


UTTARA
THE
Legend of the Turquoise

ILLUSTRATIONS AND TEXT BY
CARLO DE FORNARO

PUBLISHED BY MARCUS & CO.
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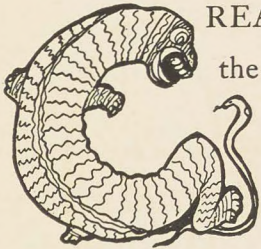
To
Mrs. M. B. Train



SURYA

When the Immortals created the two eyes of
heaven, they placed fair splendor in Him.

—Rig Veda



REAT commotion reigned among
the Immortals, as a most unpre-
cedented event had convulsed
and shaken the inhabitants
of the city of Swarga in
the heaven of Indra.

Three of the most powerful and most beautiful
of all the gods, Indra, Surya and Soma, had fallen
foolishly, hopelessly in love with a mortal woman.
She was the daughter of a Brahmin priest, a twice-
born man, and so fair was she that the King of
Benares described her as a morsel fit for the
gods.



The court poet had sung her beauty in a song which ran thus :

“ Thou canst behold her beauty but once and nevermore, for like the splendor of Surya it blinds thee for thy daring.

“ Thus I, from the profound depth of my blindness will describe to thee in words as poor as my fancy is rich, what I saw.

“ Her countenance is pale and sad as the white lotus in full bloom when it is kissed by the rays of the love-lorn moon.

“ Her hair is black as the thoughts of Yama, and it is so delicate and sensitive that it reflects all her moods, her most intimate thoughts, and thou canst observe her hair if thou darest not glance at her face. Her eyes are as deep as the Bottomless Well, and when she gazes at thee for a while thou feelest that she could absorb thee as thou dost the perfume of a flower. But if thou couldst only read in her eyes thou wouldst find there the source of all the Blessings.



“ When her eyelids close and open slowly they seem to yawn indifference or contempt, and the eyebrows are arches which keep the eyes from irradiating the Universe.

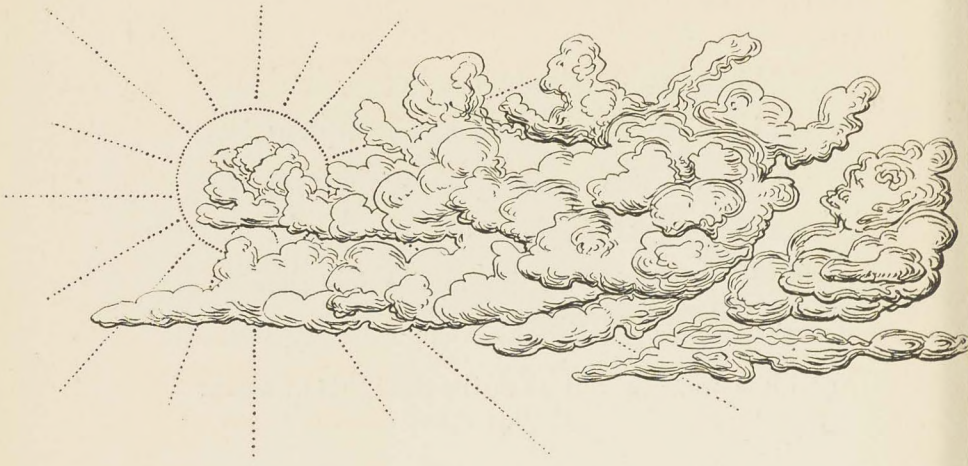
“ Her mouth is sometimes paler than the palest coral, at other times darker than a bloody wound, and it is more flexible than the thoughts of a courtier.

“ When her lips smile at thee thou art certain that thou hast found a new heaven, for she uncovers another Milky Way; but when they scorn or show anger then hadst thou better never show thy face again, for sorrow will eat thy soul as leprosy corrodes a body.

“ Her hands are so minute and graceful that at the sight of them the bengalies weep and pine away in envy.

