

Chapter 12: A Hunt for Trouble



BY THORNTON W. BURGESS

Ol' Mistah Buzzard, sailing high in the blue, blue sky, looked down on a funny sight. Yes, Sir, it certainly was a funny sight. It was a little procession of five of his friends of the Smiling Pool. First was Billy Mink, who, because he is slim and nimble, moves so quickly it sometimes is hard to follow him. Behind him was Little Joe Otter, whose legs are so short that he almost looks as if he hadn't any. Behind Little Joe was Jerry Muskrat, who is a better traveler in the water than on land. Behind Jerry was Grandfather Frog, who neither walks nor runs but travels with great jumps. Last of all was Spotty the Turtle, who travels very, very slowly because, you know, he carries his house with him. And all five were headed up the Laughing Brook, which laughed no more, because there was not water enough in it.

Now Ol' Mistah Buzzard hadn't been over near the Smiling Pool for some time, and he hadn't heard how the Smiling Pool had stopped smiling, and the Laughing Brook had stopped laughing. When he looked down and saw how the water was so nearly gone from them that the trout and the minnows had hardly enough in which to live, he was so surprised that he kept saying over and over to himself:

"Fo' the lan's sake! Fo' the lan's sake!"

Then, when he saw his five little friends marching up the Laughing Brook, he guessed

right away that it must be something to do with the trouble in the Smiling Pool. Ol' Mistah Buzzard just turned his broad wings and slid down, down out of the blue, blue sky until he was right over Grandfather Frog.

"Where are yo'all going?" asked Ol' Mistah Buzzard.

"Chugarum! To find out what is the trouble with the Laughing Brook," replied Grandfather Frog.

"I'll help you," said Ol' Mistah Buzzard, once more sailing up in the blue, blue sky.

Grandfather Frog watched him until he was nothing but a speck. "I wish I had wings," sighed Grandfather Frog, and once more began to hop along up the bed of the Laughing Brook.

The Laughing Brook came down from the Green Forest and wound through the Green Meadows for a little way before it reached the Smiling Pool. There the sun shone down into it, and Grandfather Frog didn't mind, although his legs were getting tired. But when they got into the Green Forest it was dark and gloomy. At least Grandfather Frog thought so, and so did Spotty the Turtle, for both dearly love the sunshine. But still they kept on, for they felt that they must find the trouble with the Laughing Brook. If they found this, they would also find the trouble with the Smiling Pool.

So Billy Mink jumped and skipped far ahead; Little Joe Otter ran; Jerry Musk-

rat walked, for he soon gets tired on land;
Grandfather Frog hopped; Spotty the Turtle
crawled, and way, way up in the blue, blue sky,
Ol' Mistah Buzzard flew, all looking for the
trouble which had stopped the laughing of the
Laughing Brook and the smiling of the Smil-
ing Pool.