

## NATHICANA

It was in the pale garden of Zais;  
The mist-shrouded gardens of Zais,  
Where blossoms the white nephalot,  
The redolent herald of midnight.  
There slumber the still lakes of crystal,  
And streamlets that flow without murm'ring;  
Smooth streamlets from caverns of Kathos  
Where broodth the calm spirits of twilight.  
And over the lakes and the streamlets  
Are bridges of pure alabaster,  
White bridges all cunningly carven  
With figures of fairies and daemons.  
Here glimmer strange suns and strange planets,  
And strange is the crescent Banapis  
That sets 'yond the ivy-grown ramparts  
Where thicken the dusk of the evening.  
Here fall the white vapours of Yabon;  
The thought-blotting vapours of Yabon;  
And here in the swirl of the vapours  
I saw the divine Nathicana;  
The garlanded, white Nathicana;  
The slender, black-hair'd Nathicana;  
The sloe-eyed, red-lipped Nathicana;  
The silver-voiced, sweet Nathicana;  
The pale-rob'd, belov'd Nathicana.

And ever was she my beloved,  
From ages when time was unfashioned;  
From days when the stars were not fashioned  
Nor anything fashion'd but Yabon.  
And here dwelt we ever and ever,  
The innocent children of Zais,  
At peace in the paths and the arbours,  
White-crowned with the blest nephalote.  
How oft would we float in the twilight  
O'er flow'r-cover'd pastures and hillsides  
All white with the lowly astalthon;  
The lowly yet lovely astalthon,  
And dream in a world made of dreaming  
The dreams that are fairer than Aidenn;  
Bright dreams that are truer than reason!  
So dreamed and so lov'd we thro' ages,  
Till came the cursed season of Dzannin;  
The daemon-damn'd season of Dzannin;  
When red shone the suns and the planets,  
And red gleamed the crescent Banapis,  
And red fell the vapours of Yabon.  
Then redden'd the blossoms and streamlets  
And lakes that lay under the bridges,  
And even the calm alabaster  
Glowed pink with uncanny reflections  
Till all the carv'd fairies and daemons  
Leer'd redly from backgrounds of shadow.  
Now redden'd my vision, and madly  
I strove to peer thro' the dense curtain  
And glimpsed the divine Nathicana;  
The pure, ever-pale Nathicana;  
The lov'd, the unchang'd Nathicana.  
But vortex on vortex of madness  
Beclouded my labouring vision;  
My damnable, reddening vision  
That built a new world for my seeing;  
A new world of redness and darkness,  
A horrible coma called living.  
So now in this coma call'd living  
I view the bright phantoms of beauty;

The false, hollow phantoms of beauty  
That cloak all the evils of Dzannin.  
I view them with infinite longing,  
So like do they seem to my lov'd one:  
Yet foul from their eyes shines their evil;  
Their cruel and pitiless evil,  
More evil than Thaphron or Latgoz,  
Twice ill for its gorgeous concealment.  
And only in slumbers of midnight  
Appears the lost maid Nathicana,  
The pallid, the pure Nathicana  
Who fades at the glance of the dreamer.  
Again and again do I seek her;  
I woo with deep draughts of Plathotis,  
Deep draughts brew'd in wine of Astarte  
And strengthen'd with tears of long weeping.  
I yearn for the gardens of Zais;  
The lovely, lost gardens of Zais  
Where blossoms the white nephalot,  
The redolent herald of midnight.  
The last potent draught am I brewing;  
A draught that the daemons delight in;  
A draught that will banish the redness;  
The horrible coma call'd living.  
Soon, soon, if I fail not in brewing,  
The redness and madness will vanish,  
And deep in the worm-peopl'd darkness  
Will rot the base chains that have bound me.  
Once more shall the gardens of Zais  
Dawn white on my long-tortur'd vision,  
And there midst the vapours of Yabon  
Will stand the divine Nathicana;  
The deathless, restor'd Nathicana  
Whose like is not met with in living