

# LITTLE GROWLING BIRD AND THE BIG WILD BEAST



Last week you were told how Nokomis and the children finished the Maple-Sugar-making and returned to the Wigwam with the sleigh and toboggan loaded with cakes of maple-sugar and all the other things they had used in the camp. And how, when they arrived, they heard strange noises; and how Little Bear had dashed out of the Wigwam crying for help and yelling that a BIG WILD BEAST had tried to get in at him! There was not room enough then to tell what happened afterward—so you shall hear it now. Well, after Little Bear rushed out of the Wigwam he clung tightly to Nokomis' dress. He was so fat and out of breath and so frightened he could not talk—only puff and pant! Nokomis untied the rope that fastened his leg to the stout stake, and reached for Wah-gaw-wud, the Big Axe, which she had dropped in the excitement. Then—



Aundak, the Crow, sneaked up and pecked in at the door of the Wigwam. "There isn't any one inside!" he called out. Nokomis knew then that the Prowling Thing must be hiding BEHIND the Wigwam! Now, Yellow Hair—like most little Paleface girls—was very much afraid of all WILD BEASTS, except, of course, the ones Little Growling Bird had made her acquainted with, inside the Refuge Ground. She was frightened now, and grabbed the little boy's arm, begging him not to let the BIG THING get at her! And do you think Growling Bird ran to Nokomis and hid (like Little Bear) behind her skirts, leaving Fanny unprotected?—No indeed! He just grasped his little tomahawk firmly and GROWLED his OWN little growl—which was very terrifying to SMALL animals! (That is why Nokomis called him Little "GROWLING" Bird!) Then they all marched round the Wigwam to see what the BIG THING was.



Sly Mister Crow said he would follow last—"to guard the rear!" But after they had gone half-way around the Wigwam he heard a fierce growling BEHIND him! This was not what he calculated upon, when he took the place, and you may be sure he did not lag behind when he found he was nearer than any one else to the BIG THING! After that he took pretty long steps for a Crow, and nearly got a "crick" in his neck from looking back over his shoulder. But Nokomis hurried on, calling out to whomsoever it might be that she had Wah-gaw-wud, the Big Axe, ready and meant business. Mukoons, the Little Bear, trotted alongside, as close as he could get to her. He knew, as well as little boys and girls know, the safest place to be when danger threatens.



When they had gone almost clear around the Wigwam, Nokomis stopped to examine some large footprints in the snow that lay piled up at one side of the tent. They looked like big moccasin tracks, and puzzled her greatly. Then Mukoons came and snuffed them! (Little bears have to learn most things through their noses, you see!) HE declared they smelt just like moccasins, and he was right, this time. But Aundak flapped his wings and hopped up in the air a bit so as to get a better view of the doorway—and what do you think he saw? He spied A GREAT BIG SOMETHING just disappearing in the entrance to the Wigwam! He was a little too late to see enough of it to make out exactly what it was, but he rather thought it was a "WINDEGO," or man-eating GIANT!



Things now began to look serious for Nokomis and her little family. There was the BIG THING hiding INSIDE the Wigwam, with no way to chase it out! It made Nokomis very angry to think that any person, or thing, should come along and take possession of her home without saying "by your leave" or anything else. She raised the Big Axe over her head and called out, fiercely: "Umbay 'Gwah-jing—Come outside!" Growling Bird dared it to come outside, also, but there was no reply! Yellow Hair hid behind Nokomis. She was too much afraid even to LOOK when she heard the word "WINDEGO"! She had heard that these Ogres were in the habit of eating people without waiting to cook them! (But this is only an Indian fairy story and not really true.) As for Little Bear, he covered his eyes with his little black paws and thought no one could see him!



Suddenly the door-flap of the Wigwam flew open and there sat our old friend, BIG BEAR, grinning from ear to ear! (Of course, YOU have already guessed who the "BIG THING" was that scared them!) That very morning Big Bear had come out of his winter cave and gone straight to the Wigwam. Finding no one at home but Little Bear, he thought he would hide until Nokomis and the children came back and then play a joke on them. They were so much taken by surprise and looked so foolish when they saw who it was, that Big Bear laughed right out and shouted, "APRIL FOOL!!!" However, they were all so glad to see him again that they didn't mind being "fooled" in such a pleasant way. And so, the FIRST of APRIL is called "ALL FOOLS' DAY"—because jokes are played on people then. But whether Big Bear started the custom himself, or learned it from the Palefaces, it is hard to say! A. T. C.