

DIONYSOS IN INDIA.

(Opening Fragment of a Lyrical Drama)

BY

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Opening Scene :

Verge of an upland glade among the Himalayas.

Time, Sunrise.

First Faun.

. Hark! I hear
Aerial voices—

Second Faun.

Whist!

First Faun.

It is the wind
Leaping against the sunrise, on the heights.

Second Faun.

No, no, yon mountain-springs—

First Faun.

Hark, Hark, O Hark!—

Second Faun.

Are budding into foam-flowers : see, they fall
Laughing before the dawn—

First Faun.

O the sweet music !

Child-Faun

(*Timidly peeping over a cistus, uncurling into
blooms.*)

Dear brother, say oh say what fills the air !
The leaves whisper, yet is not any wind :
I am afraid.

First Faun.

Be not afraid, dear child :

There is no gloom.

Child-Faun.

But silence : and—and—then,
The birds have suddenly ceased : and see, alow
The gossamer quivers where my startled hare—
Slipt from my leash—cow'rs 'mid the foxglove—
His eyes like pansies in a lonely wood ! [bells,
O I am afraid—afraid—though glad :—

Second Faun.

Why glad ?

Child-Faun.

I know not.

First Faun.

Never yet an evil God
Forsook the dusk. Lo, all our vales are filled
With light : the darkest shimmers in pale blue :
Nought is forlorn : no evil thing goeth by.

Second Faun.

They say—

First Faun.

What ? who ?

Second Faun.

They of the hills : they say
That a lost God—

First Faun.

Hush, Hush : beware !

Second Faun.

And why ?
There is no god in the blue empty air ?
Where else ?

First Faun.

There is a lifting up of joy :
The morning moves in ecstasy. Never !
O never fairer morning dawned than this.
Somewhat is nigh !

Second Faun.

May be : and yet I hear
Nought, save day's familiar sounds, nought see
But the sweet concourse of familiar things.

First Faun.

Speak on, though never a single leaf but hears,
And, like the hollow shells o' the twisted nuts
That fall in autumn, aye murmuringly holds
The breath of bygone sound. We know not when—
To whom—these little wavering tongues betray
Our heedless words, wild wanderers though we be.
What say the mountain-lords ?

Second Faun.

That a lost God
Fares hither through the dark, ever the dark.

First Faun.

What dark ?

Second Faun.

Not the blank hollows of the night :
Blind is he, though a God : forgotten graves
The cavernous depths of his oblivious eyes.
His face is as the desert, blanched with ruins.
His voice none ever heard, though whispers say
That in the dead of icy winters far
Beyond the utmost peaks we ever clomb.
It hath gone forth—a deep, an awful woe.

First Faun.

What seeks he ?

Second Faun.

No one knoweth.

First Faun.

Yet a God,

And blind !

Second Faun.

Ai so : and I have heard beside
That he is not as other Gods ; but from vast age—
So vast, that in his youth those hills were wet
With the tossed spume of each returning tide—
He hath lost knowledge of the things that are,
All memory of what was, in that dim Past
Which was old time for him : and knoweth nought,
Nought feels, but inextinguishable pain,

Titanic woe and burden of long æons
Of unrequited quest.

First Faun.

But if he be
Of the Immortal Brotherhood, though blind,
How lost to them ?

Second Faun.

I know not, I. 'Tis said—
Lython the Centaur told me, in those days
When he had pity on me in his cave
Far up among the hills—that the Lost God
Is curs'd of all his kin, and that his curse
Lies like a cloud about their golden home :
So evermore he goeth to and fro—
The shadow of their glory.

Ai, he knows

The lost beginnings of the things that are :
We are but morning-dreams to him, and Man
But a fantastic shadow of the dawn :
The very Gods seem children to his age,
Who reigned before their birth-throes filled the sky
With the myriad shattered lights that are the stars.

First Faun.

Where reigned this ancient God ?

Second Faun.

Old Lython said
His kingdom was the Void, where evermore
Silence sits throned upon Oblivion.

First Faun.

What wants he here ?

Second Faun.

He hateth Helios,
And dogs his steps. None knoweth more.

First Faun.

Aha !

I heed no dotard god ! Behold, behold
My ears betrayed me not : O hearken now !

Child-Faun.

Brother, O brother, all the birds are wild
With song, and through the sun-splashed wood
[there goes
A sound as of a multitude of wings.

Second Faun.

The sun, the sun ! the flowers in the grass !
Oh, the white glory !

First Faun.

'Tis the Virgin God !

Hark, hear the hymns that thrill the winds of morn,
Wild pæans to the light ! The white processions !
They come ! They come !