



The title "GOLDEN DAYS" is rendered in large, ornate, black-outlined letters. The letter "G" is particularly large and contains a small illustration of a child. The letter "D" also contains a child illustration. The letters are set against a background of radiating lines and other decorative motifs. Below the main title, the words "FOR BOYS AND GIRLS" are written in a smaller, simpler font. The entire title is reflected in a mirror image below it.

GOLDEN DAYS

FOR BOYS AND GIRLS.

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A New-Fashioned Flavoring

L. M. Montgomery

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When Mrs. Clay went to pay a long-promised visit to her sister it was not without some misgivings that she left her household in charge of Edmund and Ivy.

To be sure, Ivy could be trusted; she was fifteen, and had been her mother's right hand for years. But Edmund, who was sixteen and ought to have had more sense than Ivy, but hadn't, was prone to tricks and nonsense; and all the rest of the little Clays, a round half dozen in number, were noted for the numerous scrapes they contrived to get into daily.

Nevertheless, Mrs. Clay stifled her doubts and went away for a week, burdening Edmund and Ivy with so many charges and reminders that they forgot half of them before she was fairly out of the gate.

Edmund was deputed to kindle fires, chop wood, feed the pig, bring in water, and, last-but-not-least, he was to look after the youthful Clays and keep them in order.

Ivy was to do the housework and see that the children were kept comparatively clean and mended and keep a wary eye on things in general.

"And if anything dreadful should happen," warned their mother, "be sure to send for me at once. Be careful of the fires, Ivy, and, Edmund, never you try to light one with kerosene. I expect in the end to come home and find the house burned to the ground or half the children killed."

"That isn't the right spirit to go on a visit in, mother," said Edmund. He was sitting on the edge of the wood-box, whittling over the floor. "Just make up your mind to enjoy yourself. Don't worry about us. We'll be all right. I give you my word everything will go swimmingly. I'll keep the kids straight—and Ivy, too, if she gets fighting. You can depend on me, mother."

"I know just how much dependence is to be placed on you, Edmund," replied his mother, severely; "now, do behave yourself while I'm away, and don't call your brothers and sisters 'kids.'"

"Well, I'm sure I can't call them lambs, anyhow. Just listen to that"—as a crash and a scream sounded in an adjoining room. "Fan and Reeve have 'gone over' on the rocking chair again. There won't be a whole piece of furniture left in this establishment by another month."

Altogether, as has been said, Mrs. Clay did not leave home in a very easy state of mind. Nevertheless the Clay household got on wonderfully well. Edmund behaved himself tolerably well and attended to his man-of-the-house duties with praiseworthy diligence. Moreover, he kept the younger Clays within reasonable bounds and refused to aid or abet them in making nuisances of themselves.

He studied hard in the long evenings after Fan and Reeve and Kitty and Jo and

Frank and Bobby had been tucked away in their beds and Ivy had taken her knitting and sat down in the little sitting-room.

“I’d put more heart into it if I thought it would come to anything,” he said mournfully; “but it won’t. No college for me! I’ll have to leave school in the spring and pitch into earning my own living and helping you folks along. It’s tough on a fellow to be poor. Don’t I envy Scott Dawson! He’s going to college next fall.”

“It’s too bad you can’t go, Ed,” said Ivy, sympathizingly. “You’re ever so much smarter than Scott Dawson. But I don’t suppose we could ever manage it.”

“I know that well enough. Let a fellow complain a bit, will you? It eases me. No, I won’t whine when it comes to the point. I’ll get all that done beforehand, and you’ll see me grinning over the counter as if I were the happiest fellow in the world. If we were not so awfully poor, Ivy, or if the good old days of fairies and three wishes hadn’t gone by, what would you go in for?”

“Music,” answered Ivy, with a little sigh. “Oh, dear me! I’d just love to be a good violinist. But that costs money, too; so I needn’t think of it.”

“If that blessed Uncle Eugene of ours wasn’t such a miserly old crank,” continued Edmund, “he might help us along a bit. He isn’t much like a story-book uncle, is he, Ivy? I’d like to meet him just to see what he’s like.”

