

better opinion of myself than to think I shall engage in such foolery," and he thrust his knobby arms out and dug himself deeper into the earth, for he meant to get such a hold and make such a solid stand that he never should be shaken.

"I see nothing to dance for," said the Willow; "I can't dry my tears so suddenly for every strolling player that chooses to pipe for me."

"It is undignified to dance," said the Poplar. "How I should look!"

"Well, I should like to dance pretty well," said the Elm; "it is graceful exercise, but then I don't care about it if the rest do not dance. I should not wish to be conspicuous."

The Rocks said they would dance; they only asked that Orpheus should play loud enough to move them, and that he should play exactly as he did when he came before. They were perfectly willing to dance, but they must insist on knowing the tune. The Evergreens said they should dance, as a matter of course; it would be ridiculous not to; they were ready, only let him come and strike up—they would lead off.

Orpheus came with his lyre and sang. The Evergreens immediately began to dance, but they were out of time from beginning to end. It was not the music that made them dance; in fact, they led off before Orpheus had uttered a note. When the Elm saw them she also began to dance quite gracefully, though she did not listen much to the music. But she saw the Oak clinching his knobby fists at Orpheus, and she stopped, pretending that she had only been practising some steps by herself, which was true. The Willow had her griefs, and she said, "'Tis better to sigh than be dancing." The Poplar cried, "Hem!" and looked serious; he was not quite sure about this dancing. The Rocks were covered with lichens hundreds of years old, and they said,—

"This is very different music from what moved our ancestors. We know about that music; we have reduced it to perfect rules. Keep to the rules and we will dance; not otherwise," and they sat stiff.

Orpheus wept. "Will no one listen?" he cried. "The ground is wet with the blood of heroes, and I sing their souls into life." Once more he touched his lyre and sang with sweeter power. There was a stir in the forest. The shoots that had lately sprung from the earth, minature trees, having the perfect structure folded