

POLLY OLIVER'S PROBLEM

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Polly Oliver's problem by Kate Douglas Wiggin

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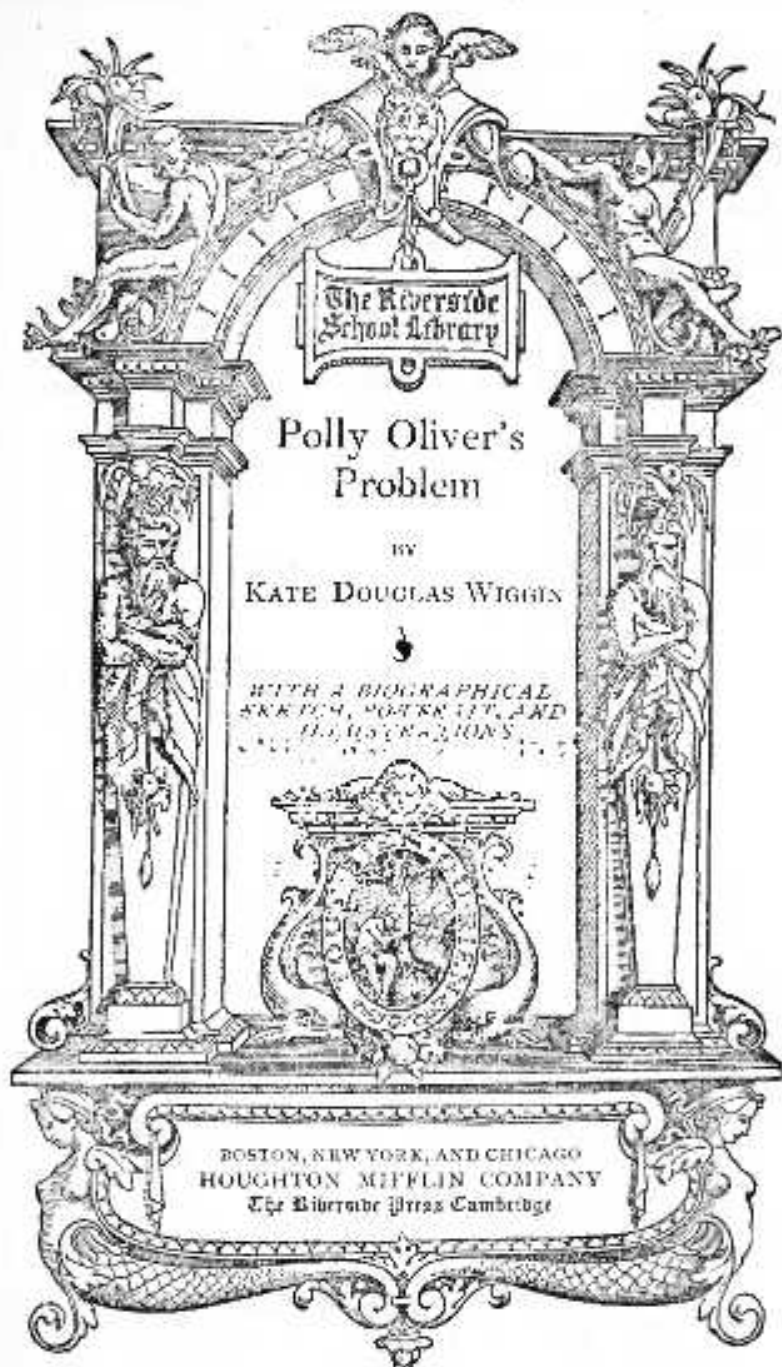
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KATE DOUGLAS WIGGIN

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Kate Douglas Wiggin



The Riverside
School Library

Polly Oliver's
Problem

BY

KATE DOUGLAS WIGGIN



WITH A BIOGRAPHICAL
SKETCH, NOTES, AND
ILLUSTRATIONS

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WOMEN
SILENT
YEAR

KATE DOUGLAS WIGGIN.

It is an advantage for an author to have known many places and different sorts of people, though the most vivid impressions are commonly those received in childhood and youth. Mrs. Wiggin, as she is known in literature, was Kate Douglas Smith; she was born in Philadelphia, and spent her young womanhood in California, but when a very young child she removed to Hollis, in the State of Maine, and since her maturity has usually made her summer home there; her earliest recollections, thus belong to the place, and she draws inspiration for her character and scene painting very largely from this New England neighborhood.

Hollis is a quiet, secluded place, a picturesque but almost deserted village — if the few houses so widely scattered can be termed a village — located among the undulating hills that lie along the lower reaches of the Saco River. Here she plans to do almost all her actual writing — the story itself is

begun long before — and she resorts to the place with pent-up energy.

A quaint old house of colonial date and style, set in the midst of extensive grounds and shaded by graceful old trees, — this is “Quillecote,” — the summer home of Mrs. Wiggin. Quillecote is typical of many old New England homesteads; with an environment that is very close to the heart of nature, it combines all that is most desirable and beautiful in genuine country life. The old manor house is located on a slightly elevation commanding a varied view of the surrounding hills and fertile valleys; to the northwest are to be seen the foot-hills of Mt. Washington, and easterly a two hours’ drive will bring one to Old Orchard Beach, and the broad, blue, delicious ocean whose breezes are generously wafted inland to Quillecote.

Mrs. Wiggin is thoroughly in love with this big rambling house, from garret to cellar. A genuine historic air seems to surround the entire place, lending an added charm, and there are many impressive characteristics of the house in its dignity of architecture, which seem to speak of a past century with volumes of history in reserve. A

few steps from these ample grounds, on the opposite side of the road, is a pretty wooden cottage of moderate size and very attractive, the early home of Mrs. Wiggin. These scenes have inspired much of the local coloring of her stories of New England life and character. "Pleasant River" in *Timothy's Quest* is drawn from this locality, and in her latest book, *The Village Watch Tower*, many of her settings and descriptions are very close to existing conditions.

Her own room and literary workshop is on the second floor of the house; it is distinctively a study in white, and no place could be more ideal for creative work. It has the cheeriest outlook from four windows with a southern exposure, overlooking a broad grass plat studded with trees, where birds from early dawn hold merry carnival, and squirrels find perfect and unmolested freedom. A peep into this sanctum is a most convincing proof that she is a woman who dearly loves order, as every detail plainly indicates, and it is also noticeable that any display of literary litter is most conspicuously absent.

Interesting souvenirs and gifts of infinite variety are scattered all over the room, on

the wainseoting, mantel, and in every available niche ; very many are from children and all are dainty tributes. A picture of an irresistibly droll child face, of the African type and infectiously full of mirth, is one of a great company of children who look at you from every side and angle of the room.

Dainty old pieces of china, rare bits of bric-à-brac, the very broad and old-time fireplaces filled with cut boughs of the spicy fir balsam, and various antique pieces of furniture lend to the inner atmosphere of Quillcote a fine artistic and colonial effect, while not a stone's throw away, at the foot of a precipitous bank, flows — in a very irregular channel — the picturesque Saco River.

In this summer home Mrs. Wiggin has the companionship of her mother, and her sister, Miss Nora Smith, herself a writer, which renders it easy to abandon herself wholly to her creative work ; this coupled with the fact that she is practically in seclusion banishes even a thought of interruption.

And now, what was the beginning and the growth of the delightful literary faculty, which has already given birth to so many pleasant fancies and happy studies, especially of young life ? A glimpse is given in the