

The Unlocked Door

Written for The Western Home Monthly by Margaret Bemister

Claire Kinnaird stood at the window of her little sitting room looking anxiously up the street. It wanted only twenty minutes to train time and John ought to be here. As she looked a tall figure came round the corner and in at the gate.

"Did the transfer come for your trunk?" he asked as he entered.

"Yes a little while ago and I am all ready," she answered, smiling up into his grave face.

"That is wonderful, how did you manage it?" he asked with a rather grim smile. "Well we had better go now for we must catch this car."

A few minutes brought them to the depot, only in time for her to board the train. As he helped her on he slipped a small parcel into her hand.

with a strange intensity but when he caught her glance he would turn quickly away. At first she had questioned him thinking he had some worry he was keeping from her—but to all her enquiries his replies had been noncommittal, sometimes even abrupt. She had tried not to notice the lack of tenderness, and when he had found her crying softly to herself she had pleaded her old time headache. Then as the weeks went on she could no longer disguise to herself this lack which had grown into a coldness now. Then her woman's pride had told her to no longer sue for his attention and she had at last given up all her little loving ways.

Then had come this proposal of his to visit her aunt in New Orleans. She had wanted to go at first but when she thought



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"Goodbye, Claire," he said, "have a good time."

"Goodbye, John," she answered a little wistfully, but he did not notice the tone and turned away.

When Claire reached her section she opened the little parcel; within lay a purse of gold beads, and as she opened it she found a roll of bank notes—"Oh John," she whispered as swift tears sprang to her eyes.

As the train sped on, her thoughts flew back over the year of their married life. The first few months that were so happy, then the sudden change that came over John. She never could find the cause of it. Over and over again she had thought of every minute before that day when his manner changed. It was the morning after the little bridge party of Mrs. Carson's. The night before he had been so care-free and happy, the next morning he had seemed so cold and strange. His manner had lacked nothing of his former care and thoughtfulness, in fact he was even more considerate if that were possible, but the old tenderness was gone. Often after that she found him looking at her

of the wealth and the gay society of her former life her heart clung with a new longing to the little house that was fast losing the home feeling. When she had objected to the plan he had pressed her for a reason, and the only one she could think of was the necessity of beautiful clothes.

He had turned abruptly from her and walked to the window and with his back still turned had said: "You need have no anxiety on that score."

The next morning he had handed her a cheque which amply paid for the gowns that not even her cousins could outdo. But as each one came home and was put in its place in the trunk her heart had grown heavier for not once did he ask to see them or take any interest beyond asking if she had enough money.

And now she was on her way to the gaieties that no longer held any attraction for her. What a farce life was after all. She had thought he cared so much for her at first but it must have all been a delusion. Now he was tired of her and glad to send her away. Then her eye caught the purse again and she wondered how he had



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