

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 believed by the experts that any benefit 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 localities 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 in unbroken column miles in length, as the local story had it, the toads marched past the town of Blencoe, 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 towns, 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 "a-wool go" like his green-coated brother, despite the fact that Shakespeare proclaims that his toadship has a jewel in his head. Ugly and venomous, the bard of Avon writes the toad down, and ugly and venomous 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, "Foraging 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 arrogate 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 intention 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 toad of the last day had been sounded, and they were all summoned, sinners and sinless, to answer at the bar of judgment. Tradition says that the migration which brought this fear upon the people was one of the frogs. Scientists of today lean rather to the toad theory, but it made little difference to the frightened populace which species of batrachian 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 date 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 views 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 "candle light." At midnight they were wrapped in the profoundest slumber, but no sleep however sound could withstand the roar that broke upon that peaceful hamlet in the watches of the night. There were blended the noises of a million throats. It was guttural, harsh and horrible, and it came out of the jetty 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 ate little light holes in the inky blackness.

The slaves were prostrated with fear and clung to the knees of their masters. The noise ceased not for an instant, but on the contrary increased with every moment, and then, to the added horror of all, the noise found shape in words which one quick-eared, imaginative woman interpreted into this, all but two of the people accepting the interpretation readily: "Judgment day; Judgment day; Colonel Dyer and Elderkin too, and catch a nigger too."

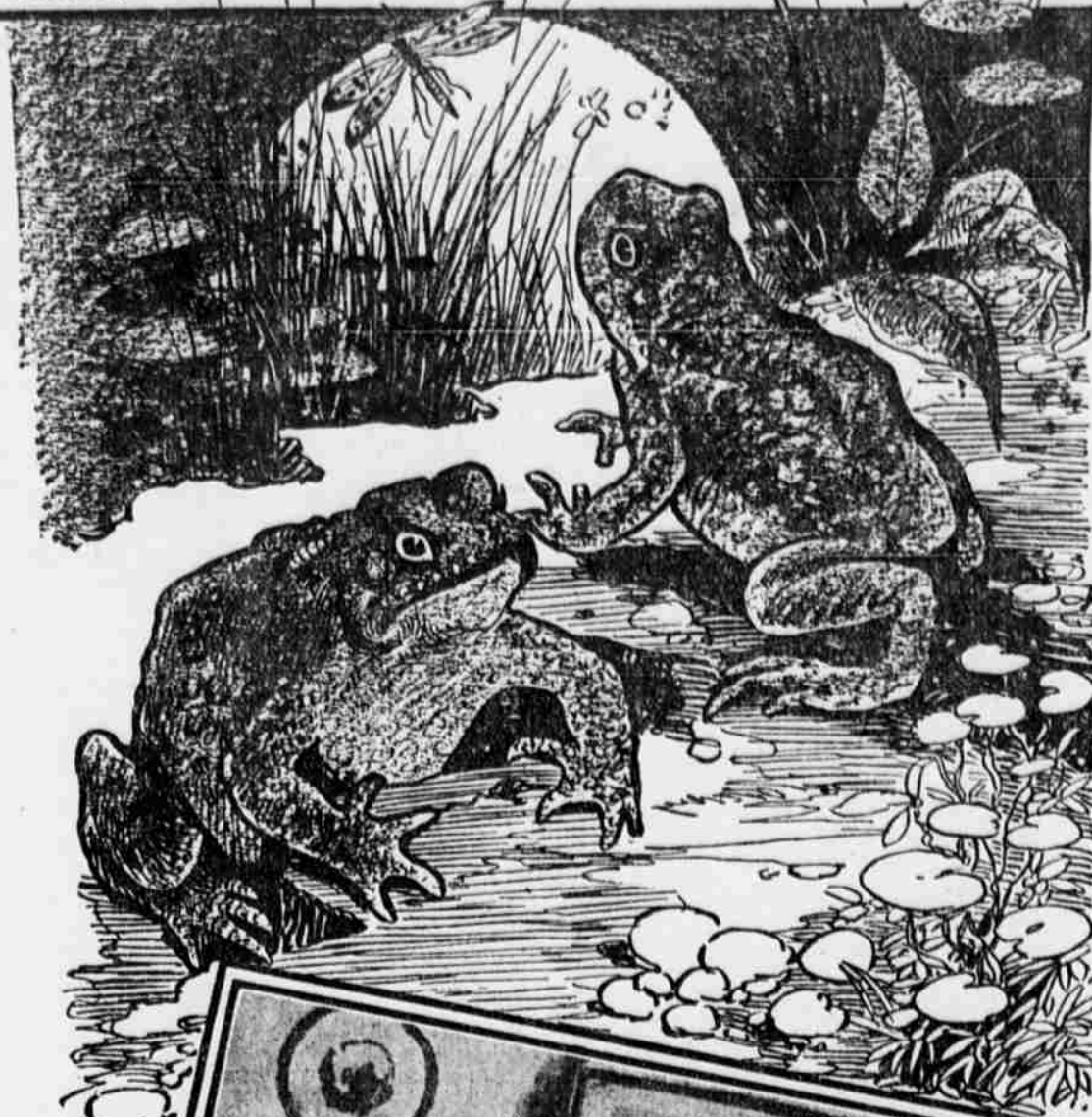
It is perhaps needless to say that the only two people among the white inhabitants of

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 thereat 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 had 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



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gulls appeared—birds never before seen in that locality within the memory of man. They came in tremendous flocks and devoured without stopping the hosts of the enemy, and they completely saved the crops from destruction. Now the gulls follow the plains like chickens, and in Utah at least, it is said that no one has any desire to raise his hand against them.

