

The Little Ghost

BY HARRIET PRESCOTT SPOFFORD

UNDER the shadow of the wood
Soft in the dawning flowed the stream,
And shining there the shad-bush stood,
A slim ghost dreaming some deep dream.

Perchance an unknown troop had passed
In the dark night that way with her,
And where the tide some slow star glassed
Lingered till she forgot to stir.

And morning found her light foot caught
Fast in the flags along the brink,
While rustling all her veils she sought
Back to her glooms to fade and sink.

All day she saw the silver shad
Slide up the stream, and all day long
From reeds and pools a piping glad
Rose round her in a ceaseless song.

Frail as a flake of snow, she thrilled
When the blithe bees about her came,
Or when from southern heavens spilled
The bluebird's wing flashed like a flame.

And happy people on the bridge
Smiled at the sweet and airy thing,
And wayfarers along the ridge
Leaned low and said, Behold the Spring!

But still all day she stood and dreamed
Alone, till, when the moonlight hoar
Fell down and mantled her, she seemed
A glimmering, shimmering ghost once more,

The wraith of all the springs to be,
The wraith of all the summers dead,
One day a great wind set her free—
The little ghost had waked and fled.

A Successful Marriage

BY L. H. HAMMOND

SHE was sitting at one end of the hearth in a deep arm-chair, her quiet hands crossed upon her lap, and her eyes looking through the steady glow of the fire into a world of long ago. Outside the hushed and stainless earth lay white under the clear December sky; within, the midnight silence was unbroken. Tired with days and nights of watching, they had all, hours ago, gone to their rest, yielding what she had required as her right—this last night alone with her dead. He lay, as she had wished, on the great lounge in the library, where, if she raised her eyes to look through the open doors, she could see him, as she had so often seen him before, resting after his day's work. But now her eyes were on the fire, and she was thanking God from the depths of her soul for the success of her married life. It had been a hard battle; she bore the scars still; but it had issued in a victory which neither life nor death could tarnish.

It had all happened so long ago that for years it had rarely been even in the background of her thoughts; but now that she sat alone—alone though he still lay yonder—things long forgotten took substance and form; and through the clear glow of the fire she watched the woman who had once been herself, and the man who had made the tragedy and the glory of her life.

They were in the little house to which he had taken her as a bride, the poor little house at which some of her friends had looked in well-bred surprise, and at which others had never looked at all. They found it charming themselves, and the depth and joy of her love had shamed him out of even a wish to apologize for it. Being a practical young person, she was soon busy with unaccustomed tasks, puzzling over novel problems in domestic finance, and inventing ways past finding out for doing without things herself, while

providing them for the admiring and unsuspecting partner of the enterprise. The watcher by the fire looked on with eyes that saw not only the poverty, but the love which abolished consciousness of it as a thing to be regretted. Then her glance fell on the beautiful room in which she sat and the noble library beyond it, and she smiled as those may who have proved, both in the want and in the fulness of material things, that a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.

The practical young woman was also an idealist; for although she believed that no man and woman could come to a perfect adjustment in the enforced intimacy of married life without some difficulties, yet one thing she held to be impossible: they might misunderstand one another, they might hurt one another until love found the remedy for their pain; but they could never degrade their life together by bandying angry words.

The woman by the fire followed her with pitying eyes which yet held a reproach for her reticence. If she had told the man all that was in her heart, would it not have made a difference?

But the years slipped by in unclouded happiness. More and more it was her joy not only to serve him, but to make his choice her own. There were many differences of opinion, but none that touched her conscience; and in any less vital matter it was her delight to adopt his choice before he found that she had a different one of her own. The woman by the fire sighed, seeing what the other woman did not know—that she was giving the man a false understanding of herself by so sinking her individuality in his that he grew to believe her an echo of himself; and that she was forcing him, by the insistence of her own love, to acquiesce in the absorption of all her energies in the provision for his comfort. He had little chance to give, she