# Story of the Blazing Beast

begged little Nell, snuggling close to the indulgent grandmother, who was seated on the sofa in front of the cheerful grate are after supper.

"Yes, a story, grams!" cried Billy, brother to little Nell, who just that minute came into the room munching the remnants of a bit of jelly cake. Then be took his sent on the floor at dear old grandma's feet.

Once upon a time, begun grandma, there dwelt in the great primitive forest a man who had a wife, a little son and a daughter. This man was a lazy, ignorant, cowardly fellow, too lazy indeed to clear and till the soil that he might furnish vegetable and fruit food for his family, so their only sustenance was the flesh of fish, fowl and animal, such as the man could find roundabout in the big woods.

One day his wife told him that the larder was empty of provisions and asked him to go out and find something for the family to eat that they might not become ill through want of food. Shouldering his gun, the man set forth in quest of game.

As it was late in the afternoon, the shadows were very deep under the giant trees, thick with their untrimmed limbs covered by interlacing vines and choked by underbrush. Thus it,

ELL us a story, granny, dear," mense Iron pot hung over it full of bolling water, everything being in readiness to cook whatever the man might be fortunate enough to bring home. On beholding the big toe the woman fell back from it in terror, crying out: "Why, that's from the foot of the blazing beast! Death to any person touching it. I would starve and see my chil-

dren starve before I would taste it." Now, there was a legend among the forest people of that time and place that a great beast, part animal, part bird, as large as an elephant and having a beak like an eagle, eyes of fire and a flaming tongue lived in the forest. Not only one such beast was there, but a great many of them. It was said that the "blazing beast" would do no one harm unless first attacked, but once having been hurt in any way it never rested day or night until it accomplished some awful revenge. It was told that once upon a time one of these beasts had been killed by a band of woodmen and parts of it eaten. The uneaten parts gathered themselves together at night and became reanimated with life, and while the men slept it devoured them, flesh and bone. The woman was familiar with the stories of the blazing beast, but the gluttonous man would not listen to her nor be guided by her warn-

ing. Since she stoutly refused to touch



THE BEAST LEAPED TOWARD THE PROSTRATE MAN.

was in nowise particular about the about, his keen eyes on the ground, then on the tree limbs, a huge, dark moving form caught his notice. There away in the thickest part of a great they went to the brook near by the log tree it was baif hidden away. Instantly the man raised his gun and fired. Something fell to the ground a few paces away under the tree. He ran to the spot and picked up the object, which was about the size and shape of a large cocoanut and which turned out to be a big toe from some strange animal's or bird's foot. Putting the bleeding member into his wildcat skin game pouch, the man hurried home, for hunger was gnawing at thought of the dainty and new kind of dish they would soon enjoy.

The woman had a fire of sticks blazing in the rough fireplace and an im-

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was difficult for the man to distinguish the big toe, the man himself dressed it one object from another. But as he and put it into the boiling pot to cook. When it was done he ate it to the last kind of fiesh he ate one animal was as shred of fiesh, licking greedily the bone good as another. After wandering and nail, But his urging the children to partake of the toe had no effect on them, for their mother's warning was enough for them. With their mother

cabin and caught enough fish for their

By the time the second supper was cooked the night was setting in, and darkness shrouded the little log cabin. seeming to curtain it from the rest of the world. As soon as the frugal meal was over the children crawled into their beds of dried leaves and marsh grass and fell asleep. Soon the man and woman followed the children's example and lay on their rude beds, but neither of them slept. The woman's eyes were open, her ears on the alert for that which she feared. The man was uneasy in his stomach, for the toe meat which had tasted so sweet to him during the eating had turned to

After a few minutes of suspense to the woman and stomach ache to the man a queer sound was heard as of swiftly rushing wings outside the cabin door, which had no shutter and therefore was wide open.

As the noise of passing wings ceased, an awful voice shricked through the cabin, filling it with a deafening sound: "I want my big t-o-e! I want my big t-o-e! I want my big t-o-e!" The man shook as with a chill, the woman also

trembled, and the children awoke. After a few minutes of silence the man said in a hoarse voice, "Old woman, get up and go out and see what it

is." Being the man's slave, the woman got up and went out, running all WILL that she could see and hear nothing. Just as she was settled in her bed again there came that terrible voice my big t-o-e! I want my big t-o-e!"

three times, then silence, as before. and suffering awful pangs of pain in CALL AND TELL YOU ALL ABOUT his stomach, raised his hoarse voice IT. slightly above a whisper and said to his little son, "Boy, get up and go out

and see what it is." Like his mother, the boy was afraid to disobey, so he crept out of bed and san shivering round the house to return

with the same report that he could he he very forest and hills that stretche miles away and almost bursting the ear drums of the terrified persons who trembled in their beds: "I want my big t-o-e! I want my big t-o-e! I want m big t-o-e!"

After the echoes of the terrible anblood enrilling voice ceased the man once more gave an order, this time say ng: "All three of you get up and g out and see what it is. Old woman you look up on top the house; boy, yoook down on the ground; girl, you looetween top and bottom. In this wa the beast can't escape you."

For the third time he was obeye without a murmur, for it would have been as much as their fives were wort for the woman and children to have hesitated in carrying out the man' commands. But the instant the mawas left alone there was heard a terri ble noise in the chimney, and as ! looked in that direction the most hor rible sight met his eyes. Down the chimney came a "blazing beast," ! eyes of fire looking right into the face of the man, who was speechless. It tongue leaped like forked lightning and it flapped its batlike wings, mak ing a deafening noise. One leap the buge, birdlike beast made toward the prostrate form in the corner and de voured it without a moment's delay: then back up the chimney it flew, crying in a triumphant voice: "I've got my big toe! I've got my big t-o-e! I've got my big t-o-e!"

And the story is that never again was the blazing beast or any other of its species seen on earth, and it is supposed that they migrated to another planet, presumably the moon.-Wash-Ington Post

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