

THE TOAD OUR BEST FRIEND

by EDWARD B. CLARK COPYRIGHT BY W.A. PATTERSON

UNCLE SAM'S scientists have had more than one good word to say for the toad. Several government publications have been issued, I am told, telling about the toad and its good work. There is no department in nature which is overlooked by the scientists of Secretary of Agriculture James Wilson's department. If it is beloved by the experts that any amount may come to the people of the United States by the study of the habits of a particular animal, that animal is studied forthwith and studied carefully.

In folk lore history and in the history of locusts which hardly can be classed as folk lore, the frog and the toad frequently have been confused; sometimes stories have been told of frog visitations and it has turned out that the invading army was composed of toads. The reverse of the statement also has been found to be true on several occasions.

Some years ago an army of track-hopping tramp toads took possession of the gravel road bed of the Sioux City and Pacific railway, and its unbroken column miles in length, as the local story had it, the toads marched past the town of Blincoe, Iowa. It is stated that there were so many millions in this mighty army that nothing like an accurate estimate of the toads could be made. The ground was said to be brown with the color of its visitants.

If there was such an army of the batrachians as it is said there was it would be no wonder if the residents of the infested district might have feared that the toads would divert their course from the railroad into the town, to repeat Pharaoh's plague of the frogs. "When the rivers brought forth frogs abundantly, which went up into the houses, and into the bed chambers, and even upon the beds, and upon the people, and even into the ovens and into the kneading troughs."

Now the toad is not nearly so handsome a being as his frog cousin. He never could "swoon up" like his green-coated brother, despite the fact that Shakespeare proclaims that his toadship has a jewel in his head. Ugly and unamused, the bird of Arou writes the toad down, and ugly and unamused to the people's mind in many places he is to this day, although in reality he ranks with the birds as one of humanity's best friends. As a matter of fact, it is likely that the brown-skinned army which moved without banners in military array some years ago was on the march to meet the great army of Rocky Mountain locusts which was moving steadily forward in an opposite direction and in General Sherman's words, "Parading liberally upon the country."

Even though the toads are so harmless and helpful, they perhaps will never get anyone to love them. It must be admitted that appearances are against them. The Iowa people who some years ago were visited by the toads had no reason to struggle to themselves any particular distinction on account of the visitation, for in scores of instances the animals have appeared in immense bodies, and in some cases, without any invitation so to do, they have inaugurated veritable reigns of terror.

Years ago, in the little Puritan settlement of Windham, Conn., out of which sprang as many notable American families, perhaps, as have come from any other colonial hamlet, a migration of toads led the people to believe that the locusts of the last day had been sounded, and they were all summoned, sinners and saints, to answer at the bar of Judgment. Tradition says that the migration which brought this fear upon the people was one of the toad locusts of today but rather to the toad locusts of the olden time which species of batrachians brother it was that brought horror into their midst.

Now it happened that there lived in Windham two colonial colonels, big men and dignified, by names Dyer and Elderkin. It may do no harm at this late day to say that both these military titled gentlemen were more fond of good living, so the story goes, than was perhaps exactly consistent with the strictest Puritan thought. Some of the elders of the place, it is said, looked a bit askance at some of the pleasures of Colonels Dyer and Elderkin. There were slaves in that day in Connecticut and Windham held its share.

One peaceful night in May the Windham families retired at their usual hour, not long after "twelve-light." At midnight they were wrapped in the profound slumber, but no sleep however sound could withstand the roar that broke upon that peaceful hamlet in the darkness of the night. There were blended the voices of a million throats. It was guttural, harsh and horrible, and it came out of the jolly blackness of midnight. The people of Windham jumped from their beds panic-stricken, threw on what clothes they could, and rushed outdoors, many bearing pine torches, which lit little light holes in the inky blackness.

