

***KATE DOUGLAS
SMITH WIGGIN***



***A VILLAGE
STRADIVARIUS***

Kate Douglas Smith Wiggin

A Village Stradivarius

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“Goodfellow, Puck and goblins,
Know more than any book.
Down with your doleful problems,
And court the sunny brook.
The south-winds are quick-witted,
The schools are sad and slow,
The masters quite omitted
The lore we care to know.”

EMERSON'S *April*.

“FIND the three hundred and seventeenth page, Davy,
and begin at the top of the right-hand column.”

The boy turned the leaves of the old instruction book obediently, and then began to read in a sing-song, monotonous tone:

“‘One of Pag-pag’”—

“Pag-a-ni-ni’s”

“‘One of Paggernyner’s’ (I wish all the fellers in your stories didn’t have such tough old names!) ‘most dis-as-terous triumphs he had when playing at Lord Holland’s.’ (Who was Lord Holland, uncle Tony?) ‘Some one asked him to improvise on the violin the story of a son who kills his father, runs a-way, becomes a high-way-man, falls in love with a girl who will not listen to him; so he leads her to a wild country site, suddenly jumping with her from a rock into an a-b-y-s-s’”

“Abyss.”

“—a—rock—into—an—abyss, where they disappear for ever. Paggernyner listened quietly, and when the story was at an end he asked that all the lights should be distinguished.”

“Look closer, Davy.”

“Should be extinguished. He then began playing, and so terrible was the musical in-ter-pre-ta-tion of the idea which had been given him that several of the ladies fainted, and the sal-salon-salon, when relighted, looked like a battle-field.’ Cracky! Wouldn’t you like to have been there, uncle Tony? But I don’t believe anybody ever played that way, do you?”

“Yes,” said the listener, dreamily raising his sightless eyes to the elm-tree that grew by the kitchen door. “I believe it, and I can hear it myself when you read the story to me. I feel that the secret of everything in the world that is beautiful, or true, or terrible, is hidden in the strings of my violin, Davy, but only a master can draw it from captivity.”

“You make stories on your violin, too, uncle Tony, even if the ladies don’t faint away in heaps, and if the kitchen doesn’t look like a battle-field when you’ve finished. I’m glad it doesn’t, for my part, for I should have more housework to do than ever.”

“Poor Davy! you couldn’t hate housework any worse if you were a woman; but it is all done for to-day. Now paint me one of your pictures, laddie; make me see with your eyes.”

The boy put down the book and leaped out of the open door, barely touching the old millstone that served for a step. Taking a stand in the well-worn path, he rested his