behind and the entire army surged towards the prince on the white horse. As it did there was not only the one agonised cry which the black prince had given, but the same cry from a thousand throats. That is how it began to happen. One portion of the army pressed backwards whilst the other pressed forward, pushing the outward rim of men and creatures onto the advancing white line.

I wish never again to hear the cries and groans of terror, and to watch the things sinking down upon the vessels which had now, themselves, become

limp. The centre of that great circle became one terrible massed darkness, and it was screaming for pity and relief from the holy circle which ever narrowed, and ever moved with serenity towards the dark, amorphous mass of hatred and fear.

Had they been able to break and run, it might have been different. Had the ships been able to pierce the terrible circle they might have escaped, but that gentle circle was also inexorable in its intent. This evil did not reach and intercept that ship, and received its own destruction, for ever.

I saw then another wonderful thing happen. The pure white circle rose above the evil below, and joined so that what appeared to my sight was a vast shining disc of gleaming white. Its radiance grew and grew, and as this happened so did the cries of the encapsulated and covered dark army.

It was then the black prince revealed his last effort at strategy. He pointed downwards and with that flew at unbelievable speed towards the earth. His was a great flash of shining darkness, but what he purposed was to no avail, at least not for the liberation of his forces and himself, because the radiant white disc flowed downwards and outwards, so that it cut off escape from the perimeter, and ever forced the unholy army to descend further downwards. As rapidly as the darkness descended, so above it, and yet in parallel with it, the disc, or this formation which was like an upturned saucer covered the retreat of the darkness.

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The rest of that matter I can scarcely tell, for it was so fearful. I saw the blazing crimson crater beneath, and yet I must ask, "Was it a crater?", for to tell the truth it seemed to me like a glorious blazing of love, a fire which would receive and then consume that which was untrue and unreal, yet which at the same time would also purge of its dross that which was eternal and real. I feared for the dark army and the things which were plunged into it from the pressure which was above, but I sensed that what was above was little, if any different, from that which was below. All I can say now is that it was a consuming fire, and nothing was consumed which did not need to be, and nothing which was genuine and of the nature of the true sails would ever discover destruction in this great blaze.

Of this I can say no more, than as all flew and tumbled and fell into that great sea of fire, the sky glowed again in its softness and its purity, and there, where the great serpent had lain there was no more darkness. The serpent also, had somehow been cast into the blaze, and only little wisps of ascending smoke could give indication of a great and purifying immolation.

No sooner had the streaming army of the white horses and riders accomplished their work of judgement than they turned and moved towards the place from which they had come, where the saffron and the rose hues met, and at which point the ship had now arrived. My own view of it all was as though the vantage point from which I had gazed at it was changed and I was travelling with the ship, and for that matter was both looking at it in its travels and being aboard, and this at the one and same time, as though in one and the same place.

The army of the white prince streamed towards the meeting of the rose and the saffron, and entered it, as it were, passing into a dimension beyond my seeing, although I had comprehension of what it was. It was as though they had passed through the centre of a curtain, and having emerged on the other side would be seen by us only when we arrived by some other route.

So I watched with eagerness, first feeling the intense joy grow within me, and then rise to the surface, finally spreading across every area of my consciousness.

CHAPTER THE NINTH

The seer now has brought before him the final things of the world about him, and the realm above him. Whilst he is, in vision, entering a realm beyond that which men have known, all time-history is recapitulated for him in vision-form. Also the secret he has ever longed to know, that of history's purpose and pattern, is now unveiled for hint, and he is filled with great joy and peace. Finally, to his adoring eyes, the secret of the three sails, and the ship of the sails is made clear. Whilst the seer is not bound to tell, the reader perceives that much of the mystery lies in the very last word of the chronicle of the beloved seer.

The ship ploughed and plunged on, cutting through the rose-coloured foam of cloud which was itself of the nature of peace. Silence flowed past and not a murmur disturbed the progress of the vessel. In line with the silent pointing of the prow, but above and beyond flew the bright bird of life. Every eye, and the gaze of every eye was on the centre of the saffron glow, which was now becoming even more brilliant, and increasingly luminous. Intense light of iridescent nature was beginning to pour like cascades of shining splendour, and dazzling incandescence. A wide aura of this gleaming glory was shed about the ship as it sped on in tranquillity. Its high sails shone with translucent purity, and the serenity of the vessel was queenly, quite majestic, and carrying in itself the dignity of unchallenged sovereignty.