Windham who did not thoroughly accept the interpretation were Colonels Dyer and Elderkin. In a few minutes the light of the torches showed an immense concourse of toads or frogs, whichever they were, bearing down the main street of the town, croaking and "glucking" like a myriad of night demons. It suddenly struck the people that if Judgment day was at hand, notwithstanding the fact that Colonels Dyer and Elderkin seemed to have been singled out by the visitors, the day of accounting according to the Bible was an all-embracing affair, and thereafter all the Windham people started trembling violently.

There are living today a good many persons who are direct descendants of the Colonel Elderkin whom the batrachians called to Judgment that night. In Chicago until recently there lived a Mrs. Charlotte Perkins Norris, a direct descendant of Colonel Elderkin. Mrs. Norris had heard the story of the invasion of the village a score of times from the lips of her grandmother, who as a child was taken time after time to see the place from which the night disturbers came. To the days of their deaths Colonels Dyer and Elderkin were called Frog Dyer and Frog Elderkin, and if local Connecticut authorities are to be believed, there has not been seen from that day to this either a toad or a frog in the meadow and pond from which started that midnight migration.

To get away, for a moment, from frogs and toads, and in order to lead back to them again, let it be said that out in Utah the gull is a carefully protected bird. Olive Thorne Miller speaks of them as "great, beautiful, snowy creatures who look strangely out of place so far from the seashore." I have been told that these gulls are sacredly protected by the law and the people of the western state, and I have also been told that the early settlers, the Mormons, believed that the Lord has sent the birds to his chosen people.

It is no wonder that it was believed the gulls were specially sent. Clouds of grasshoppers had destroyed the crops in that early day in many of the western territories. They attacked Utah by the million millions. Then it was that the



THERE WERE BLENDED THE NOISES OF A MILLION THROATS



NOTHING LIKE AN ACCURATE ESTIMATE COULD BE MADE

large "tangle-legged" grasshoppers. Master toad took kindly to this species of food, but owing to the nature of the insect's legs and their extreme length he found difficulty in swallowing. In order to aid in the process, as soon as he would get a firm grip on the grasshopper he would look for a stick or a stone by means of pushing against which he could force his prey down his throat. Now in order to see what the toad would do if no stone or stick were at hand, all of those articles were removed from his vicinity, and then he was fed another big grasshopper with great knotted legs.

Now it must be remembered that the present writer is not vouching for this toad story; he is simply setting it down as it has been told by an observer, and if it is a "nature fake" the blame must go elsewhere. The toad, finding he could not swallow the big grasshopper, looked about as usual for a stone and, finding none, he attempted to use the ground as a pusher. He was unable to get the right angle to secure sufficient force, and so as a last and perfectly effective means, he stood on his head and without the least difficulty forced his food down his throat.

This toad unquestionably was a wonder. One day, we are told, he happened to find an angleworm of great length. He took hold of one end and succeeded in swallowing about an inch and a half of the worm, which then realizing its danger apparently, wound the rest of its body ball-like around the neck of the toad. This gave the worm leverage enough to enable it to tug away at that part which the toad already had swallowed. The result was that although by a mighty effort the toad could swallow about half an inch, the worm, when the relaxation came, succeeded in withdrawing three-quarters of an inch. The toad saw his breakfast slipping away from him, but his infinite wit came to his rescue. It is said that he sat up like a squirrel took one mighty swallow, and then before the worm could get in its withdrawing work, he pressed his forefeet against his throat and held the swallowed part of the breakfast in place; then, so the story goes, by a series of quick successive swallowing and throat squeezing, the toad soon had the worm in the dark interior where he was needed for breakfast.

Toad migrations are not extraordinarily uncommon events. They have taken place in many parts of the country, and once the toads in traveling succeeded in stalling a railroad train on the Canadian Pacific line. The story of this runs to the effect that the wheels

crushed the creatures and so greased the rails that progress was impossible for some time. The passengers said that they could have stood the situation more philosophically if the blockaders had been frogs, for then the question of the food supply would have been settled for a lot of hungry people. Frogs' legs make good eating.

It is not generally known, perhaps, to the layman that toads, like frogs, lay their eggs in the water. Countless millions of eggs will be deposited in some morass. They hatch out, the young get big enough, and migrate in a body to the dry land, sometimes going long distances as an entity. These, it is said, are the marching armies of toads which astonish people and accounts of which are spread broadcast over the earth.

