

# Why Grandfather Frog Has No Tail

by Thornton W. Burgess

Old Mother West Wind had gone to her day's work, leaving all the Merry Little Breezes to play in the Green Meadows. They had played tag and run races with the Bees and played hide and seek with the Sun Beams, and now they had gathered around the Smiling Pool where on a green lily pad sat Grandfather Frog.

Grandfather Frog was old, very old, indeed, and very, very wise. He wore a green coat and his voice was very deep. When Grandfather Frog spoke everybody listened very respectfully. Even Billy Mink treated Grandfather Frog with respect, for Billy Mink's father and his father's father could not remember when Grandfather Frog had not sat on the lily pad watching for green flies.

Down in the Smiling Pool were some of Grandfather Frog's great-great-great-great-great grandchildren. You wouldn't have known that they were his grandchildren unless some one told you. They didn't look the least bit like Grandfather Frog. They were round and fat and had long tails and perhaps this is why they were called Pollywogs.

“Oh Grandfather Frog, tell us why you don't have a tail as you did when you were young,” begged one of the Merry Little Breezes.

Grandfather Frog snapped up a foolish green fly and settled himself on his big lily pad, while all the Merry Little Breezes gathered round to listen.

“Once on a time,” began Grandfather Frog, “the Frogs ruled the world, which was mostly water. There was very little dry land—oh, very little indeed! There were no boys to throw stones and no hungry Mink to gobble up foolish Frog-babies who were taking a sun bath!”

Billy Mink, who had joined the Merry Little Breezes and was listening, squirmed uneasily and looked away guiltily.

“In those days all the Frogs had tails, long handsome tails of which they were very, very proud indeed,” continued Grandfather Frog. “The King of all the Frogs was twice as big as any other Frog, and his tail was three times as long. He was very proud, oh, very proud indeed of his long tail. He used to sit and admire it until he thought that there never had been and never could be another such tail. He used to wave it back and forth in the water, and every time he waved it all the other Frogs would cry 'Ah!' and 'Oh!' Every day the King grew more vain. He did nothing at all but eat and sleep and admire his tail.

“Now all the other Frogs did just as the King did, so pretty soon none of the Frogs were doing anything but sitting about eating, sleeping and admiring their own tails and the King's.

“Now you all know that people who do nothing worth while in this world are of no use and there is little room for them. So when Mother Nature saw how useless had become the Frog tribe she called the King Frog before her and she said:

“Because you can think of nothing but your beautiful tail it shall be taken away from you. Because you do nothing but eat and sleep your mouth shall become wide like a door, and your eyes shall start forth

from your head. You shall become bow-legged and ugly to look at, and all the world shall laugh at you.'

“The King Frog looked at his beautiful tail and already it seemed to have grown shorter. He looked again and it was shorter still. Every time he looked his tail had grown shorter and smaller. By and by when he looked there was nothing left but a little stub which he couldn't even wriggle. Then even that disappeared, his eyes popped out of his head and his mouth grew bigger and bigger.”

Old Grandfather Frog stopped and looked sadly at a foolish green fly coming his way. “Chug-arum,” said Grandfather Frog, opening his mouth very wide and hopping up in the air. When he sat down again on his big lily pad the green fly was nowhere to be seen. Grandfather Frog smacked his lips and continued:

“And from that day to this every Frog has started life with a big tail, and as he has grown bigger and bigger his tail has grown smaller and smaller, until finally it disappears, and then he remembers how foolish and useless it is to be vain of what nature has given us. And that is how I came to lose my tail,” finished Grandfather Frog.

“Thank you,” shouted all the Merry Little Breezes. “We won't forget.”

Then they ran a race to see who could reach Johnny Chuck's home first and tell him that Farmer Brown was coming down on the Green Meadows with a gun.

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