

What Happened  
at  
Brixley's

Lucy Maud Montgomery  
1906

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# What Happened at Brixley's

L. M. Montgomery

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“It’s a downright shame the way Alf Logan and all those Cornertown Road boys persecute Lige Vondy,” said Frank Sheraton, dropping down on the porch steps.

“What do they do?” asked his cousin Fred, looking up from his book.

“Everything. I was down at the blacksmith’s forge this evening, and Alf was there with a crowd of his satellites, bullying and bragging as usual. Lige came along, and they guyed him in every way they could. He feels so badly over it, too. He almost cried to-day. Alf jeered at him, and the other boys laughed and applauded. I told Alf it was a shame, but I was only one against them all. Lige was on his way to the brook for a pail of water, and when he was coming back Tom Clark pretended to run into him and tripped him up. The water was all spilled, and it’s no easy job for Lige with his weak back to carry a bucket up that hill. I went and carried the second one for him, and those Cornertown bullies didn’t meddle with us. They play every kind of mean trick on Lige, but he doesn’t mind that as much as the fun they make of him. It makes him wild to be laughed at, and they know it. The rest of the boys wouldn’t be so bad if it wasn’t for Alf Logan. He has a kind of chieftainship over them some way—what with his bluster and his boasting they think him a regular hero—and they follow his example in everything.”

“I believe Alf Logan is a coward at heart,” said Fred.

“Of course, he is. Do you suppose a boy who wasn’t a coward could take pleasure in persecuting a poor, simple chap like Lige? Alf likes to bully boys that can’t defend themselves, but he’s mighty careful to keep clear of those who can. I’d like to give him a settling down, but I don’t want to get into a scrap with Cornertown rowdies, even for Lige’s sake.”

“Of course, not,” agreed Fred, “but perhaps we’ll get a chance to take Alf Logan down a little yet. If we could only make him ridiculous in the eyes of his admirers it might destroy his influence, and maybe they’d leave Lige in peace.”

About a week later Frank came home with another story.

“I tell you, Fred, there was some fun on foot at the forge to-day. Alf Logan was there, and was giving the details of some wonderful adventures of his down at the harbor, and the crowd was drinking it all in when Lige came ambling along and began to tell his story. You know that old tumbledown shanty in the hollow of the Jersey road that the Brixleys used to live in? Folks say it’s haunted. Goodness knows why it should be, for I’m sure the poor Brixleys were nearly as silly and quite as harmless as Lige himself. But that’s the report, and skeery people give that house a wide berth after night. Well, it appears that Lige was coming past there about nine o’clock last night and just as he got opposite the door—you know it’s right close to the road—a great, tall, white figure popped out and flew at him! Lige is a truthful fellow, so he

must have seen something—a white cow or horse, or perhaps a wind-blown paper. He took to his heels and ran for dear life with the ghost chasing him as far as Stanley’s hill, when it suddenly disappeared. Well, Lige reeled all this rigmarole off in his own peculiar fashion, and dilated on the scare he had got quite proudly. The boys pretended they didn’t believe a word of his yarn, and badgered him until he got mad as hops. Alf Logan had the most to say, of course. He didn’t believe in ghosts, not he! And if he was to meet one he wouldn’t be scared of it—not much! He’d ask no better fun. He’d march right up to it and ask it what it wanted. You wouldn’t catch him running away like a scared baby!

“Lige may be simple-witted, but he has his cute moments, too. He spoke right up, and told Alf that he wouldn’t go past the old Brixley house himself after dark. Alf said he’d just as lieve go past it and through it on the darkest night that ever was as not, and then Lige up and dared him to do it.

“I couldn’t help chuckling—Alf looked so flat. But he couldn’t back out after all his bragging.

“‘Of course, I’ll go,’ he said, loftily. ‘Don’t some of you fellows want to come along, too, for the fun of it?’

“I thought that was a pretty barefaced dodge to get company for the escapade, but it seemed to pass. Tom Clark and Chad Morrow, Ned and Jim Bowley said they’d go. Chad is a bit jealous of Alf, so he’ll see there’s no shirking. They’re to go to-morrow night, and look here, Fred! Alf Logan is going to see a ghost then if he never saw one before, and never will again. And I want you to help me a bit.”