Straw Hats and Autos

"You might scarcely think," said Mr. Mac Blink, "that there was anything in common between straw hats and automobiles, but by their cost of upkeep, in which respect they are strikingly alike."

"They say it costs more to keep an automobile than it does to buy one; precisely the same is true of the straw hat. You take my own experience for an illustration.

"Early in the season I bought a straw hat for which I paid \$2. I know a place where you can get a very good straw hat for that money and if it hadn't rained all summer I should have been on the straw hat account under an additional expense.

"But it always does rain more or less just as it has done this summer, and as it is well known if a drop of rain gets on a straw hat it is all up. Raindrops on a straw hat will accumulate dust, and then you have to have the hat cleaned, and that costs money; it some places 25 cents; in some 15.

"I find by reference to my books that I have paid out this summer in straw hat account for upkeep only \$2.30, which is a good deal. While the automobile man has been spending his money for gasoline and things I have been blowing mine for hat cleaning, and it has cost me more to keep that hat going than it cost me originally.

"But in this I find some slight satisfaction. In this respect at least I find myself on the same footing with the man who at the beginning of the season bought instead of a straw hat an automobile."

A Professional Diagnosis.

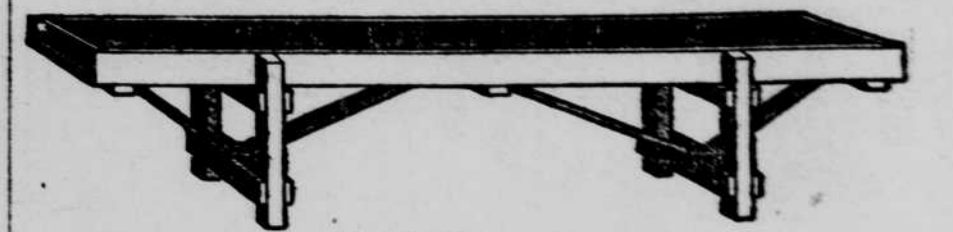
Policeman—What is the matter with my finger, doctor? It pains me terribly.

Surgeon—It is a strictly professional affliction.

Policeman—What do you mean? Surgeon—Simply that you have a felon on hand.

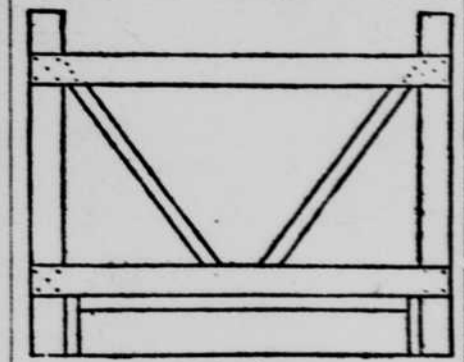
BUNK IS SATISFACTORY FOR FEEDING PURPOSES

Nebraska Stock Raiser Used One for Twelve Years With Excellent Results—Stands Strain of Big Steers.



The Finished Bunk.

With this description appear some drawings of a feed bunk which Mr. J. C. Price of Nebraska has used for 12 years with very satisfactory results. He thinks it will stand the strain of big steers better than any other. This bunk has only four legs and for that



End View.

reason will set level anywhere, this feature being of especial importance in the winter when the ground is frozen. A bunk made in accordance with this sketch requires less lumber than any other style, says Homestead. Make the bed proper of yellow pine 2x8 stock, using good straight 2x8 for the sides, letting them come flush with the outside of the bottom and make a mortise of the sides for the ends to fit in. For ordinary cattle, a

bottom made of four 2x8 will usually be wide enough but for horned cattle or big steers, five pieces should be used, making it forty inches on the inside. To make the legs, cut them the length wanted out of good, rough 4x4, nail them lightly to the trough (afterwards bolt them), then put the pieces of 2x4 (one on each side of legs) up tight against the bottom of bunk, being careful to have the legs straight. Then put on the lower pair of 2x4 crosspieces about five inches from the ground. Next comes the bracing which is made of 2x4 and put in like the drawing. Put in the short braces first; that is the braces between the legs, then put a piece of 2x8, one foot long on top of the lower crosspieces for the long brace to rest on, taking care to have them tight.