“I wouldn’t,” said Ivy, emphatically, “if he’s as cranky and particular as mother says he is. And he behaved abominably to father when they had that dispute over the property. No, I don’t want to see Uncle Eugene. If I did I should be apt to flare out and tell him what I thought of him. It’s a mercy there’s no fear of us seeing him. He wouldn’t come here for anything.”

“You don’t know. It’s always the unexpected that happens,” replied Edmund, oracularly. “Wouldn’t it be a joke if he were to come now, when mother is away. If the kids—I beg your pardon! I mean my hopeful brothers and sisters—behave as they usually do when we have company, how it would horrify him. Old bachelors generally know all about how children should be trained, and I’ve no doubt Uncle Eugene’s an aggravated specimen.”

The Clays were undeniably poor. Mr. Clay had died some five years before, leaving his family but scantily provided for. Mrs. Clay had hard work to make both ends meet. Being a woman of resource and thrift, she accomplished it, but luxuries were unknown in the little household. Yet they were happy in spite of their poverty. Edmund’s college course had to be given up. He was to take a position as clerk in a dry goods store in the spring. Ivy had her own deprivations, of which she said little. She buried music dreams in the recesses of her heart, and made over her dresses and wore her hats three seasons with smiling sweetness.

I think, on the whole, they enjoyed life quite as well as richer people; only, as Edmund said, a little more cash would not have been an overwhelming inconvenience.

“I tell you what, Ivy,” said Edmund, on Saturday afternoon, as he banged down a load of wood with a deafening crash, and sent a shower of dust over the dishes Ivy had so carefully wiped, “I’m glad mother’s coming home Monday, when all’s said and done. We’ve got along tip-top, to be sure, but the cares of being at the head of family affairs have weighed me down so heavily this week that I feel like an old man. We’ve been fortunate so far in that we’ve had no visitors. But they’ll be sure to come to-day—just our Saturday luck!”

“Mercy! I hope not. I’m so busy. I’m determined that mother shall find this house in spic and span order when she comes home, so I’m having a grand rummage. This cupboard has to be put to rights, and I’ve fifty other things to do. And I’ve got the most dreadful cold in the head. I can scarcely breathe. Goodness, Ed! That’s never a knock at the door.”

“But it is! Ten to one it’s Aunt Lucinda Perkins come to stay over Sunday.”

“Ed, you must go to the door,” said Ivy, with dismayed remembrance of her wet apron and generally disorderly appearance. “And whoever it is show them to the sitting-room. Don’t dare to take anyone into the parlor, for Reeve and Robby got in there this morning to play shop before I discovered them, and it’s in an awful mess.”

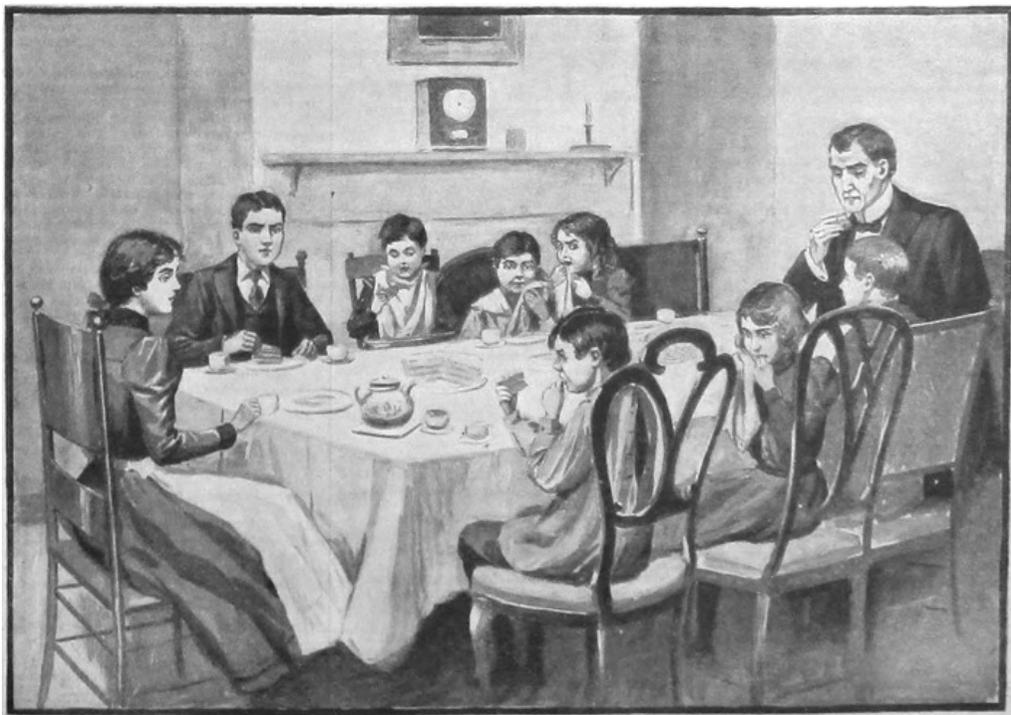
Ivy listened anxiously as Edmund went to the door. The visitor’s tones were masculine, and she breathed a sigh of relief that it was not Aunt Perkins, anyhow; but her complacency was of short duration.

