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Clytie, the Sunflower Nymph

Emilie Poulsson

Clytie was a beautiful nymph who lived among the woods and streams. Her golden hair was the color of the cowslips in the brook, and her robe was of pale green — a color she loved because it belonged to the young leaves, and to the grass in spring. Sometimes as she sat in the meadow beside her favorite stream, where the field flowers grew so tall as to half hide her, she seemed almost like a flower herself. She loved, as she sat there, to feel the wind blow her hair around, and to keep her face turned up to the sun, as a flower turns in the direction from where comes all the light and warmth. The hot afternoon never drove her indoors for shelter; side by side with the violets and lilies she rejoiced in the sun's caressing warmth, and grew stronger and more beautiful day by day.

Early in the morning, fresh as the dawn itself, she would come through the dewy grass to a hilltop, whence she could see the first pink flush come into the sky; then waiting till the shining edge of the sun appeared over the hills, she would greet him as he flooded all the world with light.



All day, as she roamed the woods or dipped her white feet in the waters of the streams, she could see him mounting higher and higher in the sky, or going down towards the western horizon. If clouds came across his face, she drooped and looked unhappy, but if a sudden shower came down upon her she laughed with happiness, because she knew then that the sun would soon show himself again. As the afternoon shadows lengthened she would gather up her flowers — the narcissus or the great yellow lilies she had found — slowly mount the hill from which she could look towards the west, and settling herself into a comfortable nook in the rocks, would watch the great sun go slowly down out of sight, leaving a golden train of brightness behind him. Then, as the flowers closed their petals and sank to sleep, she brushed softly through the leaves, and soon was sleeping as peacefully herself, in her cool and quiet bower.

So the days of this sun-loving maiden were passed. She seemed a creature made to live in the light of the sun, and to grow under its beams, as do the flowers. Apollo, the great sun god, who looks down upon mortals, had seldom seen anything so beautiful, as he moved over the wide fields, and because she

was so flower-like, and because she so loved the sunbeams and showers, he determined that she should never die like other mortals, but that she should become a flower, golden-colored like her hair, and like the sun that she so loved to look upon. The leaves are pale green, and the flower, standing high upon its stalk, turns its face to the sun. It is said that as the sun moves slowly across the sky, the flower turns its face from east to west, and for this reason it is called the sunflower.

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