

The Day of the Great Storm

by Clara Dillingham Pierson

Everything in the meadow was dry and dusty. The leaves on the milkweeds were turning yellow with thirst, the field blossoms drooped their dainty heads in the sunshine, and the grass seemed to fairly rattle in the wind, it was so brown and dry.

All of the meadow people when they met each other would say, "Well, this *is* hot," and the Garter Snake, who had lived there longer than anyone else, declared that it was the hottest and driest time that he had ever known. "Really," he said, "it is so hot that I cannot eat, and such a thing never happened before."

The Grasshoppers and Locusts were very happy, for such weather was exactly what they liked. They didn't see how people could complain of such delightful scorching days. But that, you know, is always the way, for everybody cannot be suited at once, and all kinds of weather are needed to make a good year.

The poor Tree Frog crawled into the coolest place he could find—hollow trees, shady nooks under the ferns, or even beneath the corner of a great stone. "Oh," said he, "I wish I were a Tadpole again, swimming in a shady pool. It is such a long, hot journey to the marsh that I cannot go. Last night I dreamed that I was a Tadpole, splashing in the water, and it was hard to awaken and find myself only an uncomfortable old Tree Frog."

Over his head the Katydids were singing, "Lovely weather! Lovely weather!" and the Tree Frog, who was a good-natured old fellow after all, winked his eye at them and said: "Sing away. This won't last always, and then it will be my turn to sing."

Sure enough, the very next day a tiny cloud drifted across the sky, and the Tree Frog, who always knew when the weather was about to change, began his rain-song. "Pukr-r-rup!" sang he, "Pukr-r-rup! It will rain! It will rain! R-r-r-rain!"

The little white cloud, grew bigger and blacker, and another came following after, then another, and another, and another, until the sky was quite covered with rushing black clouds. Then came a long, low rumble of thunder, and all the meadow people hurried to find shelter. The Moths and Butterflies hung on the under sides of great leaves. The Grasshoppers and their cousins crawled under burdock and mullein plants. The Ants scurried around to find their own homes. The Bees and Wasps, who had been gathering honey for their nests, flew swiftly back. Everyone was hurrying to be ready for the shower, and above all the rustle and stir could be heard the voice of the old Frog, "Pukr-r-rup! Pukr-r-rup! It will rain! It will rain! R-r-r-rain!"

The wind blew harder and harder, the branches swayed and tossed, the leaves danced, and some even blew off of their mother trees; the hundreds of little clinging creatures clung more and more tightly to the leaves that sheltered them, and then the rain came, and such a rain! Great drops hurrying down from the sky, crowding each other, beating down the grass, flooding the homes of the Ants and Digger Wasps until they were half choked with water, knocking over the Grasshoppers and tumbling them about like leaves. The lightning flashed, and the thunder pealed, and often a tree would crash down in the forest near by when the wind blew a great blast.

When everybody was wet, and little rivulets of water were trickling through the grass and running into great puddles in the hollows, the rain stopped, stopped suddenly. One by one the meadow people crawled or swam into sight.

The Digger Wasp was floating on a leaf in a big puddle. He was too tired and wet to fly, and the whirling of the leaf made him feel sick and dizzy, but he stood firmly on his tiny boat and tried to look as though he enjoyed it.

The Ants were rushing around to put their homes in shape, the Spiders were busily eating their old webs, which had been broken and torn in the storm, and some were already beginning new ones. A large family of Bees, whose tree-home had been blown down, passed over the meadow in search for a new dwelling, and everybody seemed busy and happy in the cool air that followed the storm.

The Snake went gliding through the wet grass, as hungry as ever, the Tree Frog was as happy as when he was a Tadpole, and only the Grasshoppers and their cousins, the Locusts and Katydid, were cross. "Such a horrid rain!" they grumbled, "it spoiled all our fun. And after such lovely hot weather too."

"Now don't be silly," said the Tree Frog, who could be really severe when he thought best, "the Bees and the Ants are not complaining, and they had a good deal harder time than you. Can't you make the best of anything? A nice, hungry, cross lot you would be if it didn't rain, because then you would have no good, juicy food. It's better for you in the end as it is, but even if it were not, you might make the best of it as I did of the hot weather. When you have lived as long as I have, you will know that neither Grasshoppers nor Tree Frogs can have their way all the time, but that it always comes out all right in the end without their fretting about it."

Source:

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