

THE SABBATH

To *A. E. W.*

OCCULT, forbidden lights
Move in the royal rites.
Diaphanous, they dance
Above the souls in trance
That have attained to their untold inheritance.

Above the mystic masque,
Like plumes upon a casque,
They wave their purple and red
Above each haggard head.
Thy are like gems snake-rooted, basilisks' bed.

Here were the tables set
For Baal and Baphomet:
Here was the altar drest
With fire and Alkahest
For many a holy host, for many a goodly guest.

Here was the veil, and here
The sword and dagger of fear.
Here was the circle traced,
And here the pillar placed
For Him the utterly unfathomably chaste.

Here grew the murmur grim
Of the low-muttered hymn;
Here sound itself caught flame
From the dark drone of shame—
The world reverberated the unutterable Name!

Astarte from her trance
Leapt loving to the dance,
Greeting as fire greets firs
Her whirling worshippers.
And all her joy was theirs, and all their madness hers!

Yea! thou and I that strove
For mastery in love,
Circling the altar stone
Maze-like, with magic moan,
Forthwith made that divinest destiny our own.

Throughout that violent vigil
We wove the stormy sigil,

Our faces ashen-lipped
From our heart's blood that dripped
On the armed talismans of that moon-vaulted crypt.

Then came the sombre spectre
From the abyss of nectar;
Yea, from the icy North
Came the great vision forth,
A giant breaking through the weary web of wrath.

Then, in the midst, behold
That blaze of burnished gold
Imperishable, set
With adamant and jet;
And by the obscene head we hailed him Baphomet.

Hail to the Master, hail!
Lord of the Sabbath! Baal!
I kiss thy feet, I kiss
Thy knees—and this—and this—
Till I am lifted up to the incorporeal Byss.

Till here alone exalted
I gaze beneath the vaulted
Forehead, within the eyes
Wherein such wonder lies,
The incommensurable gain, the pagan prize.

We are thy moons and suns,
Thy loyal knights and nuns,
Who tread the dance around
Thine altar, with the sound
Of death-sobs echoing through the immemorial ground.

O glee! the price to pay!
Swear but our souls away!
And we may gain the goal
That all the wise extol—
The world, the flesh, the devil, weighed against a soul.

The wind blows from the south!
Crushed to that burning mouth,
Lured by that lurid law,
We melt within that maw;
And all the fiends loose hold, and all the gods withdraw!

Upon the altar-stone
We are alone—alone!
In vivid blackness curled
With livid lightings pearled—
Sweat-drops upon God's brow when He creates a world!

Sister, the word is spoken!
Sister, the spell is broken.
The Sabbath torches flicker;
The Sabbath heart beats quicker;
We have drained the Sabbath cup of its austerest liquor.

Forsaken is the hall;
Finished the festival.
My witch and I are thrown
Dead on the altar stone
By the contemptuous god that made our soul his own.

Come! Come! we must begone.
Hiss the last orison!
Intone the last lament!
Take the last sacrament,
The extreme unction, Saviour when the soul is spent!

Come! hurry through the night,
A trail of tortured flight!
Eagle and pelican
Become mere maid and man
Till the next Sabbath—days each like leviathan!

Nay! lift the languid head!
Take of this wine and bread!
The vision is withdrawn;
The lake calls, and the lawn;
Our love shall walk abroad in the grey hours of dawn!

ETHEL RAMSAY.