

grow with more dazzling colours and more fragrant perfume than in the fair garden of Sicily.

To Demeter, the Earth Mother, was born a daughter more fair than any flower that grew, and ever more dear to her became her child, the lovely Proserpine. By the blue sea, in the Sicilian meadows, Proserpine and the fair nymphs who were her companions spent their happy days. Too short were the days for all their joy, and Demeter made the earth yet fairer than it was that she might bring more gladness to her daughter Proserpine. Each day the blossoms that the nymphs twined into garlands grew more perfect in form and in hue, but from the anemones of royal purple and crimson, and the riotous red of geraniums, Proserpine turned one morning with a cry of gladness, for there stood before her beside a little stream, on one erect, slim stem, a wonderful narcissus, with a hundred blossoms. Her eager hand was stretched out to pluck it, when a sudden black cloud overshadowed the land, and the nymphs, with shrieks of fear, fled swiftly away. And as the cloud descended, there was heard a terrible sound, as of the rushing of many waters or the roll of the heavy wheels of the chariot of one who comes to slay. Then was the earth cleft open, and from it there arose the four coal-black horses of Pluto, neighing aloud in their eagerness, while the dark-browed god urged them on, standing erect in his car of gold.

“ ‘The coal-black horses rise—they rise ;  
O mother, mother !’ low she cries—  
Persephone—Persephone !