

he caught him up in his arms and tried to staunch the wound. But it was too late. While he held him the boy's head fell back as a flower does when its stem is broken. He was dead and Apollo kneeling beside him wept for him, dying so young, so beautiful. He had killed him, although through no fault of his, and he cried, "Oh, if I could give my life for yours, or die with you." Even as he spoke, the bloodstained grass turned green again and there bloomed forth the wondrous flower that was to make the lad's name known forever. Apollo himself inscribed the petals — some say with Hyacinth's initial, and others with the two letters of the Greek word that means "Alas"; either way, a memorial of the god's great sorrow.

There is a story, too, that Zephyr, the West Wind, not Apollo, was the direct cause of the death, that he also loved this fairest of youths and in his jealous anger at seeing the god preferred to him he blew upon the discus and made it strike Hyacinth.

Non-Fiction

Such charming tales of lovely young people who, dying in the springtime of life, were fittingly changed into spring flowers, have probably a dark background. They give a hint of black deeds that were done in the far-distant past. Long before there were any stories told in Greece or any poems sung which have come down to us, perhaps even before there were storytellers and poets, it might happen, if the fields around a village were not fruitful, if the corn did not spring up as it should, that one of the villagers would be killed and his — or her — blood sprinkled over the barren land. There was no idea as yet of the radiant gods of Olympus who would have loathed the hateful sacrifice. Mankind had only a dim feeling that as their own life depended utterly on seedtime and harvest, there must be a deep connection between themselves