

tirely harmless in reference to vegetation, and on the whole we may say he is the most useful of all animals as an insect destroyer. His manner of catching insects is such that the most delicate plant is not injured in the act. His long tongue is thrust with unerring aim and quick as thought on the victim, who vanishes so suddenly that unless the observer pays close attention he can hardly discover the operation.

"Few persons are aware of the great benefit which results from preserving these unsightly animals in gardens. They are particularly useful in gardens where fowls cannot be introduced on account of the injury they would in various ways produce, although they may destroy many insects. The toad neither scratches the ground nor feeds on the crops, and his small size and trifling weight permit him to go anywhere in search of his food.

"As we were walking in the garden last summer, we came across one of these 'squatters', among the squash vines. He was seated near his hole in the wall, surveying the premises, and apparently enjoying the growth of the vegetables, like a philosopher. Have you ever noticed, gentle reader, the benevolent expression in the eye of a toad? If it were not for his uncouth dress we would call him a gentleman. His philosophical mien was catching, and we fell to speculating upon the value wrapped up in that carbuncled jacket. We asked the

question, 'What is he good for? It is said the Creator has formed nothing in vain—nothing without a specific plan and design. Why was this toad made so disgusting, dirt-coloured, wide-mouthed, pot-bellied and moping? There is nothing to inspire affection or terror.' Just at that moment a pestiferous squash bug was crawling upon a leaf. In a moment his eye flashed with intelligence, and quick as thought his long tongue reached the insect, and his capacious mouth closed with a snap not unlike a percussion cap.

"A correspondent of the *Cambridge Chronicle*, a few years ago, put in a plea for toads, and justifies his partiality by the following, which we extract from his communication:—'We have in our garden a small nursery of plum trees, which have nearly been destroyed by the canker worm. Last season we commenced shaking them off. One day we observed many toads about these trees that

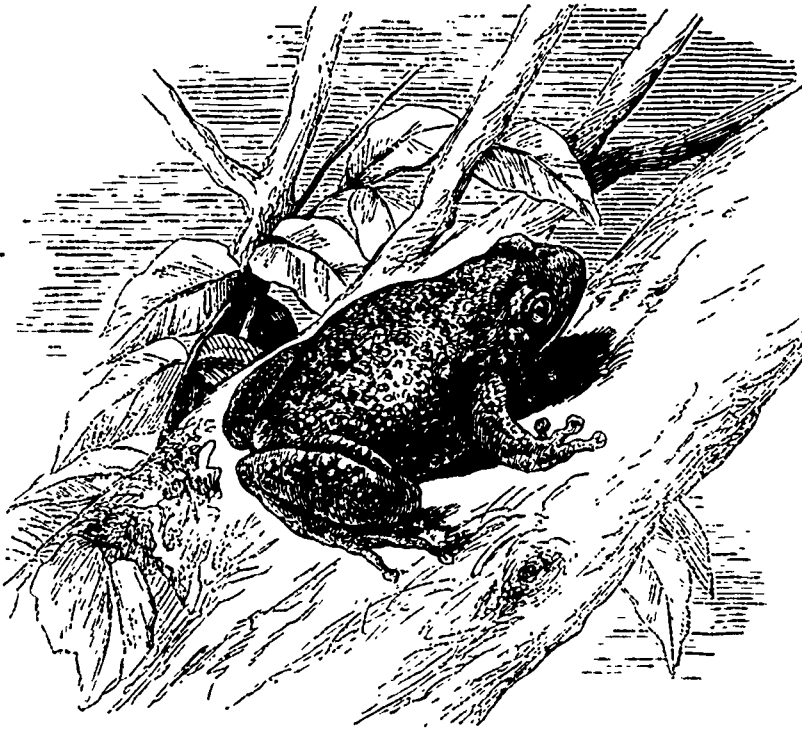
on our approach became frightened, and retired in great haste to their retreats in the neighbouring bushes. Soon, finding that they were not pursued, they commenced hopping back, and caught with avidity each canker worm as it descended on its tiny thread. We counted at one time thirty immediately around our feet. Day after day we fed them on their favourite food, and they became so tame as to follow us, watch our hand, and take the worm from our fingers.

"In the autumn," says another writer, "a pit wherein melons were grown was so much infested with ants as to threaten the destruction of the whole crop, which they did first by perforating the skin and afterwards eating their way into the fruit; and making

are also the virtues of the jewel contained in its head. But he has a jewel—not, however, in his head, as the poet would have it. It is seated in his stomach, instead of his head, and, unlike the oyster, whose pearls are the result of disease, this comes of good health and good digestion.

"That poor, despised, and harmless reptile is admirable in its proportions, and has an eye of such transcendent beauty that, when we find one, we place it on our hand to view it more minutely. Its skin, too, so completely adapted to the subterranean places into which it goes for shelter, is well worth the attention of the philosopher. As this little animal is innocuous, we feel sorry when we see it trampled under foot by inconsiderate people, who have learned from their grandfathers that it is full of venom." Our common Canadian species (*Bufo Americanus*) is, in general appearance, very like the well-known European toad. Its eggs are deposited in long strings, and fertilized like those of the frog; and like that animal, the first stage of its existence is passed in the water, in the tadpole state.

Another species of toad, not so well known as the foregoing, yet not uncommon, is the Tree Toad (*Hyla versicolor*), which spends the greater part of its life and finds its prey among the branches of trees, to which it clings by means of the peculiar conformation of its feet, the toes being tipped with little round pellets. It is extremely



several unsuccessful experiments to destroy them, it occurred to us that we had seen the toad feed on them. We accordingly put about half-a-dozen toads into the pit, and in a few days scarcely an ant was to be found.'

"Several years ago a gentleman advertised for toads to put in his garden, for which he paid a small sum each; and if others would follow his example, and thus induce the boys to save the toads alive, instead of killing them, all would be the gainers.

"In proportion to what the toad is capable of doing, there is not a more useful animal to man. In the search of a livelihood he is sure to benefit somebody. He has no bad habits, yet how often do we find him the victim of an ignorant and cruel prejudice.

"The toad has had its full share of marvellous tales. Its poisonous properties are celebrated in many an ancient chronicle, as

variable in its colour and markings, and has the power, moreover, of changing its hue to assimilate it to that of surrounding objects, in such a manner as to elude detection. This peculiarity is indicated in its specific name—*versicolor*, colour changing. It is said to possess also considerable ventriloquial power, so as to deceive the listener in regard to the direction of the sound of its voice, and render its capture still more difficult—a convenient provision of no small consequence to its safety, as it is extremely noisy, especially during damp weather. These two species are the most common in Canada, but several others are met with in different parts of the continent. We must reserve further notice of the order to another issue. The illustration represents the common tree Toad.

Eighteen flocks of wild pigeons passed over London on the 28th March, proceeding in a north-easterly direction.