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## Daphne, the child of the morning

*Sir George W. Cox*

In the valley near Mount Olympus, where the river Peneios flows into the sea, the beautiful Daphne spent a happy childhood. She climbed the rocks to greet the first rays of the rising sun. Later, she watched the sun with its fiery horses travel through the sky and sink behind the western mountains. She wandered over hill and dale, free and light as the spring breeze. The girls around her liked to talk about love, but Daphne had no interest in a man, although many wanted her as their wife.

One day, when she stood on the slopes of Mount Ossa in the early morning, she saw a glorious figure before her. The light of the rising sun shone with golden splendor on his face and she knew he was Apollo. He hurried towards her and said, "I have found you, Child of the morning. You have rejected others, but you cannot escape me. I have sought you for so long, now you will be mine."

But Daphne's heart was brave and strong. Her cheeks blushed and her eyes sparkled with anger as she said, "I do not know love and I belong to no one. I live freely among the streams and hills. I will not give up my freedom for anyone." Then Apollo's face darkened with anger and he approached to seize the girl. But she was as fast as the wind and fled. She ran over hill and dale, over rock and river while her feet moved like falling leaves in the autumn. But Apollo caught up with her when her strength began to wane.

Then she reached out her hands and called upon the goddess Ceres for help, but she did not come. The girl was dizzy and her limbs trembled with exhaustion as she approached the wide river. She felt Apollo's breath close to her. With a wild cry, she called out, "Father Peneios, receive your child." And she ran into the current, further and further until the water gently closed over her.

She was gone. Apollo mourned his madness that had caused him to chase the free-spirited girl. He said, "I have punished myself with my foolishness. The light of the morning is now taken out of the day. I must continue alone on my journey until it comes to its end." As he spoke these words, laurel began to grow on the bank where Daphne had dived into the stream. And this green shrub with thick clusters of leaves bears her name forever.

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