

IMPRISONED FROGS AND TOADS.

The imprisonment of frogs and toads in stone is much more remarkable than that in the trunk of trees, even if we believe only a modicum of the narratives published on the subject. The statements are unmistakable, and are made in all good faith, that living frogs and toads are occasionally thus imbedded, and that exact impressions of their bodies corresponding to their respective sizes, are left in the cavities of the stone where they are found. Chatsworth is credited with once having had (we do not know whether it still exists) a marble chimney-piece with a print of a toad in it; there was a traditional account of the manner in which it was found. The *Mining Journal* contains an account of a discovery made by a miner at Pen-y-Caran, near Merthyr-Tydfil. When working at a depth of forty-five feet, his mandrel struck into a piece of shale; a frog, large but weak, leaped out and crawled along the ground with some difficulty; the eyes were full-sized, but apparently sightless; the mouth seemed as permanently closed, and the spine was twisted as if it had been compelled to adapt itself to a narrow and ill-shaped space. The frog, when liberated, grew in size and weight, but could not be fed; he appeared to breathe through the skin covering the lower jaw. We certainly cannot blame Ellis, the miner, from exhibiting his prodigy to admiring visitors at a public-house in Merthyr; and considering the intensity of popular belief on this subject, we must view indulgently his inscription: "The greatest wonder of the world! a frog found in a stone forty feet below the surface of the surface of the earth, where it has been living without food for the last five thousand years!"

The first question is now how much of these narratives to believe; and the second, how to account for so much as we do believe. That frogs live to a great age, that they are liable to endure long abstinence, that their power of hibernation is something extraordinary, and that the skin has the property of acting upon the atmosphere in such a way as to fulfill in some degree the function of the lungs, are facts admitted by naturalists. The toad, also, when kept in a dark place, can live for several months without food of any kind. Smellie, while cautiously abstaining alike from positive belief and absolute incredulity, recommended observant men to attend to such a possible explanation as the following: "In the rocks there are many chinks as well as fissures, both horizontal and perpendicular, and in old trees nothing is more frequent than holes and vacancies of various dimensions. Through these fissures and vacancies the eggs of toads may be accidentally conveyed by water, the penetration of which few substances are capable of resisting. After the eggs are hatched, the animals may receive moisture and small portions of air through the crevices of rocks or the channels of aged trees. But," he modestly adds, "I mean to persuade, for I cannot satisfy myself."

Mr. Broderip, the naturalist, does not admit the probability of Smellie's conjecture concerning the conveyance of frog's eggs by water. No one now doubts that frogs, toads, snakes, and lizards really do issue occasionally from rock broken in a quarry, hard stone loosened in well-sinking, and coal or shale dug in a colliery; but the question is whether the substances were really solid and impassable to air and moisture. The late Dr. Buckland remarked that "the evidence is never perfect to show that the reptiles were entirely inclosed in solid rock. No examination is made until the reptile is first discovered by the breaking of the mass in which it was contained, and then it is too late to ascertain, without carefully replacing every fragment (and in no case that I have seen reported has this ever been done,) whether or not there was any hole or crevice by which the animal may have entered the cavity from which it was extracted. Without previous examination it is almost impossible to prove that there was no such communication."

Dr. Buckland, to test the matter in some degree, made some remarkable experiments. He caused twelve circular cells or cavities to be cut in a large block of oolite limestone, with provision for an air-tight glass

cover to each cell. Twelve other cells were cut in a block of siliceous sandstone. Twenty-four live toads were put into the cells, one in each, the covers fastened down air-tight and the blocks of stone buried three feet deep in a garden. They were left undisturbed for twelve months, at the end of which time the cells were opened. All the toads in the sandstone rock were dead, but most of those in the oolite (the cells of which were larger) were still living. Some had lessened in weight, some had increased. But as a few of the plates of glass were found cracked, it was deemed possible that minute insects might have entered. The living toads were left alone for another twelve months, at the end of which time all were dead. Seen through the glass covers, the poor fellows seemed to be always awake, with open eyes. Perhaps they were marveling what crime of their had subjected them to a sentence of two years' solitary confinement.

To sum up; the best naturalists now agree that, however wonderful the ascertained phenomena really are, frogs and toads cannot live one year without air, nor probably two years without food.—*Harper's Weekly.*

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NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN THAT the undersigned has filed his final account as Executor of the last will and testament of H. E. BONES, Dec'd in the County Court of the State of Oregon for Washington County, and that THURSDAY after the first Monday in January, A. D. 1875, at 10 o'clock a. m. has been set for the final hearing of said matter.

S. A. HOLCOMB.

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