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# GOLDEN DAYS

For  
Boys  
and  
Girls.



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# OUR CHARIVARI

L. M. Montgomery  
writing as Maud Cavendish

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When Jerry Boirier, Uncle Lyman's French servant-boy, told us there was to be a charivari at Roderick Brown's that night, we were wild to go.

"We," were Allison Hillier, of New York; Algernon Keefe, from Nova Scotia, and myself, Fred Harvey, from Quebec. We were cousins, and we were spending our vacation at Uncle Lyman Harvey's farm, on Prince Edward Island. We were having a splendid time, but we were chiefly notorious for our scrapes. Our average was two and a half a week, and Aunt Maria said, time and time again, she never had a minute's peace, lest one or the other of us should be brought in a corpse. And I'm obliged to confess that we generally got into trouble through our own headstrong doings and willful disregard of Uncle Lyman's advice. He was very patient, except in

cases of outright disobedience; but he warned us solemnly every day, that we would learn a lesson sooner or later, if we didn't mend our ways. And Uncle Lyman's words came true to the letter, though we used to wink and grin at each other whenever his back was turned.

But about this charivari! Ever heard of one? Well, it is an old French Canadian custom, and is kept up in a good many places in Canada yet. Whenever there's a wedding the young fellows of the settlement call at the house, dressed in every queer costume they can contrive, with horns and bells and so on, and keep up a racket for hours.

When a charivari is well-conducted and respectable it is real fun. Sometimes the costumes are well got up and the charivariers don't do anything worse than make a noise; and mostly the people of the house invite them into the kitchen and treat them with cakes, which the bride herself comes out and hands around. Then they go off, peaceably and orderly. That's one kind of charivari. But there are two kinds, as we afterwards discovered.

Well, we were crazy about the affair, but when we asked Uncle Lyman's permission we got a decided "No!" He told us he didn't approve of charivaris, anyhow, and he knew from what he'd heard that this was going to be one of the worst kind. A lot of roughs from the "back road" were going, and there'd be liquor in the crowd, and we'd be certain to get into trouble.

Uncle Lyman isn't one of the coaxable kind, so we went off pretty sulky, and sat down on an old bench behind the barn to hold an indignation meeting.

"Say, you fellows, *I'm* going to that charivari yet!" This was my contribution.

"How'll you manage it?" asked Allison. "If we could hit on a plan, I'd go in for it, for it's likely the only chance we'll ever have of seeing a real charivari. It'd be no end of fun to tell the folks at home."

Then we made our plans in cold blood. We agreed to smuggle the necessary things up to an old shed back of the barn, during the day, each being responsible for so much. Algie was to get the lantern, two horns, an old tin pan and a pot—to get black off of, you see.

I agreed to bring two old dresses of Veronica's—Veronica Gallant was Aunt Maria's big, fat French girl—and Allison was to get Jerry's working clothes. Jerry and Veronica had gone home. It was a holy day, so we had a fine chance.

Every now and then through the day you'd see a boy sneaking into the house when Aunt Maria wasn't round, and rushing out again by the back way with something. We knew no one would go near the old shed. How to get out at night bothered us most.

Uncle Lyman not only locked all the doors at bedtime, but carried the key off with him, because he'd discovered that Jerry had a habit of getting up and going out apple-stealing after every one was in bed.

All the downstairs windows made too loud a noise in opening to think of getting out of them, for uncle and aunt slept on the ground floor. The only up-stairs one that would serve, was a little one in the clothes-room; it opened on the steep kitchen-roof at the back of the house.

We resolved to climb out of this, slide down the roof and jump off on a pile of seaweed that had been used for banking in winter and hadn't been removed.

When we went to bed at night we could hear horns blowing up all the roads, and it just made us tingle. It was a dusky, starlit night, and a new moon was low in the west, looking like a little crescent of reddish gold.

After what seemed a dreadful long time, Allison and I concluded uncle and aunt were asleep, and we got up. When we crept into Algie's room, of course he was sound asleep—and such a time as we had to wake him! And then he was sleepy and stupid for half an hour.

