

THE WILD ASS  
*To Prince O. of Z. K.*

I

THE secret of the House of Set  
Is hidden in my sevenfold veil ;  
For I am he that doth beget  
The Rood, and bear the Holy Graal.

Yet is my manhood woman-frail  
Barren my motherhood. Then how  
Shall men my mystic mountain scale ?  
These ram's-horn thumbs jut from my brow

To push them to the miry slough  
Wherein the foes of Set are caught.  
Come, let us pluck the Golden Bough  
From the brave Tree of life and thought !

Who heareth naught, he heedeth naught.  
Come, we are safely housed and shrined  
Where subtler images are wrought  
Than boast the treasuries of Mind !

II

The secret of the House of Set.  
As a poor pilgrim clambering  
Toils on the slopes, so I to get  
Halidom for my lord the King.  
Faintly and feebly murmuring  
I uttered the mysterious runes,  
And bade my body's sleekness sing  
Silky, satanic, subtle tunes.

Was he not holy? Milk of moons  
Were not so pallid as his cheek,  
And roses of a million Junes  
His mouth left livid. So I seek

In all God's seas a tiny creek  
Wherein to moor my shallop. Nay!  
He is a mountain, chill with bleak  
Stark winds of innocence astray!

The fearful passion sweeps me away.  
So with a passionate thrill of fear  
I creep—like shadows across Day!  
Like Winter on the expended year!—

From those cold feet, a frozen meer,  
To those cold knees, a lost lagoon,  
To that wild woodland, strangely near  
To the lone tower that tops the moon!

Verily and Amen! Unhewn  
The great grim forest menaces.  
What gardener may dare to prune  
Those woods to build me palaces?

So climb, each ledge an infinite stress,  
Lustful as light, as lechery loth,  
From the brutality of Besz  
To the plumed perjury of Thoth!

I held him holy. Holier both  
Than aught the bearers of the bier,  
Thoum-aesh-neith and Auramoth,  
Saw in the hiding-house of fear.

The sorceries that span the sphere,  
The spells that harness star and sun,  
I whispered in his siren ear—  
Once, twice, and thrice for every one!

Once, twice, and thrice—the boon's begun!  
With four and five and six it stirs:  
With seven the druid dance is done,  
And Death drives home his silver spurs!

Then—the last leap. What crowning curse  
Can bid that cup of curses brim?  
How may God's maniac ministers  
Lash the last langour out of Him?

I did it. How? So great and grim  
The Gods are, I may never guess.  
Suffice it, on his mouth I swim  
A drowning dastard. The caress

Wakes the lost life. I see him dress  
The godhead. Up he bounds and brays:—  
The wild ass of the wilderness,  
The soul that sees, the soul that slays!

Inhabit the untrodden ways,  
Set! Thou my god and I thy priest,  
Thy temple hidden in the haze  
Of deserts death to god or beast!

Thou who art both shalt foin and feast  
With me who am both, thy hate's co-heir,  
Lord of the West and of the East—  
The scorpion's hole, the lion's lair!

I kissed his mouth—sublime despair!  
Our souls were one; our bodies met—  
Yea! darkness cover everywhere  
The secret of the House of Set!