What the gull was to Salt Lake region the toad was to one section of a northwest Texas county, some time ago. There was but a comparatively small area of the county under cultivation, but the growing things were threatened with destruction by a horde of Rocky Mountain locusts; then there appeared to the astonished gaze of the resident Texans an army of toads, before which in numbers the great army of Xerxes was but as a score. These dismal-looking, warty-backed Hop-o-my-thumbs came along as on business bent. They said nothing and they ate grasshoppers. They cleaned up utterly one entire flight of the creatures. And they quietly sat under the cabbage leaves and beet tops to wait for more. They didn't come. The toads had saved the crops, and it may be judged that if one wants to be certain to get in a quarrel he can get it if he will go that section of Texas and malign a toad.

Should anyone be inclined to doubt the insect-eating capabilities of a common every-day American toad, let him listen to the evidence of an experimenter, who is at once a scientist and a clergyman, the one fact establishing his accuracy and the other his veracity. This theologian-naturalist, as the record shows, found a toad in his garden and proceeded to make a pet of it. He went to call on master toad one morning about ten o'clock and without knowing how many insects already had fallen before the toad's darting tongue, proceeded to feed him on plant pests. The toad ate readily and greedily twenty-three large squash bugs which were offered him, and then locked up inquiringly for more.

The squash bug larder was depleted, so the clergyman turned his attention to caterpillars. Of these hairy, repulsive creatures the toad ate ninety-four, so the story record goes, and then he shut down to hop heavily off to a shady corner to take that rest which it is said aids animal digestion.

Now this same experimenter tells tales of toads which might appear a bit overdrawn, were not the gentleman's cloth what it is. He took in his experiments with one toad some

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 angletworm of great length. He took hold of one end and succeeded in swallowing about an inch and a half of the worm, when then realizing its danger apparently, wound the rest of its body bow-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 fore-foot 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. MacBlink, "that there was anything in common between straw hats and automobiles, but by that way of thinking you'd be surely forgetting 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 no additional expense."

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

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Soap

is more soothing than Cold Cream; more healing than any lotion, liniment or salve; more beautifying than any cosmetic.

Cures dandruff and stops hair from falling out.

HER FIRST PROPOSAL.



Ethel—Was she glad when he told her the old, old story?
Marjorie—You bet she was. Why, that girl never heard it before.

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About the size of your shoes, many people wear smaller shoes by using Allen's Foot-Ease, the Antiseptic Powder to shake into the shoes. It cures Tired, Swollen, Aching Feet and gives rest and comfort. Just the thing for breaking in new shoes. Sold everywhere. 25c. Sample sent FREE. Address: Allen S. Olmsted, Le Roy, N. Y.

His First Lesson in Economy.
"When I was a very small boy and a dime looked pretty big to me, I met John H. Farley—who had always been my good friend—on the street one June day," says Frank Harris.
"Frank," he said, "the Fourth of July is coming soon. You'll want some change then. Let me be your banker until then and you'll have some money for firecrackers, torpedoes, lemonade and peanuts."
"I emptied my pockets into his hand and every day thereafter until the Fourth I turned over to him my small earnings. When the day of days came around I had a fund that enabled me to celebrate in proper style, while many of my platmates were flat broke. It was my first lesson in thrift, and it was a good one. Hundreds of Cleveland people would be glad today to testify to the fact that when John H. Farley was a friend of a man or a boy he was a friend indeed."—Cleveland Leader.

The Weeds Return.
"Confound these election bets, anyway!" grumbled Harker.
"Lose heavily?" inquired his friend.
"No, I won ten boxes of cigars and they were so rank I sold the whole lot to the corner tobacconist for a dollar."
"Well, you made a dollar, anyway."
"Yes, but that is not the worst of it. My wife saw the boxes in the window marked 'A Bargain, \$2,' and bought the whole lot to give me as a birthday present."

A FOOD DRINK.
Which Brings Daily Enjoyment.

A lady doctor writes:
"Though busy hourly with my own affairs, I will not deny myself the pleasure of taking a few minutes to tell of my enjoyment daily obtained from my morning cup of Postum. It is a food beverage, not a poison like coffee."

"I began to use Postum eight years ago, not because I wanted to, but because coffee, which I dearly loved, made my nights long weary periods to be dreaded and unfitting me for business during the day."

"On the advice of a friend, I first tried Postum, making it carefully as directed on the package. As I had always used 'cream and no sugar,' I mixed my Postum so. It looked good, was clear and fragrant, and it was a pleasure to see the cream color it as my Kentucky friend always wanted her coffee to look—like a new saddle."

"Then I tasted it critically, for I had tried many 'substitutes' for coffee. I was pleased, yes, satisfied, with my Postum in taste and effect, and am yet, being a constant user of it all these years."

"I continually assure my friends and acquaintances that they will like it in place of coffee, and receive benefit from its use. I have gained weight, can sleep sound and am not nervous."
"There's a Reason."

Read "The Road to Wellville" in pkgs. Ever read the above letter? A new one appears from time to time. They are genuine, true, and full of human interest.

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