We took our shoes in our hands and tiptoed down the hall to the clothes-room door. Then Allison tripped on a rug and fell against the door. It flew open with a bang, and his shoes went skating over the floor. We were sure every soul in the house would be up at the noise, but, as all was still, Allison got up, and after we had

a laugh we got to the window.

I thought we'd never get it up. It stuck, and Allison shoved and shoved. All at once it gave way, and went up so suddenly he nearly went through it. We fired our shoes down first, giving them a good fling to send them clear of the roof, and then Allison went.

He slipped out and went down the roof like an eel. We heard him jump, and then whistle softly, as a signal. It was Algie's turn next. He crawled out boldly, but the roof was slippery from the dew, and first thing I heard him give a scramble and a yell, and then he was gone!

I heard him and Allison giggling below, so I knew he wasn't hurt, but I thought Uncle Lyman would certainly hear that yell, and for quite ten minutes I didn't dare to climb out. When I did I forgot about the window; and when I had wriggled half-way down, the contrary thing fell with a force that fairly jarred the house. I suppose things sounded worse to us in the dark and silence, but at the time I couldn't see why every one didn't wake up. I lay there quaking, till I heard Allison below.

"Say, you up there! Are you going to get down to-night?"

So I crept down and jumped off on the seaweed.

When I got it all out of my mouth and ears, I said:

"Have you fellows got all the shoes?"

And it turned out they couldn't find one of mine. So we had to waste about fifteen minutes rooting around for it, till we discovered Algie had it with the rest, after all.

I relieved my feelings by saying:

"Well, you idiot!"

And we started, taking a short cut through the spruce grove, and nearly tearing our eyes out on the low boughs. Just then old Gyp, who was chained in the orchard, began to bark furiously, ending off each series with a long, quivering howl.

"I'd like to choke that dog dead," snarled Allison.

I don't want to give you the impression that Allison was always this bloodthirsty, mind. Generally he was quite amiable, but his patience had been tried that night.

Gyp had stopped barking when we reached the shed, and we lit the lantern and hurried to work. Algie put on Jerry's trowsers, hitched neatly to his shoulders, and turned up to his knees, Jerry's coat wrong side out, and an old straw hat. Then he blacked his face and hands with pot-black, and took a tin pan.

Allison and I had a fearful time getting into Veronica's dresses. They were a mile too big for us, and no matter how much we tucked them in at the waist, we were sure to trip and fall every minute, and have to pick each other up. It's a mystery to

me how girls ever get round.

I blacked my face and hands, but Allison was too nice for that; so he put on a headdress he had made of foolscap. It came down over his face and went up in a big peak with two long horns. He had blacked it in stripes, and looked perfectly wild in it.

We laughed at each other for a spell, and then took a horn apiece and started. When we got to the house it was pretty late, and the charivari was in full swing. We agreed to keep together; but as soon as we mixed with the crowd, we were quickly separated.

There was a big crowd, and such an array of costumes you never saw. They all had torches of birch-bark and burning brooms, and such yelling and horn-blowing and pan-hammering! I got jostled around rather roughly, and, besides, I was beginning to be doubtful.

Some of the fellows were acting pretty wild; they had liquor, that was plain to be seen, and there was a good deal of fighting and pelting rocks at the house. And they kept getting worse. I was out of breath, blowing my horn, and, after I had been kicked and cuffed and knocked down once or twice, my taste for charivaris was a thing of the past.

Then some one fired a pistol, and I said to myself, "I'm for out of this," and looked around for the boys. I was just despairing of finding them, when the crowd opened before me and I saw Algie standing, bare-headed, at the other end of the space. He started across and got in the way of a big charivari, who lifted his foot and kicked the child—Algie was only a little fellow.

Before I could move, Allison sprang out and struck the bully fair in the face. Then I shouted and sprang forward. Some one tripped me, and I fell; the next minute the whole crowd closed over me, mad with liquor, hooting and fighting. I thought the life was being trampled out of me, and then I felt some one grab me by the arm and drag me out. It was Allison; his headdress had fallen off, and he looked white and scared.

"Let's run," he panted.