When Edmund had shown the caller into the sitting-room and returned to the kitchen, Ivy divined that the “something dreadful” had happened at last.

“Ivy, the Philistines be upon thee,” said Edmund, with a solemnity belied by his dancing eyes—eyes that plainly indicated his enjoyment of the whole situation.

“Is it Aunt Perkins, after all?”

“It’s worse than ten Aunt Perkinses. Ivy Clay, in that room, at this very minute, sits our respected Uncle Eugene.”



“WHY, IVY, WHAT’S THE MATTER WITH THE LAYER CAKE?”

“Mercy on us,” exclaimed Ivy; and then collapsed, sitting down on the wood-box.

“Don’t take a fit, sis. When I opened the door there he stood as grim as you please. ‘Is your mother at home, boy?’ he asked. ‘No, sir; she isn’t,’ I replied. ‘Well, I’m her brother-in-law, Eugene Clay,’ he said, ‘and I’ve come to see her as I have to wait a few hours here for my train.’ Whereat I gasped out, ‘Oh!’ and towed him into the room, feeling decidedly faint. My part’s done. Now, Ivy, it’s your turn. Sail in gracefully and bid him welcome to the house of Clay.”

“In this mess? I can’t,” declared Ivy.

“Well, no; you’ll have to fix up a bit—brush your hair, and so forth. Do the thing up in good style, Ivy. I’m going to peek through the crack and watch the interview.”

“Edmund,” implored Ivy, beginning to recover her equanimity, “don’t do anything dreadful now, will you? Don’t make me laugh or anything like that?”

“Bless you, no! I’ll be a model nephew. I’m properly scared, I tell you. Don’t I look pale? All I’m afraid of, Ivy, is that Uncle Eugene will get alarmed and run, for all the kids are in the room above his head, and are making a most unearthly racket. If some of them come crashing through the ceiling, it’s no more than I expect.”

“Oh, Ed, do go and make them stop. My head is just in a whirl. Oh, if mother were only home! Do help me out of this scrape like a dear boy. What does he look like?”

“Who? Uncle Eugene? Oh, he’s not too savage—more civilized looking than I had expected. Well. I’ll go and make those little Clays up there tone down before his nervous system is utterly wrecked. You ‘pretty’ yourself up, Ivy, and beard the lion in his den as if you liked it. Don’t let him suspect what a martyr you are to family ties.”

Poor Ivy hurriedly brushed her rebellious curls into place, replaced her soiled apron by an immaculate white one, and, with her heart in her mouth, but looking very pretty and housewifely, nevertheless, contrived, she never knew how, to get into the sitting-room and say:

“How do you do, Uncle Eugene? I am glad to see you,” hoping she would be forgiven for the atrocious fib.

“Are you?” returned Uncle Eugene grimly. “So your mother isn’t home, hey?”

“No; she’s visiting Aunt Mary. She expects to be home on Monday.”

“Was that your brother who opened the door?”

“Yes. That is Edmund, my older brother. Won’t you take off your overcoat, sir? Of course, you’ll stay to tea,” said Ivy, devoutly hoping he wouldn’t.

“Well, yes; I suppose I will, if you’ll get me an early one. Train leaves at 4.30. I can’t wait over. Sorry your mother is away! How many are there of you?”

“Eight.”

“Humph! I should have thought there were four times eight by the noise that was going on overhead when I came in. So you’re housekeeper at present? You look like your mother.”