Then the beautiful harbour appeared. The entrance to it was through two noble heads which stood like battlements guarding the secrets of eternity. At the sight of it unrestrained joy broke out in the ship, and again the strange but gracious music began to well up. It was difficult to know whether it emanated from the sails, or having simply begun there was taken up by every throat, or, as you might say, by every heart, and you might add, by every secret heart. I mean by this the innermost heart. Out of the depths of all creatures, as well as from the depths of the sails, the prince, the bird, yea, and the impenetrable depths of the mid-sail with its immortal light, the music welled. Then it broke into songs, and the songs were filled with the long history of the vision-time, from when first the soundless voice had spoken, and the great bird



had come with life in its wings, and the power of the third sail had moved to bring all things into sight. It was the song which having commenced there caught up in its rapture the passing of time-ages, and vision epochs. It told the story like a saga in song. It told the grandeur of the ancient lovers of the sails and the terror of its enemies. It spoke of the great loving of the white bird as it had breathed renewal into every generation and had given the proclaimers of the mystery of the sail new powers to proclaim. If there was a lament in the song it was not bitter but of melancholy sweetness which brought the tears rushing over every heart, but yet they were tears of joy.

So the saga flowed on, as the white ship, glowing as never we have seen it before our eyes, passed through the great heads, and they shone across us with light that was surpassing all we had ever known. It is impossible to count the number of the throats from which burst this throbbing paean of praise and adoration, for the saga had reached the time of the coming of the child of the woman, the seed of the ancient father, and the fulfilment of his timeless dream. In this great suffering we began to understand the eternal secret of the mid-sail, and the great power of the fore-sail to aid the child of the woman, that he, bearing all, nevertheless might not be destroyed.

Then to every eye flashed, though but for a moment, a new vision of the gentle lamb, and as we watched, seeing the limpid gaze of the tender one,

we saw the lamb fade and fading become a vision of the mighty lion, who, standing in' magnificence, lifted up his noble head, his crown of regality, and roared his majestic authority to the four corners so that neither within that vale, nor beyond it was there anything which did not know and witness the triumph.

In that moment the heart of every creature bowed, and in that moment the truth came flooding in that this was the true man, as man had been at the beginning, but also as he was now, in utmost measure, in total fulfilment, at the end. Thus the heart of everything worshipped, and again the music broke forth, and all the golden air was vibrant with the singing.

This was enough, and more than this there could never be, but something within me yearned to look back to the universe from which we had come. In the most secret chamber of my most hidden heart one thought had remained, one question which yet had to be answered, otherwise I would not know all. When I say "all", I mean all that a man can and may know and not the "All" which is beyond the knowing of man.

The question kept throbbing there like a nerve that cannot be quiet but involuntarily quivers and moves and twitches while it is yet waiting to be tranquillised, waiting for the cessation of its unknown movement. So I looked back, past the heads, to where I had known the time-history of the blood and race of

man into which the three sails had brought us. I looked back that I might know the full truth of the vision.

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One of the ancients wrote the chronicle of a fleeing family, forbidden to look backwards as they fled from destruction. To look back was to yearn for what had been, and to yearn for what had been meant the death of hope for what was to be. Such looking back, and such motive was not in me. It was because I longed to know all things, that I might worship without the wisp of a doubt, or the tiniest trace of a query. Never, in all those years had I known such relief from the questing heart and the asking mind, and I longed for this freedom. I longed for it to be utterly relaxed so that I might enjoy the land into which we had come.

Looking back I saw that some untellable transfiguration had taken place. The world as we had known it, and the beloved earth as we had trodden it, and the created world as we had lived in it was now as it had been, no more. It was there, but renewed. It was as shining as this new city into which we had entered. All about it was noble, and nothing was left unfinished. It seemed as though that great lake of the consuming fire had risen, spilled its banks and shores, and had flowed across the entire universe. With its coming, as also with its going again, all things had become new.

Also I had the sense that space as we had known it in time-history was no more. We had arrived, through much travelling to this final haven, and yet we had not travelled at all. We had entered through harbour heads which were *here*, but yet, also they were *there*.^t *There* and *here* were all the one. *Above* and *below*, though above and below, were also the one. There was no *before* and *after*, but should that be the ease—that they still existed—then they also were the one.

Even then I did not know all. Had one of the shining ones about us come to me and talked to the mind of my heart I doubt whether, even then, I would have understood. Quite long ago I had grasped the secret of the sails, but only in such measure as to assure me all that had been had had to be, so that all that was to be could mostly surely be. Yet now I was seeing that fact in a new way. Nothing of the *loss* of nobility of that first one, or of the deceit and the triumph of the invading serpent had altered the power and the purposes of the sails. Before it all began the white ship had been, and now' that it had come to completion it was only what it had always been.

Seen from time-history, it had had to become, and become from what had never been. Seen in vision-history it was only now being revealed as what had ever been. I knew in that moment that to go back into the era where I had lived, and to tell these things to men would seem to them madness, and a dangerous madness at that. Such madness

would set them upon me, for they had reasoned otherwise. They had reasoned the failure of the sails, for they had taken up the vain truth of the little ships, and the coiling evil which lay behind them, hiding his time to smash the truth and make a new history in time and in vision.

Yet if I had not had these revelations at that very moment of entering the new time, where it was the no-time, and had I not looked back, and in looking back, understood, then it would have been impossible, in looking forward, not to have known, even as in all things I myself had been known.