"Algie!" I gasped.

"Waiting for us up the lane! Quick, now, before they see us!"

We ran pell-mell up the lane, Algie falling into rank as we passed him, and if you've ever tried to run in a girl's dress, you'll know it was a serious time. At the road I just dropped down to get my breath and take off that dreadful skirt.

"Tell you, we're lucky to get out of that," puffed Allison, as he struggled out of his. "Uncle was right, as he always is. What fools we've made of ourselves! You're

a brick, Fred! That fellow would have downed me—he was a regular tough.”

“I guess we’re quits,” I said, feebly. “Algie, did that chump hurt you?”

“My leg’s pretty sore,” he admitted. “I wish we’d minded Uncle Lyman.”

Allison and I did, too; but that didn’t mend matters, so we started across the fields on the run. We were going at a furious rate, when we came spang up against something. It was a barbed-wire fence, and we hadn’t seen it in the dark. Allison and I weren’t hurt, as our heads came above it. But it took Algie right across the face, and he said he was killed.

We knew he must be badly scratched, but the only thing to do was to get home as soon as possible, and we had to go around by the road. We didn’t talk much, but when we got to the seaweed again, we stopped and looked at each other, and Allison said:

“Well!”

It looks flat on paper, but I never realized before how much expression could be crowded into a single syllable.

In all our scheming it had never occurred to us to ask how we were going to get up and in again.

There was simply no way for it; we felt that we were sold. There was only one thing to do. Allison and I might have braved it out till morning, but Algie’s face had to be attended to. We marched around to the door and knocked. Soon we heard steps, and Uncle Lyman opened the door, holding the lamp above his head and peering out in wonder. The wonder changed to blank amazement when he saw us.

We pushed each other in and stood there, a sorry trio—black, torn, ragged, hats gone, and blood all over Algie’s face.

Uncle set the lamp down and went to the hall door.

“Maria,” he called, “get up and come out here, will you?”

Then he said, sternly:

“Now, boys, I want to know the meaning of this!”

We stammered through it, piecing out each other’s remarks, shamefacedly. By the time we finished, Aunt Maria came in, and she took Algie in hand, while Allison and I went out to scrub ourselves.

“What do you suppose Uncle Lyman will do?” questioned Allison, as he helped me wash the back of my neck. “Pack us off home to-morrow?”

“Like as not,” I answered, dolefully. “It’ll serve us right! But I’m sick of this sort of thing, and I’m going to turn over a new leaf.”

“Same here,” said Allison, energetically.

And we went in to face our doom.



But Uncle Lyman said not a word; he simply handed me the lamp and pointed to the stairs.

“We’ll catch it to-morrow,” whispered Allison, consolingly, as we went upstairs.

We were three pretty humble boys as we slipped down to breakfast next morning. We ached from our soles to our crowns. Allison had a black eye. I was all bruises. Algie came in after we did, and his face looked dreadful, and yet so comical—all patched with sticking-plaster. I didn’t intend to laugh, but I happened to catch Allison’s eye—nothing could keep that boy down long—and I snickered right out. Then I was more ashamed than ever.

Aunt Maria sat with her lips shut forbiddingly, but we were nearly through breakfast before Uncle Lyman spoke. Then he asked:

“Boys, have you had enough of this kind of fun?”

We said we had.

“Will you ever do the like again?”

“Never!” we all said; Algie said it twice.

And that was every word Uncle Lyman ever said, even when Jerry came in, and said a man had been seriously hurt the night before.

But we kept our word. Uncle Lyman had no reason to complain of our obedience the rest of the summer. He referred to the affair but once again. That was when he saw us off at the station. Just before the train started he came over to the edge of the platform.

“Boys,” he said, “you’ve had some queer experiences this summer. Now, which one are you most ashamed of?”

As the train glided out we poked our heads out of the car window.

“The charivari!” we all replied together.

## TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Mis-spelled words and printer errors have been fixed.

Inconsistency in hyphenation has been retained.

[The end of *Our Charivari* by Maud Cavendish [L. M. (Lucy Maud) Montgomery]]