APOLLO AND DAPHNE

One day Cupid, the little god of love, sat on the bank of a river, playing with his arrows. The arrows were very tiny. Some had points of gold, and others had points of lead. None of them looked as if they could do much harm.

That day Apollo, the great sun-god, walked along the bank of the same river, when returning from his fight with the serpent of darkness, called the Python. He had just used a great number of his wonderful golden arrows in killing this gigantic serpent. Feeling very proud of his victory over the Python, he said, when he saw Cupid at his play, “Ho! What are such little arrows as these good for?” Cupid’s feelings were very much hurt at this. He said nothing, but he took his little arrows and flew to the top of Mount Parnassus.

There he sat down on the grass and took a leaden-pointed arrow from his quiver. Looking all about him for some mark for his arrow, he saw Daphne walking through a grove. Daphne was the daughter of Peneus, the river-god. She was so beautiful that the sleeping flowers lifted their heads and burst into full bloom at her coming. Cupid shot the leaden-pointed arrow straight
at Daphne’s heart. Although it did her no other harm, this little blunt arrow made Daphne feel afraid, and without knowing what she was running away from, she began to run.

Then Cupid, who was very naughty, took a golden-pointed arrow from his quiver, and with this wounded Apollo. The golden-pointed arrow had the power to make Apollo love the first thing he saw. This chanced to be Daphne, the river-nymph, who came running by just then, with her golden hair floating out behind her.

Apollo called to Daphne that there was nothing to fear; then, as she would not stop running, he ran after her. The faster Apollo followed the faster Daphne ran, and she grew more and more afraid all the time, for the little leaden-pointed arrow was sticking in her heart.

She ran till she came to the bank of her father’s river, and by this time she was so tired that she could run no farther. She called on her father for help. The river-god heard, and before Apollo could overtake her, changed her into a tree, a beautiful tree with glossy evergreen leaves and blossoms as pink as Daphne’s own cheeks.

When Apollo came up with Daphne, there she stood, on the bank of the river, not a nymph any longer, but a beautiful tree. Apollo was broken-hearted, at first, to see how he had lost Daphne. It was all the fault of the little golden-pointed arrow. Since this tree was all that was left of Daphne, Apollo loved the tree, and said that it should be planted by the side of his temple. He
made himself a crown from its evergreen leaves, which he always wore for Daphne’s sake. This tree still grows in Greece, and is called the Laurel of Apollo.