Scarcity of Timber.

Wood is becoming scarcer and dearer every year. As population increases we shall be obliged to use more acreage in its sustenance. The trees will be planted again on the watersheds, and dams will be built to hold surplus water for use in times of drought, as is done in older countries. Your rivers then will be more servicable in summer and less dangerous in the spring time.

FOR WOOL AND MUTTON

How to Develop Good Flock for Double Purpose—Blue Grass Makes Best Permanent Pasture.

(By F. G. HUGHES.)

To develop a good flock of breeding sheep for wool and mutton I would begin with the ewes that are half Cotswold and half Merino and mate them with a buck that is a full blooded Shropshire.

In the cross you get a grade of sheep that is hard to beat for both wool and mutton. By this method I once got a twin lamb that sheared, when a little more than a year old, 16 pounds of good wool and when a year and a half old the carcass weighed 160 pounds.

I cross my sheep back and forth as my judgment tells me is best. If the sheep are getting too wrinkly and the wool too short I get either a Cotswold, Oxford or Shropshire buck, and if the fleece is getting too hairy and light in weight I breed back to the Merinos.

In caring for the flock I prefer

green pasture for them, as many months in the year as possible.

Blue grass makes the best permanent pasture. Dwarf Essex rape can be sown as soon as the ground will work in the spring and if sown alone five or six pounds of seed will be required per acre.

Six or eight weeks after sowing it will be ready for pasture which will last until freezing time.

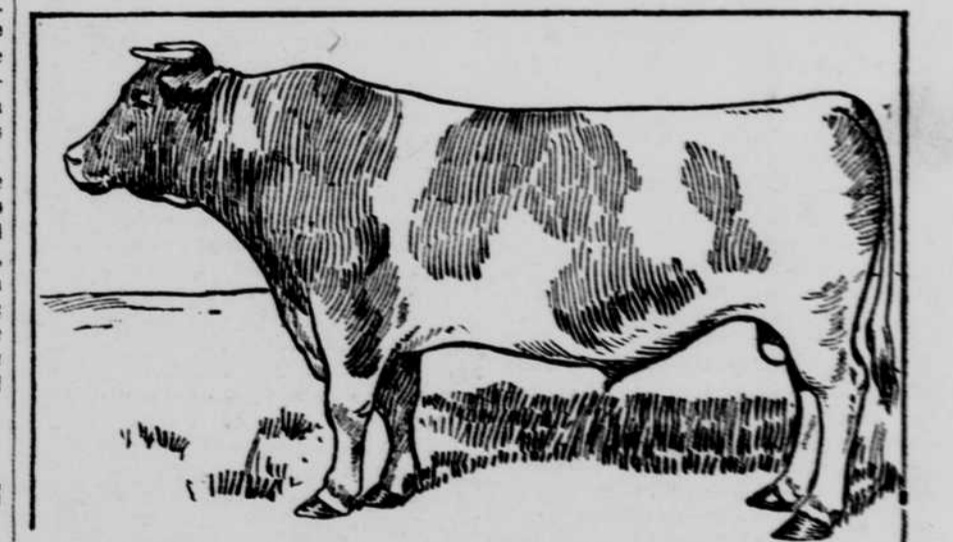
A smaller amount of rape can be sown with oats and after the crop is removed I have an excellent fall pasture. Sheep like rape, but I would not advise anyone to keep them on rape alone.

Pumpkins are good feed for them in the fall of the year. When winter comes on and the pastures do not furnish enough feed to keep them thrifty and growing nicely I begin feeding corn and fodder, cow peas and clover hay and sometimes threshed oats or sheep oats.

I believe ten sheep will eat as much as one cow and I aim to feed accordingly.