Uncle Eugene slowly divested himself of his handsome light overcoat. He was a tall man of about fifty, with grizzled hair and a clean-shaven face. He had a hard mouth and deep-set eyes.

Ivy, with a covert glance around the room, was thankful to see it was comparatively neat. A sudden calm had succeeded Edmund’s entrance overhead. His measures, whatever they were, must have been sudden and effective.

“There,” said Uncle Eugene, depositing himself comfortably in a rocker by the fire, “that will do. I daresay you’re busy, so don’t let me detain you. You needn’t think you’re in duty bound to entertain me; in fact, I’d prefer you wouldn’t.”

Thus abruptly dismissed, Ivy gladly left her grim uncle to the charms of solitude and hastened to the kitchen, where she found Edmund scrubbing the hands and faces of all the little Clays, not one of whom dared whimper under the operation, for

they realized that Edmund meant business.

“Hello, Ivy! You didn’t take long to dispose of him. Did he bite?”

“Oh, don’t, Edmund! This is no joking matter.”

“No, indeed! It’s a serious case. Don’t I look as if it were?”

“Ed, he’s going to stay to tea, and he wants it early. What can we give him to eat?”

“What other people eat, I suppose. Or has he some abnormal appetite that craves—”

“I mean there’s nothing baked in the house only loaf bread. I was so busy this morning I thought I wouldn’t make cake. And I’ve heard mother say what an epicure Uncle Eugene was. I’m going right to work to make a layer cake; it won’t take long, but I shall have to hurry. And there is the quince preserve. That’ll have to do. You’d better go in with him, Ed.”

“Not I. I’ll have to fly round to the grocery for butter. Do you want anything else?”

“No; don’t bother me,” replied Ivy, who was scurrying in and out of the pantry with a bowl and a flower-scoop. Edmund proved himself a tower of strength. He finished putting the little Clays in order and then went around to the grocery with a rush.

On his return he found Ivy whipping up her cake energetically.

“It’s all ready for the flavoring, Ed. Just hand me the bottle of vanilla out of the pantry, will you? It’s on the second shelf.”

Edmund dived into the pantry and returned with the vanilla bottle, rushing off again to settle a noisy dispute between Frank and Bobby in the hall. Ivy measured out and stirred in a generous spoonful of vanilla, filled her pans and triumphantly banged the oven-door upon them.

“Now, I do hope it will turn out well. I’ll whip up a bit of frosting for the top. What a blessing those children are behaving so well! If they only keep it up at tea-time!”

Ivy began to set the tea-table, stepping briskly in and out of the room. She saw with dismay that Jo had strayed in somehow and was actually perched on Uncle Eugene’s knee in earnest conversation with him.

Now, Jo Clay was six years old, and, not having arrived at years of discretion, was justly regarded as the infant terrible of the family. He could not keep either his own secrets or those of other people, and Ivy was on thorns, for there was no knowing what revelations Jo might be making to Uncle Eugene. She hoped devoutly that he had not overheard any of her or Edmund’s remarks, for they would be fatally

sure to be recounted.

In vain she surreptitiously beckoned Jo out of the room. Jo refused to heed her, and once Uncle Eugene saw her and said:

“Leave him alone. We are all right.” After which she gave up in despair, although in her pilgrimages in and out she caught scraps of Jo’s remarks about “moosic” and “Ed wanting to do to tollege,” that made her groan.

Ivy set the table daintily, with spotless cloth and shining china, and put an apple geranium in pinkish bloom in the centre. The loaf-bread was cut in the thinnest of slices, the quince preserve was dished in an old-fashioned cut-glass bowl, and her cake came out of the oven as light and puffy as down.

“Just the best of luck, Ed,” said Ivy, delightedly, as she clapped the layers together with ruby jelly, whisked the frosting over the top and sprinkled grated cocoanut on it. “Isn’t that pretty? I hope it’ll taste as good as it looks. Now, Ed, I’ll take in the tea and you take in the children and get them settled in their places. Keep an eye on them, too. I’ll have enough to attend to. And, oh, Ed! Jo’s been sitting on Uncle Eugene’s knee for an hour, and I know he’s been telling him a fearful lot of stuff. Why couldn’t you have decoyed him out?”

