

THE BOYS' WORLD

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April 23, 1910.

The Old Cooky Woman

L. M. MONTGOMERY

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"No. He is going right to work if he can find anything to do," answered Archie. "He has applied for that position in the Steel Manufacturing Company that Jack Wallace had."

"He hasn't much chance there. Neil Blair is almost sure of that. His father has a pull," he says.

"Well, I'm not so sure about that as Neil is. Mr. Burgess is the man who has most to say in the matter, and I've been given to understand that he doesn't altogether favor Neil. Thinks his academy record isn't just what such a responsible employer's ought to be. I imagine. But there are other applicants, all of them with some influence at their backs, and some of them are just as competent as Ellis. He hasn't anyone to push his claims."

"Well, Ellis is a fine fellow," said Bert heartily, "and I hope he'll get something else if this goes against him. Burgess is an odd ticket anyway. They say you never can tell what he is going to do till he does it; but they have great faith in his judgment. Well, I must be off. A fellow mustn't waste time, with exams only two weeks away."

Meanwhile, Ellis Saunders had gone to his boarding house in a brown study. He had been talking to Allan Burgess, the captain of the Academy football team, and Burgess had told him that a match had been arranged between the "Invincibles," and the Sheffield High School "Wayfarers," to be played at Sheffield, fifty miles distant, in a week's time.

"Dr. Whidden has given us a holiday for it, and all the Academy boys must go for the honor of Millboro. We'll have a regular celebration, especially if we wipe the Wayfarers out of existence, as we fondly hope to do," he concluded with a laugh. Ellis did not respond as enthusiastically as usual. His face had flushed slightly at the mention of Sheffield, and he listened rather absently to Burgess' details. Just before they parted the latter said: "You're applied for the position in the steel works, haven't you, Saunders?"

Ellis nodded.

"Thought as much from the questions father has been asking about you. Was glad my answers could be favorable. Hope you'll get it."

"I don't expect it in the least," said Ellis, rather curtly.

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Sheffield was a small village, but there were a great many people in it, judging from the crowd around the grounds. Everywhere Ellis encountered faces he knew. He nodded pleasantly and sometimes stopped to speak, but his eyes roved over the scene as if seeking for something else. Presently he gave a little sigh of relief.

"She can't have come," he thought. "I am a cad to feel relieved. Still before all those fellows, and Allan Burgess and Nelson Evans, too! I'll go up, and see her after the game is over, of course."

When the match was fairly on, even Ellis forgot everything else. The Millboro boys ranged themselves on one side and cheered and shouted themselves hoarse. The Sheffield lads did the same on the other side. The contest was long and stubborn, for the "Invincibles" found the "Wayfarers" foes worthy of their steel. But in the end they vindicated their name and the game was theirs with a narrow margin.

When conquerors and conquered left the grounds the excitement rapidly subsided. Ellis found himself next to Mr. Burgess, who had come down to see the game at Allan's request. He shook hands with Ellis in a friendly fashion, looking keenly at the lad from under his bushy eyebrows.

"Pretty well played game, eh?" he said good-humoredly.

Ellis nodded enthusiastically.

"The 'Invincibles' would look out for that," he said proudly.

"Well, I'm ravenously hungry," interjected Nelson Evans, the son of a Millboro millionaire and the "biggest swell," as the boys said, at the Academy. "Wonder where an obscure individual like myself can get a bite. The 'Invincibles' are to be lunched by their friends the enemy, but we rag-tag and bob-tail must

forage for ourselves."

"Here comes Mother Bunch," exclaimed Bert Macdonald with a laugh. "She's got a big basket, and I warrant there's something to eat in it. Hurrah!"

Ellis looked in the direction indicated with a face suddenly grown crimson. He knew what he would see—a little stout woman in an old-fashioned bonnet and shawl, selling cookies to the crowd as she plodded through it.

For a minute he turned away. All his enemies were there, as well as Allan Burgess, who had come up to speak to his father. For one brief instant Ellis was tempted to walk swiftly away. The "old cooky woman," as the boys were calling her, had not yet seen him.

"I believe I'll go and invest in some of those cookies myself," said Mr. Burgess. "They look good, like the ones my mother used to make when I was a little shaver."

Suddenly Ellis stepped forward and elbowed his way through the crowd. A flush of shame was on his face, but this time it was shame of himself. His voice was clear and steady when he reached the cooky woman's side.

"That basket is too heavy for you, Aunty," he said gently. "Here, let me take it."

He turned and faced the boys squarely. "Come on, boys, I'm running this thing now, Aunty, you must go and sit down over there under the trees. I'll sell your cakes for you."

The old woman, whose tired, lined face had lighted up with love and pride, tried to protest, but Ellis put her aside gently.



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As Allan moved away, munching his purchases, the other boys crowded around again and bought their cookies. Ellis passed out cakes and changed quarters with his usual easy manner. In a few minutes the basket was empty, and he turned to the little woman under the trees.

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"Thank you," she said. "Ellis is a good boy and always was. I'm glad to think he is a bit clever too, and that his classmates like him."

When Ellis and his aunt had gone, the other boys hurried off in various directions. And Mr. Burgess, who had been a spectator of the whole affair, found himself alone.

He nodded his head several times in a peculiar way. Any one of his business acquaintances, seeing that, would have said:

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(Continued on page 5.)

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“I can give it to you myself,” said Ellis with a laugh, “for I’ve helped aunty make them hundreds of times.”

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Mis-spelled words and printer errors have been fixed.

[The end of *The Old Cooky Woman* by L. M. (Lucy Maud) Montgomery]