I prefer to have lambs come in February and although it may require care to save them during cold weather, when fall comes, I think I am ahead for they go through the winter better and make better sheep than do late lambs.

FINE SPECIMEN OF HOLSTEIN



Strange as it may seem to say so, there is no best breed of cows, chickens or anything else. It is true that some breeds are better than others, but when it comes to deciding among the few best ones, much must be left to individual preference and varying circumstances and conditions.

When it comes to making a selection, it pays best to choose the breed most prevalent in your vicinity, provided it is one of the best standard breeds. This will enable you to sell your products to better advantage and ship to better advantage. If your community is known far and wide as making a specialty of any certain breed, buyers will come after them and pay you a better price if they

can get enough to ship in carlots. So, if you are a practical man, this will decide your choice rather than any fancied superiority of breeds.

The virtues of the different breeds balance up pretty well any way. While Jerseys give richer milk, Holsteins give more of it. One breed eats less and another makes more beef. It is well to study up all the points and then decide according to your own needs and best judgment.

The illustration shows a Holstein bull which won first prize at a recent Illinois state fair. He is a good specimen of the breed, large and vigorous, with the black and white well distributed. He is an excellent breeder, and is good enough to head most any herd.

Corn Grain for Horses.

Corn grain when ground into meal is by far too concentrated to feed alone to horses. It lacks fiber and ash to insure good digestion. Therefore, when the cob can be finely ground it is an advantage for the reason named. Certainly, ground corn is better for horses than whole corn as a saver of feed for them. The horse cannot masticate the corn fine enough so that the digestion gets all the nutrients out of it, and much of it will pass through the alimentary canal undigested, yet whole corn when fed is one foot high. When about three feet high pick back some to induce stock and lateral growth. Suchers should all be held in check and old wood removed after fruiting. Cultivate annually and sow occasionally to crimson clover. Wilson, Snyder, Erie, Rathburn and Ward are the best varieties in this section.

Blackberries. Blackberries require rich soil. Plant in fall or early spring in rows 4 by 7 feet, cutting plants to the ground. Avoid disturbing the roots until plant is one foot high. When about three feet high pick back some to induce stock and lateral growth. Suchers should all be held in check and old wood removed after fruiting. Cultivate annually and sow occasionally to crimson clover. Wilson, Snyder, Erie, Rathburn and Ward are the best varieties in this section.

Dust Baths.

If lice get too bad the hens will walk in anything loose, from soot to manure, but they never elect either on the first ballot.

Poor Man-on Foot

In a few years aeroplanes will be as common as automobiles are now, and it is obvious that the man-on-foot will have little show, says the *Espresso-Gazette*. The auto-scorcher will be a harmless individual as compared with the speed maniac overhead. A man who will take to aeroplaning must be naturally reckless to begin with, and his recklessness will increase with each flight. His toilers will best, and his

engines will fly to pieces, and there will be showers of hardware, and big iron castings will hit the man-on-foot and knock him into the ground up to his shoulder blades. Every time he walks around a block a falling monkey wrench or claw hammer will dot him on the head and make him sick and weary.

Another prospective evil is the increase of insurance agents. The insurance will be an aeroplane insurance, which will enable you to provide for your widow and children in case an aviator falls on you and squashes you. Insurance agents of various kinds are so thick now that it is impossible to avoid them, and any scheme that threatens to swell their ranks should be denounced by press and pulpit.

Life Preservers for the Air.

Dirigible balloon accidents for the last four years show a loss of 35 lives, and in the past two years 12 aeroplan-

ists have met the same fate. Is it not time that some of the ingenuity spent upon perfecting the airship be devoted to inventing an airship life preserver? In hot air balloon ascensions the descent is always made with a parachute. While an aeroplanist might not be able to extricate himself from his seat in time to take advantage of a parachute, why should not an equipage of this kind be feasible for the dirigible airships? Those who are competent to deal with the situation should devise some method of pre-

serving life in the case of accidents, which seem to be a foregone conclusion, at least in the early stages of the flying game.—*Lestler*.