“Didn’t dare! I’ll bet Uncle Eugene knows everything about our family kinks by this time. Never mind! Come on! ‘Charge, Ivy, charge! We’ll win the day,’ were the last words of Edmund Clay.”

Edmund marshalled the little Clays soberly in and arranged them in order at the tea-table. Uncle Eugene sat down and Ivy poured out the tea with fear and trembling. But all went well at first. The tea and preserves were good and the children behaved beautifully.

Uncle Eugene said absolutely nothing. He evidently considered silence to be golden. Then Edmund, in obedience to a nod from Ivy, gravely passed the layer-cake to his Uncle, after which it went the rounds of the appreciative little Clays. Ivy took none. She was too tired and worried to eat; but Edmund helped himself to a generous slice.

When he had tasted it he laid down his fork, rolled up his eyes, and opened both his hands in exaggerated dismay for Ivy’s benefit. Bobby Clay followed with “Why, Ivy, what’s the matter with the layer-cake?”

Edmund silenced him with such an awful look that none of the others dared open their lips, though each, after the first mouthful, left their cake uneaten on their plates. Uncle Eugene, however, appeared to taste nothing unusual, for he gravely ate his cake with an impassive face and finished the last crumb.

Frank sat to the right of the agonized Ivy, too far away to explain, but by his

pantomime he conveyed the fact that something serious was the matter.

Finally she took a peek of the triangle of cake on Reeve's plate next to her. She gave a gasp, a look at Edmund, and then, sad to relate, burst into a ringing peal of laughter, which, coming after the dead silence, was electrical in effect.

She caught herself up with a scarlet face, and in quick transition felt so much like crying that she might have done so if Uncle Eugene had not abruptly pushed back his chair and announced that he had had enough.

Ivy fled to the kitchen, whither she was followed by Edmund, with all the little Clays swarming after him.

"Ivy," demanded Edmund, tragically, "what in the world did you put in that cake? Never tasted anything like it in the cooking line before."

"Oh, Ed, how could you do such a thing?" cried poor Ivy, hysterically. "I can never forgive you. And after promising you wouldn't play any tricks, too!"

"Me!" exclaimed Edmund, too surprised to be grammatical. "Goodness, what have I done?"

"Oh, don't pretend innocence! I suppose you thought it a very smart trick to hand me out a bottle of anodyne liniment to flavor that cake with, but I call it mean."

Edmund stared at her blankly for a minute, and then flung himself on the sofa and went off into a burst of laughter that made the kitchen re-echo.

"Oh," he cried, "Ivy Adella Clay! You don't mean to say you flavored that cake with anodyne liniment? Ho, ho, ho! If that isn't an original idea! I always knew you were a genius, Ivy."

"How could you, Edmund?"

Edmund sat up.

"Ivy, I give you my word of honor I didn't do it on purpose," he said, solemnly. "I thought it was vanilla—honest, I did. Why, it was in a vanilla bottle, and it's just the same color."

"Yes; don't you remember Reeve broke the liniment bottle last week and I put what wasn't spilled into an old vanilla bottle. Oh, dear me! This is dreadful!"

"You're to blame, then? Why didn't you put it out of the way? How was a fellow to tell? And how is it you didn't smell it?"

"I couldn't, with such a cold. Oh, Edmund, what must Uncle Eugene think?"

"Dear knows," said Edmund, going off into another paroxysm. "I suppose the poor man will think we were trying to poison him, unless he happened to recognize the taste. Fortunately, the liniment is for internal as well as external application, so nobody will die. Well, this is the latest! Flavoring a cake with anodyne liniment! Well done, Ivy."

“Will we—do you think we ought to say anything to Uncle Eugene about it?”

“Goodness, no. Perhaps he didn’t suspect anything amiss. He ate every crumb of it, so doubtless he imagined it was the newest thing in flavoring extracts. Your reputation as a cook would be gone forever if you let him know, Ivy.”

“Well,” said Ivy, disconsolately, “it’s done now, and it can’t be undone. Fortunately, as you say, it was harmless. But the whole thing is simply dreadful. What will mother say?”

“Accidents will happen, even in a well-regulated family like ours. Go and clear off the ruins, Ivy, and feed that liniment cake to the pig. Uncle Eugene will never be any the wiser.”

Alas! When Ivy summoned up enough courage to return to the room and attack the table, what was her horror to find Jo delightedly telling all the details to Uncle Eugene!

