

**THE MAID
HE MARRIED**

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The maid he married by Harriet Prescott Spofford

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HARRIET PRESCOTT SPOFFORD

**THE MAID
HE MARRIED**



The lady that sings,

The
Maid He Married

BY

Harriet Prescott Spofford



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The Maid He Married



I

One world is as large as another to those that are in it, and events of the smallest nature, if they are close enough to the eye, can shut off the great sun himself.

It was not, however, by any means a small event that had made a stir in Mrs. Grey's family. It was one with far-reaching results. For Josephine's Aunt Josephine had committed the inconceivable folly of marrying again. Inconceivable because, as Mrs. Grey said, a woman past forty could not expect and need not pretend love, especially for a person she did not know six weeks ago; and she had already sufficient income for the narrow village life, and was not

driven to the crime, as her sister phrased it, through want.

But Josephine's aunt did not look at the affair at all in that light. She had been a good wife to the shop-keeping deacon, who, if he filled her small early ideal, had, on the whole, been a disappointment to her capacity for growth. She had saved and spared with him for years, years in which, however, she had always pitched her housekeeping on a somewhat higher key than that of any one else in the place; where Dr. Madden, and the minister had always found her companionable. But, nevertheless, she was dissatisfied. She had desired something beyond this, a different life; one, at any rate, that could better meet her instinct for the beautiful, her fancy for luxury. The monotony of the years, the poverty of thought and of occurrence were stupefying. She felt herself sinking to the level of an animal

existence. She saved herself, she imagined, by letting the larger life of the world of wealth and state control her thoughts.

She had had time to read much of this great world, and she knew how one should conduct one's self in it, if one were only there. And now, having taken the bold step of going to a not very distant town to collect a small debt, she had found herself in the house with a something more than middle-aged gentleman of leisure, whose carriage had broken down while he was driving through the hills with a party, the others of the party having gone on and left him with his servant, and a fracture of the ankle, and a very sore and angry spirit.

That Frances had not waited for him was a source of indignant feeling with Mr. Applegate; that she could have been so indifferent to his pain and his loneliness out-

raged him. It is true that Daniel was of far more service. But it was the duty of Frances. Yet, of course, it was not to be expected that she would leave a company where an English earl made one, for the sake of any old father. Mr. Applegate revised his politics on the spot, and if there had been a faction with a platform proposing the abolition of English earls, he would have voted its straight ticket. As he could not do that, he did the next best thing, and made Daniel's life a burden to him, although previously he had felt it greatly to Daniel's credit that he was an Englishman.

Straightway, when Josephine's aunt had taken in the situation, she saw her opportunity. She delayed in the place beyond her first intention. She showed a kindly sympathy in a gentle, womanly way that was very acceptable. She amused Mr. Applegate with a gift of mimicry she