

SCRIBNER'S MAGAZINE

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(Colored cover designed by S. Werner)

THE EMPTY ROOM

By Harriet Prescott Spofford

THE lock is rusty, the slow key grates—
Turn it more daringly, open the door!
Only a ghost at the threshold waits,
They that have crossed it cross it no more.

Heavy the unbreathed air of the room—
Throw wide the casement, let the wind blow;
Once it brought breath of roses in bloom,
Of the dew of a morning long ago.

Speak low—there are Presences here of old,
Sighs and sorrows and sweet desires,
Falter of prayers, and wild tunes trolled,
And here love lighted his sacred fires.

The dreams that some woman haply dreamed,
The smiles that shone on her tender face,
Here where the moonlight over her streamed,
Unseen, unshaped, still haunt the place.

For the tense string touched sings on and on—
Do you hear music? A cradle song.
Lightsome laughter? The voice is gone,
But the soundless thrill still sings along.

Friend and lover, and man and wife,
The child's sweet babble—stay, feel the spell
The empty room brims over with life,
As you hear the sea sing in the shell!