The next night was just such a one as a ghost, if at all particular in his choice of scenic effects, would have chosen to walk abroad in. It was cloudy, but a full moon behind the clouds gave a dim, weird light, and a chill east wind moaned and shivered among the trees. Alf Logan and his cronies, walking by no means briskly up the Jersey road, shivered, too. Just at that moment Alf would have given a good deal to be well out of the adventure.

“There ain’t no such things as ghosts, anyhow,” said Tom Clark, breaking a disagreeable silence.

“‘Course, there ain’t,” said Alf loftily. “Nobody believes in ’em nowadays except fools.”

“Then what was it that Lige saw?” whispered Ned Bowley, nervously.

“Shut up,” growled Alf. “Lige’d be skeered of his own shadow. I don’t believe he saw anything; he was just yarning.”

“Supposin’ we do see something,” suggested Chad Morrison. “What will you do, Alf?”

“You heard me say what I’d do, didn’t you?” retorted Alf, angrily. “Shut up your talk about ghosts! You’ll skeer yourselves and be running off and

leaving me first thing.”

The other boys resented this slur on their courage, and relapsed into sulky silence. As they neared the dreaded hollow, dark and mysterious in the shadow of the firs that surrounded it, they drew closer together and glanced nervously from side to side. The old Brixley house was indeed a tumbledown place. It had almost fallen into ruins. Doors and windows were gone, and the framework was decayed and rotten. With hesitating steps Alf and his comrades shuffled through the weeds of the old yard and stood at the entrance of the kitchen.

“Well, ain’t you goin’ in?” asked Chad, rather tauntingly, as Alf peered doubtfully into the darkness.

“Yes, I am,” said Alf desperately. “Come on, you fellows! What’s here to be skeered of?”

In another moment they had crossed the threshold and were in a small, square room that had once served the Brixleys as a kitchen and parlor and dining-room. All was quiet and dark. Something scurried overhead—a rat or a squirrel, but the sound made Alf break out into a cold perspiration. He laughed nervously.

“Well, there ain’t no ghost yet, boys.”

“You’ve got to go through every room in the house, you know,” said Chad. “There’s a bedroom at ’tother side of this, and two more up in the loft. That was the bargain.”

Alf, with a forlorn attempt at a whistle, started across the creaking floor. They had almost reached the door of the inner room when a dreadful thing happened.

In the doorway appeared a tall, white figure, whose head reached quite to the ceiling. Huge, shadowy wings flapped and waved about it, and apparently in the middle of this horrible apparition was a flaming face, with hollow, cavernous eyes. At the same time a wail of the most discordant agony that ever fell on human ears resounded through the house.

With a yell of terror Alf Logan wheeled about and made a blind dash for the door, followed by his terror-stricken comrades. Across the yard, over the hollow, and up the hill they flew with frantic speed, never daring to glance behind, although the dismal wails still followed them on the wind.

When the last echo of their flying feet had died away the ghost burst into a shout of very human laughter, and proceeded to take off the pillow slip stuffed with shavings that was on his head.

“Come here, Fred, and unpin a fellow,” he called. “I’ll never get these sheets off alone.”

Fred Sheraton popped out of the inner room, laying an old fiddle on the window-ledge.

“Did you ever see anything so funny?” he laughed. “How those fellows did run!”

“They’re running yet, I’ll bet,” said Frank. “That fearful noise you made on the fiddle scared them worse than I did I believe. Alf’ll never hear the last of this.”

If Alf Logan cherished any hope that his ghostly adventure might remain a secret that hope vanished when he went to the forge the next day. He was greeted with derision by all the men and boys assembled there. Lige Vondy had at last turned the tables on his old tormentor. Chad Morrow, who had not made any pretensions to valor in the matter of ghosts, and so did not mind owing to a scare, had told the whole story of Alf’s panic and flight. To make matters worse the truth of the story soon leaked out, and Alf had not even the consolation of thinking it was a real ghost he had run from. “Alf Logan’s home-made ghost” passed into a byword along the Cornertown Road, and Alf’s chieftainship among the boys was gone forever. He had shown himself both a braggart and a coward. Thereafter Lige Vondy was left in peace. As Frank said to Fred:

“Our grand ghost act was a decided success, old fellow.”

## TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Mis-spelled words and printer errors have been fixed.

[The end of *What Happened at Brixley's* by L. M. (Lucy Maud) Montgomery]