

Story of the Blazing Beast

TELL us a story, granny, dear," begged little Nell, snuggling close to the indulgent grandmother, who was seated on the sofa in front of the cheerful grate fire after supper.

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

Once upon a time, began 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 untrampled limbs covered by interlacing vines and choked by underbrush. Thus it

with the same report that he could not see or hear anything. But scarcely had the child slipped into his grass patch again when the voice roared above them like thunder, this time rattling the very forest and hills that stretched miles away and almost bursting the ear drums of the terrified persons who trembled in their beds: "I want my big toe-e! I want my big toe-e! I want my big toe-e!"

After the echoes of the terrible and blood curdling voice ceased the man once more gave an order, this time saying: "All three of you get up and get out and see what it is. Old woman you look up on top of the house; boy, you look down on the ground; girl, you look between top and bottom. In this way the beast can't escape you."

For the third time he was obeyed without a murmur, for it would have been as much as their lives were worth for the woman and children to have hesitated in carrying out the man's commands. But the instant the man was left alone there was heard a terrible noise in the chimney, and as he looked in that direction the most horrible sight met his eyes. Down the chimney came a "blazing beast." Its eyes of fire looking right into the face of the man, who was speechless. Its tongue leaped like forked lightning and it flapped its batlike wings, making a deafening noise. One leap the huge, birdlike beast made toward the prostrate form in the corner and devoured it without a moment's delay; then back up the chimney it flew, crying in a triumphant voice: "I've got my big toe-e! I've got my big toe-e! I've got my big toe-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.—Washington Post.

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THE BEAST LEAPED TOWARD THE PROSTRATE MAN.

was difficult for the man to distinguish one object from another. But as he was in nowise particular about the kind of flesh he ate one animal was as good as another. After wandering 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 tree it was half 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 coconut and which turned out to be a big toe from some strange animal's or bird's foot. Putting the bleeding member into his wild-cat 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-

the big toe, the man himself dressed it and put it into the boiling pot to cook. When it was done he ate it to the last shred of flesh, licking greedily the bone 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 they went to the brook near by the log cabin and caught enough fish for their suppers.

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 bitterness.

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 shrieked through the cabin, filling it with a deafening sound: "I want my big toe-e! I want my big toe-e! I want my big toe-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."

"I'm being the man's slave, the woman got up and went out, running all around the house and returning to say that she could see and hear nothing.

Just as she was settled in her bed again there came that terrible voice once more, and this time it shook the very walls and the roof over their heads: "I want my big toe-e! I want my big toe-e! I want my big toe-e!" three times, then silence, as before.

Then the man, still shaking with fear and suffering awful pangs of pain in his stomach, raised his hoarse voice 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 dash, so he crept out of bed and saw slithering round the house to return

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