

'You'll do all this, lad, i' days to come, an' mak' the tay when Dobbin an' me turns the corner o' the road,' he said.

But Steve was looking about him in bewildered happiness. The birds were singing in the little cottage garden without, and there was a sleepy hum of bees, and the cottage was flooded through its open door with sunshine and warmth. Steve felt as though he had died and wakened up in heaven. Were all the days to come to be really like this?

John Grainger had boiled a generous supply of eggs, had made the tea hot, strong and sweet, and had set a cup of it, with a great slab of home-made bread, served with honey, before Steve. 'All the time he was gravely smiling to himself.

'Seems as though Willie were come back,' he said at last. 'It was lonely here this goodish while back.'—*Catholic Weekly*, London.

THE DAY AFTER

She had been one of those beautiful girls, willowy of figure, golden of hair, pink of cheek, with clear grey eyes and a sweet dimpled chin.

She had married early. At thirty-nine the sheen of the golden hair was gone, her figure had lost its erectness, her color was faded. Now there was a pitiful stoop in the shoulders from burdens carried while too young, and there were grey threads, many of them, in her still abundant locks. But still, there the same beautiful—clear eyes and the sweet graciousness that had ever characterised her was, if anything, more intensified.

It had been a struggle, this life of hers, with this husband she had chosen. There had been poverty and hardships and many sicknesses, and he was not one of those chivalrous, thoughtful men. He loved her, of course, but somehow he never told her of it.

He was too engrossed in his own affairs to remember that she might perhaps like to be remembered on anniversaries and at Christmas time. He never proposed a holiday, and somehow she grew not to expect it.

But hers had always been a family to remember the birthdays. As far back as she could remember, she could recall her mother as saying, 'Now, to-day is my little daughter's birthday. She must be good and happy, and mother will try to make it a day to be remembered.' And mother always had, all through her life until her hands were folded in her last long sleep.

There was still at the old home the aged father and a young married sister.

'To-morrow is Elizabeth's birthday,' said Muriel, the young married sister, the night before. 'I'm going out there to see her. Haven't you a birthday present for her?'

The old father looked up. 'How fond your mother was of birthdays!' he said thoughtfully. Then he added, 'How would some pretty china do? To think of Elizabeth being thirty-nine and the mother of a family! She was such a pretty baby. Our first. Yes, get her the china, Muriel, and of the finest. The way has not been always easy for my little girl.'

'Belle's going to send flowers,' said Muriel, 'and I've a fine birthday cake to go with the silk waist I've made her.'

Elizabeth Wayland rose on her thirty-ninth birthday with a little flutter of her heart. Suppose he should remember and speak of it, after all, this husband of hers. Very carefully did she prepare an especially nice breakfast; but he, engrossed in his paper, did not apparently notice it. After he had eaten, he put on his hat and coat, bade her his usual careless good-bye, and went to his office.

'He has forgotten,' she thought as she watched him walk to the car. 'Ah, well, I won't speak of it.' But somehow that birthday was not going to pass unnoticed.

'Happy birthday, mother,' said Beatrice, her oldest, coming down half an hour later and handing her a pretty belt.

'Happy birthday,' exclaimed good Mrs. Starbird, her next-door neighbor, bringing in a beautiful tray cloth.

And then the postman brought her a birthday greeting in the shape of a long letter from her old school friend, telling her all the news of her dear old home town.

'To think that Mary Morris remembered it was my birthday!' she exclaimed happily.

By eleven good old Uncle Hiram, who lived in the next street, came puffing in.

'Your Aunt Lucy knew it was your birthday, and she sent this,' said the old gentleman, handing her a bundle. 'I guess if she'd forget everyone else's birthday she'd remember yours. You always was her favorite.'

The something proved to be a handsome sofa pillow, ornamented and enriched by Aunt Lucy's most beautiful stitches.

'My! it's beautiful, Uncle Hiram!' cried Elizabeth, flushing with pleasure. 'And just what I wanted.'

In the early afternoon Muriel came over. She kissed her oldest sister lovingly.

'A happy birthday to the best sister in the world,' she said.

Just then a man drove up.

'Father sent you up a set of china,' she added, 'and, dear me, here are the flowers.' She opened the door to receive the box. It was full of pink carnations.

'Elizabeth,' she said, 'Belle sent these with best wishes for a happy birthday.'

'Now, I'm going to stop to supper. Father, too, is coming over, and you are to wear this silk waist in honor of the occasion. This is my gift.'

She arranged her sister's hair, her still beautiful hair, though so thickly sprinkled with grey, slipped on the silk waist, fastened it and adjusted her skirt. Then she bade her look. 'You ought to have a pretty brooch,' she said, 'to set it off.'

It fitted to perfection, and the little pink stripe in it brought a tinge of color to the pale cheeks.

'You look as pretty as a rose,' said Muriel fondly. 'Now, Beatrice and I are going to get supper. I forgot to tell you that Horace ordered you some ice cream. He sends his love and wishes he could come too.'

Horace was their brother.

Her husband came home at the usual time that night, but the house was quite illuminated. The table was set beautifully with the new china, with the carnations as a centrepiece, and there was his wife in her 'silk attire,' sitting quietly with her father. There was chattering and laughter in the kitchen.

He looked surprised. Just then Muriel came in.

'Didn't you know?' she asked. 'Why, we're celebrating Elizabeth's birthday.'

The supper was perfect, the birthday cake was all it claimed to be, and there was ice cream and to spare for everybody.

But Elizabeth's husband was unusually silent. He looked at his wife more than once. 'How sweet she was; how good she had always been; how true and tender. And he? He who had wooed so tempestuously, loved so ardently, had forgotten—forgotten even her birthday.'

After the guests were gone, the children in bed, he went over to her. She was sitting in her favorite low chair.

'Elizabeth,' he said; 'I forgot—'

But Elizabeth only smiled.

'I knew you had,' she answered. And then all at once he seemed to realise that his careless conduct of so many years had done its work. She did not expect anything of him. His neglect, his thoughtlessness of such long standing had so dulled the keenness of her feelings that she could look and speak quite calmly of his lack of care. No; she did not expect anything of him.

'Why should she?'

And then recollections came trooping back, and he remembered.

The beauty was dimmed now, through servitude to him. The burden she had carried, the children she had borne him, the poverty and the disappointments and the toil. And yet through it all, how sweet, how dear, how unselfish she had ever been. The next morning he took his oldest daughter aside.

'Beatrice,' he said, 'yesterday was your mother's birthday. I did not give her anything. I forgot it. But yesterday I made a handsome sum of money, and to-day I'm going to buy her a present. Have her put on that silk waist again, will you, and get something nice for supper.' And Beatrice promised.

He went straight to her when he reached home.

'Dearest,' he said, 'yesterday was your birthday. You can't think how I felt when I saw your father and sister with their gifts, to think I had none, and, though it is the day after, will you accept, with my love, this?' And then he fastened in the lace at her throat a beautiful brooch of pearls. The loveliest, costliest thing she had ever known.

'Oh!' cried Elizabeth, flushing into her old-time beauty. 'And you remembered.'

Her husband put his arms about her. 'On the day after,' he corrected, smilingly. 'No; I'm not going to make any rash promises, dearest. You know my careless ways of old, but through it all I've never forgotten to love my wife. Shall we begin again on the day after?'

But Elizabeth only smiled. Her wonderful, rare smile, and he knew then and forever how she loved him.