“ Her feet are so dainty and soft that the flowers and grass which she treads imagine that the butterfly has just kissed them gently.

“ All her movements are so beautiful that they



seem to be singing to an incessant melody of rhythm, and they are so numerous in their perfection that shouldst thou cast a statue for each gesture of hers thou wouldst have to go to other planets for new marble or precious metal and still thou wouldst not achieve thy task.

“This I saw and I was blinded for my daring, but nevertheless had I as many lives as there are stars in heaven, and were each life as long as a world-cycle, still would I gladly become blind at the beginning of each cycle could I cast one solitary glance at her immortal beauty.”

Thus spake the Poet, and verily only the gods had dared fall in love with Uttara. Surya, the God of the Sun, appeared in the morning in a blaze of golden flames, and at noon his rays became so ardent that Uttara had to run under cover to protect herself against his passion.

More than once was Indra obliged to send to his faithful cloud-gods, the Maruts, to cover the inextinguishable radiance of the impetuous Surya.



In the evening, as if ashamed of his behavior, his face became redder and redder, and only then could Uttara look modestly into his eye.

Soma courted her more gently but with more subtlety and his pure and tormented features full of sighs would make Uttara sometimes grow pensive and absorbed. When she chastely lowered her eyes he reflected and scintillated on the silent lagoons or on the sea all his unappeased and trembling desires. But when Soma became too insinuating the jealous Indra called forth the Maruts and the Apas, thus forcing Soma to peep from behind the riding Maruts agitated and disturbed.

Indra had the preponderance over his rivals because of his presence in day time and at night time. In the morning he appeared cold and pale with jealousy, only at evenings was he supreme, absorbing all the splendor cast by the departing Surya. At night he reflected all his darker moods as he felt that Soma even if a



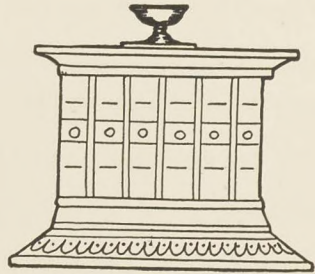
smaller was a more dangerous rival than the blustering Surya ; only when Soma was absent did Indra dot his dark blue dress with countless scintillating gems and over his shoulder threw his gauzy scarf, the Milky Way.

Uttara, like a true woman, did not show partiality toward any of her admirers, nor accede to their courtship and the three Immortals were as much at sea as if they had been common, everyday mortals.

Indrani, Indra's wife was the last to be informed of his unfaithfulness and she decided to see for herself what the woman who dared to compete with her in her husband's affection, looked like.

She saw Uttara and did not wonder at Indra's infatuation, but resolved to end this royal game of hide and seek. Ere Uttara had had time to breathe again she had been transformed into water in the sacrificial cup which her father was to use the following day in performing the sacred rites.

The despair of the three love-lorn deities was



indescribable and each one of them tried his utmost to save Uttara from destruction.

Surya, violent and intense, tried with all the ardour of his torrid rays to vaporize her and carry her up to the heavens. But all his efforts were fruitless. Soma, heart-stricken and unnerved, could only sing to her a forlorn and disconsolate complaint, but he also sang in vain.

Indra attempted several stratagems with all the power of his daring passion and finally begged Uttara to confess whom she loved, as this confession only could save her from extinction. And Uttara spoke to him trembling with emotion, "O Indra, I love thee only; for thou alone art my love, my god! I do not wish to be saved and become mortal again, but if thou lovest me deeply, absorb me, take my body, my soul, all, for I am thine forever!"

And Indra reflected his beauty into hers, embraced her fondly, desperately, with all his might, and so powerful and intimate was the desire that

the sacrificial water absorbed Indra's image. When later Uttara's father lifted the bowl to perform the rite he found in place of the sacrificial liquid a blue stone of the color of the sky in springtime, vivid and flawless, the Turquoise.