Ivy caught the fatal word “lin’ment,” and mentally collapsed.

She must apologize somehow.

“Uncle Eugene,” she stammered, with a scarlet face, her confusion not calmed in any degree by a glimpse of Edmund gesticulating wildly in the back hall, “I’m very sorry—that cake shouldn’t have tasted as it did—I meant to put in—vanilla, but Edmund made a mistake and—somehow—well, I put in a spoonful of anodyne liniment instead. It won’t hurt anyone—you know—it’s sometimes taken internally _____”

“But not in cakes,” came in a stage whisper from the back hall.

Ivy gave up trying to explain, and, in spite of her efforts, gave vent to something that couldn’t be called anything but a snicker. As for Uncle Eugene, his eyes twinkled quite genially, but all he said was:

“Accidents will happen.”

And Ivy went out, considerably mystified as to what effect the disclosure had had on him.

Soon after he looked at his watch, said it was nearly train time, and put on his coat. He shook hands with Ivy and Edmund, told them to tell their mother he was sorry not to have seen her, and relieved the Clay mansion of his unwelcome presence.

“Thank goodness!” said Edmund, emphatically, when he had seen him safely out of the gate. “The old crank has gone. I guess he won’t come back in a hurry. I should say liniment-flavored cake was an excellent preventative of unwelcome guests. What an opinion he must have of us! You are always doing something brilliant, Ivy, but you’ve surpassed yourself in this exploit.”

When Mrs. Clay returned home on Monday she listened to the tale with a curious mixture of dismay and amusement.

“I wish I had been home,” she said. “I can’t think what induced him to come. He once said he’d never darken our doors again. I suppose I ought to be thankful to find you all alive and sound of limb, but it’s a pity Uncle Eugene should have come when I was away. I expect he’s gone for good, now, Ivy, after what you gave him to eat, poor man. I know how Uncle Eugene would regard anything like that.”

But she didn’t! Next week a letter came from her brother-in-law—short and abrupt, as was his fashion, but the contents were satisfactory.

It ran:

“Sister Martha:

“Doubtless this will impress you. I called at your house last week and found you away. However, your son and daughter entertained me very hospitably and I was much pleased with them both, but especially with the girl. The boy, I take it, is somewhat mischievous and likes to tease his sister. I dare say they think I’m a crusty old fellow and they are right: but I desire to make amends for the past if you will let bygones be bygones. I am a lonely man and I want to have some interests outside myself. Edmund and Ivy did not tell me about your concerns, but I picked up an inkling from little Jo. Tell Edmund he is not to go into that store, but to prepare for college next fall and I will put him through. I have nothing else to do with my money and you must gratify me in this whim. As for Ivy, you may tell her she is to take music lessons and I will send her the best violin to be had. She is a good, housewifely girl. Tell her also that her liniment cake seems to have had an excellent effect on her cranky old uncle for it appears to have made him well all over, even to his bones and marrow. I may pay you another visit soon.

“Until then I remain yours respectfully,

“EUGENE CLAY.”

“Uncle Eugene is a brick,” exclaimed Edmund, breathlessly, “a regular brick! I repent in sackcloth and ashes of anything I ever said to the contrary.”

“He is splendid,” said Ivy, with shining eyes. “To think I am to have music lessons—and a violin. It is too good to be true.”

“You may well be grateful. It’s not every uncle who would behave so handsomely to a girl who gave him liniment cake to eat. What an advertisement this

would be for that liniment firm if they got hold of it. A liniment warranted to cure, not only every known bodily ailment, but those of the mind and heart as well! They'd make their fortune. Mother, say something! Relieve your feelings in some way!"

"I say, 'Long live anodyne liniment!'" said Mrs. Clay, laughing. "Your experiment has turned out well this time, Ivy, but I wouldn't advise a repetition. Uncle Eugene was always kind at heart, although peculiar. And now, to prevent any further mistakes, I'll go and put that new-fashioned flavoring of yours out of the vanilla bottle into a more orthodox one. The next time Uncle Eugene comes I'll make the cake myself."

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Mis-spelled words and printer errors have been fixed.

[The end of *A New-Fashioned Flavoring* by L. M. (Lucy Maud) Montgomery]