

## THE WILLOW BRANCH.

It was a holiday, and the children were planting trees in the garden.

"My tree is an oak," said Kenneth, "and the oak is the king of trees."

"Mine is a pine-tree," said Bertha. "I love to hear the pine-trees sing!"

"I am going to plant a maple," said Rose, as she flourished her little spade; "then it will have pretty red leaves in the autumn."

"I wish I had a little tree," said Baby Dot.

The children were busy, and did not notice Baby Dot till she came up and waved a long willow stick, with which Kenneth had been playing horse.

"I found a tree!" she said again and again.

Bertha and Rose smiled at each other while the baby dug a tiny hole, in which she set the willow branch; then she stamped down the earth with her little soft shoes.

"Don't tell her that her tree won't grow," whispered the thoughtful Bertha. "She will forget all about it to-morrow."

True enough, Baby Dot did forget her tree, and moreover, there came a week of rain, so that the children could not go into the garden. But the willow branch liked the rain; it pushed a little white root into the ground, and a little green leaf into the air, and it grew just as fast as it could.

"Why, see here!" cried Bertha, one day, when she was looking at the trees. "Baby Dot's tree is alive and growing! Who ever heard of anything so queer!"

Every one wondered at the baby's tree when they saw it put out new leaves and shoot up so fast that it was soon far ahead of the slow maple and the slower oak. And when Baby Dot grew a tall girl, her willow-tree was a great deal taller than she. The robins sat in it and sang, and built their nests in its branches.

*E. H. T. in Youth's Companion.*

The Niagara conference dissolved without bringing an end to the war in Mexico, though not without good results. In pursuance of its plans, General Huerta has resigned his office as Provisional President of Mexico, and has left the country. There being no vice-president to succeed him, he was succeeded by the official next in rank; who, it is reported with the advice of Federal Council, has made terms with Carranza, the leader of the Constitutionalists, and will allow him to occupy the City of Mexico without opposition. Zapata, it is believed, will also come under Carranza's rule, so that there will be peace in the central and southern provinces; but it is said that Villa will act independently and keep up the rebellion in the north.

## CURRENT EVENTS.

All other current events of the last two months that seemed worth noting as matters of permanent interest are now of little importance beside the great event — the outbreak of the longdreaded European war. When King George at Plymouth, on the twentieth of last month, reviewed the greatest fleet of warships ever assembled, people generally looked upon it as an ordinary naval review on a somewhat larger scale than usual. Three days later, the great ships went to sea under sealed orders. It was soon learned that France and Russia were gathering their forces along their German frontiers for fear of attack; and that Austria was moving an army in the direction of Serbia, and had made demands upon the Servian government which might be regarded as the signal for a general war. If Russia would support Serbia, because of racial sympathies, Germany would support Austria for the same reason; and also because through Austria, as a result of the war, she might hope to gain access to a Mediterranean port. It was repeating the situation of a few years ago, when Austria, in defiance of Russian protests, annexed Bosnia with its Servian population. At that time Russia decided not to take up arms, because war with Austria would have meant war with Germany. That, however, was but postponing the struggle which must determine whether the Slavonic or the Teutonic race shall rule in Eastern Europe.

War between Austria and Serbia began on the twenty-eighth of July. For a few days there was hope of localizing the conflict; but that hope soon disappeared. The German menace had become something more than a menace. Germany was ready to strike; and struck quickly, without waiting for a declaration of war. Her armies invaded France; one of them, planning to attack France on her weakest side, entered Belgium, in violation of the Belgian neutrality, thus bringing Britain into the struggle as the protector of Belgium; and German ships attacked British ships on the North Sea. Great Britain declared war on the fourth of August, France on the same day, and Russia a few days earlier. Montenegro joined with Serbia to resist the Austrian invasion. Greece will support Serbia. Italy and the other nations of Europe remain neutral, at least for the present. No one can tell where the war will end. It will certainly be the most terrible that the world has ever seen.

The immediate cause or occasion of the war was a murder such as furnishes the device and motto for the seal of the State of Virginia. By some strange twist of the mind, murder seems less abhorrent when it has a political motive. The crime was committed in Bosnia; and the victim was the Archduke Ferdinand, heir to the Austrian throne, the strongest and most aggressive of the Austrian leaders who were regarded as the enemies of Serbia. Many Servians were implicated in the plot which led to the assassination, thus giving the Austrian government every excuse for demanding reparation. But the demand that Austrian officers be allowed to hold the investigations in Serbia was apparently only made to be rejected. It was neither accepted nor refused; but the answer was deemed unsatisfactory, and that was all that was needed to bring on the war.