It was then that the secret of the sails came into full revelation so that the worship of eternity might be only in spirit and in truth, for in that moment all men of the sails came to their full spirithood, and the truth became lovingly and shiningly the treasure which could never be taken from them, for this was their rightful and eternal inheritance.

* * *

Everything was a shining thing in that moment, everything before and behind, above and below. The translucent light was not only shed upon all, but through all, and all became that shining light. It poured in its irrepressible cascades, gleaming, luminous, pure, incandescent, sheer, glorious light, soft and flowing, reaching out, glowing and dazzling, but nothing blinded the eyes, and all of it softened the heart to indescribable gentleness, and

tender peace. The holy hush spread in flowing waves across the harbour where our ship lay.

It was as though we were living parts of that ship, and yet as though also we were distinct from it. It was as though together we formed it, yet each had come into a possession which was his own. Suddenly, in seeing the three sails each saw himself. All were like the pattern of the sails, and yet each had his own pattern. None was a micro-pattern of the macro-pattern. Yet the macro-pattern, strangely enough had called each part of it into being to tell its truth, and to be its reflection. This is truth as only a vision can show it.

* * *

First there was the bird. As the forrard sail broke into light more brilliant than even the brilliance of this haven and dwelling place, the sail gave way to the bright bird which had taken us through our epochs and been our life where death would have claimed us. At the sight of the bird in its fullness and its truth, and at the sight of the sail fading into nothingness, and with it the great mast also, a strange sigh went up from all things created. It was the sigh of deep love, and at the same time the sigh of understanding. The sheer gentleness of this eternal and personal power seeped into the adoring multitude and their gratitude for the revelation was not voiced in uttered adoration so much as in the continued

softness of silence, with the accompaniment of that inner sigh which every one experienced.

Secondly there was the glory of the prince. Behind him the third sail fell away and was no more and the noble mast had disappeared. If the tenderness of the white bird had caused the long sigh of perpetual peace, then the glory of the prince caused waves of great joy to move outwards from where he stood, across the watching eyes, and into the hearts of his people. They stood before him only because of the deep-sorrow, for he had plumbed their depths, and had risen to the surface, bearing those powers upon himself which would ultimately have destroyed the ones for whom he had sorrowed. He had gone into the secret refuges of their hearts, the labyrinthine places of their beings, and had withdrawn the cruel things of the coiled evil, and the hard things of their own rebellion, and had set them free. To their eyes he was the lord who had delivered them, and the lamb who had been wounded for them, and the great lion who had withstood the powers of darkness which would have destroyed them.

There was the same unmoving stillness as had come with the revelation of the bird, and the silence remained poised. Then a beautiful movement went rippling across that place of light. Every man and creature became prostrate, knees and hearts bowed, minds humbled, and spirits knelt in subjection, and in this way the unbelievable joy of submission entranced the grateful worshippers.

At that point the music swelled again, but this time in a song that had never been sung. It was a new one, new in words, and new in understanding, and new in its music, because in this lord all things had become new. The song had nothing of intolerable ecstasy or of passing passion, but it was a noble song, for all sang it, having risen to this height of song and expression, and across the face of every person came such a likeness to the prince and lord himself that you might have said he was one in them, and they in him, and each was as he was. This knowledge but increased the adoration, and the end of that song has not yet come, nor will it ever, so we have come to know.

* * *

The third sail dissolved before our eyes, and as its mystery became plain in that light we had seen in the bird, and in the lord of life, the prince of suffering, so the same light appeared, and with it, face to face, we saw the fullness of the mystery.

That I am not permitted to say, for it is sealed up until all shall stand together at the end-time, as in vision-time we stood there together. It is not permitted to be told, I must say, but were I to try I could never tell the mystery, nor speak out the revelation, for only he who sees will understand. It is a mystery which must be received first in the inner heart, the most secret place of any person. Then it will flash upon the whole being, and so each will

know his own identity, and each will know the truth and the wonder of the ship, and know that the end of the ship is the true beginning of all things, for everything was destined to come to this hour.

The mystery I cannot reveal. The revelation I cannot tell.

What I can tell, however, is what I saw, as the countless multitude, those of every tribe the earth has ever known, and every creature of every species which has ever been gave thunderous and unceasing praise to the power of the centre-sail, and to the power of the fellow sails, for I may tell you that they were, in that vision-time as one. Always, in vision-time and history-time they had ever been one, for the mystery of oneness is love, and there is no mystery beyond that fact and truth.

As the applause and the worship and the adoration, the crying and the shouting, the splendid music, and the throb of the new song came into

being, the whole multitude of men and shining ones and creatures of sky and earth and sea lifted up their voices into one full-throated roar of ecstasy and knowledge.

In this great hour they had but one word, and it came in such unity as things on earth have never known, and that one word was the full truth of the mystery, which, if a man know, he need never know more, not in history-time or vision-time, for the one word to which they gave voice in their freedom, and their self-knowledge, and their knowledge of all things was this,

"ABBA!"*

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* *Abba*. This is a word used in some Eastern languages for "Father".