

THE TOAD KING AND THE FROG QUEEN



Once upon a time there was a miller at Moulin de la Mer, in the parish of Matignon. He could not live in the house beside his mill, because every night the frogs and toads fought with each other around the pool outside, and they made such a noise that the miller and his wife could not get a wink of sleep.

This went on for eighteen months, and people started to come from far and wide to see the battle between the frogs and the toads.

Amongst the visitors to Moulin de la Mer was a man who understood the language of the birds and the beasts.

"I can rid you of these frogs and toads who will not let you sleep," he said.

"I would be very grateful to you," said the miller. "How much do you want in return?"

"A hundred francs," said the man.

"If you can rid me of those frogs and toads," said the miller, "I will owe you far more than that."

The miller took the man to the mill, and when evening came, the frogs in the pool began to croak, and the toads coming down from the mountain began to give forth their cry. They met, and began to fight in the water, on the road, in the mill-yard, and even in the house.

The man who understood the language of

The Toad King and the Frog Queen

the animals said nothing, but listened. When the fight was over, he turned to the miller:

“Do you know why they are fighting?” he asked.

“No,” the miller replied.

“It is a war between the frogs and the toads. The Toad King has fallen in love with the Frog Queen, and has made her an offer of marriage, but she has refused him, and that is the reason for this war. However, if you like, I will catch the Frog Queen tonight.”

“But how can it be done?” asked the miller.

“Do not worry about that. Have you a little fishing net?”

The miller gave him a net the size of a carrelet*, and the man who understood the language of the birds and the beasts greased it with an ointment that he took from a little bottle. Then he spread the net and the Frog Queen was caught in it.

She had eyes as round and shining as pocket watches, and her webbed feet were the size of a big man’s hands. They were both was astonished when they saw her, and the miller was afraid.

The Frog Queen began to talk to the man who had set the trap.

“Oh fisherman, why have you caught me in your net?” she said.

“Because I wanted you in my power,” he replied.

“Who taught you how I could be caught?”

“It was Father Lampoudrie.”

“Alas,” cried the Frog Queen, “he is my great enemy. But take care; if you do not set me free, your mill will never again have water.”

“Before you go,” said the miller, who had not yet spoken, “you must promise to end this war; for it has kept me awake at night for many months.”

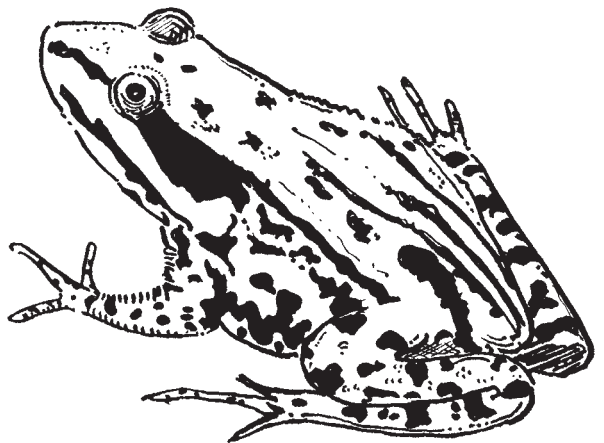
“Why have you refused to marry the Toad King?” asked the other man.

“Because he is so ugly,” cried the Frog Queen. “I will never marry him!”

“Then I will take you home with me,” said the miller.

“If you leave me for an hour without water I will die,” said the Frog Queen, “and your mill will never turn again.”

The miller brought a great vat



*carrelet – small square fishing net

full of water, and put the frog in it.

When evening came, the frogs began to croak, and the toads came down from the mountain. As soon as the Frog Queen saw the Toad King she leapt ten feet into the air, out of the vat, and onto her enemy. There was a terrible battle, and the fighting only ended at daybreak.

The following day, the man who understood the language of the birds and the beasts came back to the mill. As before, he greased his net, and once again he caught the Frog Queen.

However, this time she was forced to promise to end the war and to marry the Toad King. The miller and the man found the toad, and he was overjoyed at the good news.

When the Frog Queen saw him she said:

“Oh Toad, how can you want me to marry you when you are so ugly?”

“I may be ugly,” he replied, “but I draw poison from the earth and I purify the water that feeds you.”

“Very well,” said the Frog Queen, “I will marry you tomorrow, and bring an end to the war. Alas, since it began, I have lost over 10,000 frogs.”

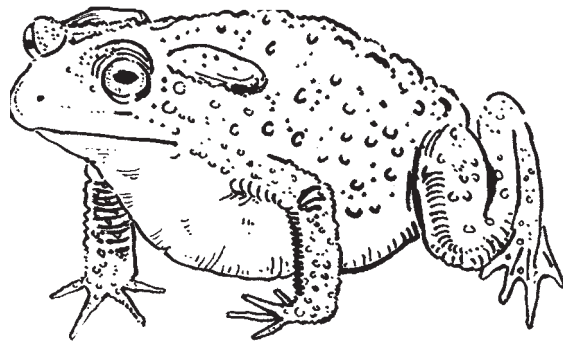
“And I have lost over twenty thousand of my subjects,” said the Toad King.

They invited the miller and his wife to the wedding, and they told them that afterwards they would receive a reward.

Next evening, the King was the first to arrive at the pool. He was accompanied by all his subjects, and he had made himself very handsome. His eyes were red, and his body was covered with warts the size of hens’ eggs.

The Frog Queen was also looking very beautiful; she had put on her prettiest green gown, and her eyes were as big and shining as pocket watches.

All the frogs were singing because the war was finally over, and the banquet took place beside the pool. There were countless dishes and delicacies for the frogs and toads, and a table was set up for the miller, the miller’s wife, and the man



who knew the language of the birds and the beasts. Upon this were placed all that was best to eat and drink.

When the meal was over, the toads asked the frogs to dance, and the festivities went on till morning. When the dance came to an end, the Toad King turned to the miller:

“I have you to thank for helping me to marry the Frog Queen,” he said. “To reward you, I will chase away all the reptiles from your land; I will stop them from eating your crops, and you will always have good harvests.”

“And to reward you for sparing my life, I will make sure that your pool is always full of water,” said the Frog Queen. “What’s more, you shall always have corn to grind in your mill, and I will show you some treasure that was hidden two hundred years ago by another miller.”

The Frog Queen and the Toad King showed the miller the treasure, then they left together. The miller was always prosperous, and he never again saw the Frog Queen and the Toad King.

Told by Rose Renaud, from Saint-Cast. She heard the story from Marie-Jeanne Carfantan, from Henanbihan, who was told it by her grandfather.