

**The Surprising Adventures of the Magical Monarch of Mo and His
People**

By

L. Frank Baum

To the Comrade of my boyhood days Dr. Henry Clay Baum

TO THE READER

This book has been written for children. I have no shame in acknowledging that I, who wrote it, am also a child; for since I can remember my eyes have always grown big at tales of the marvelous, and my heart is still accustomed to go pit-a-pat when I read of impossible adventures. It is the nature of children to scorn realities, which crowd into their lives all too quickly with advancing years. Childhood is the time for fables, for dreams, for joy.

These stories are not true; they could no be true and be so marvelous. No one is expected to believe them; they were meant to excite laughter and to gladden the heart.

Perhaps some of those big, grown-up people will poke fun of us--at you for reading these nonsense tales of the Magical Monarch, and at me for writing them. Never mind. Many of the big folk are still children--even as you and I. We cannot measure a child by a standard of size or age. The big folk who are children will be our comrades; the others we need not consider at all, for they are self-exiled from our domain.

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June, 1903.

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The First Surprise - THE BEAUTIFUL VALLEY OF MO

I dare say there are several questions you would like to ask at the very beginning of this history. First: Who is the Monarch of Mo? And why is he called the Magical Monarch? And where is Mo, anyhow? And why have you never heard of it before? And can it be reached by a railroad or a trolley-car, or must one walk all the way?

These questions I realize should be answered before we (that "we" means you and the book) can settle down for a comfortable reading of all the wonders and astonishing adventures I shall endeavor faithfully to relate.

In the first place, the Monarch of Mo is a very pleasant personage holding the rank of King. He is not very tall, nor is he very short; he is midway between fat and lean; he is delightfully jolly when he is not sad, and seldom sad if he can possibly be jolly. How old he may be I have never dared to inquire; but when we realize that he is destined to live as long as the Valley of Mo exists we may reasonably suppose the Monarch of Mo is exactly as old as his native land. And no one in Mo has ever reckoned up the years to see how many they have been. So we will just say that the Monarch of Mo and the Valley of Mo are each a part of the other, and can not be separated.

He is not called the Magical Monarch because he deals in magic--for he doesn't deal in magic. But he leads such a queer life in such a queer country that his history will surely seem magical to us who inhabit the civilized places of the world and think that anything we can not find a reason for must be due to magic. The life of the Monarch of Mo seems simple enough to him, you may be sure, for he knows no other existence. And our ways of living, could he know of them, would doubtless astonish him greatly.

The land of Mo, which is ruled by the King we call the Magical Monarch, is often spoken of as the "Beautiful Valley." If they would only put it on the maps of our geographies and paint it pink or light green, and print a big round dot where the King's castle stands, it would be easy enough to point out to you its exact location. But I can not find the Valley of Mo in any geography I have examined; so I suspect the men who made these instructive books really know nothing about Mo, else it would surely be on the maps.

Of one thing I am certain: that no other country included in the maps is so altogether delightful as the Beautiful Valley of Mo.

The sun shines all the time, and its rays are perfumed. The people who live in the Valley do not sleep, because there is no night. Everything they can possibly need grows on the trees, so they have no use for money at all, and that saves them a deal of worry.

There are no poor people in this quaint Valley. When a person desires a new hat he waits till one is ripe, and then picks it and wears it without asking anybody's permission. If a lady wishes a new ring, she examines carefully those upon the ring-tree, and when she finds one that fits her finger she picks it and wears it upon her hand. In this way they procure all they desire.

There are two rivers in the Land of Mo, one of which flows milk of a very rich quality. Some of the islands in Milk River are made of excellent cheese, and the people are welcome to spade up this cheese whenever they wish to eat it. In the little pools near the bank, where the current does not flow swiftly, delicious cream rises to the top of the milk, and instead of water-lilies great strawberry leaves grow upon the surface, and the ripe, red berries lie dipping their noses into the cream, as if inviting you to come and eat them. The sand that forms the river bank is pure white sugar, and all kinds of candies and bonbons grow thick on the low bushes, so that any one may pluck them easily.

These are only a few of the remarkable things that exist in the Beautiful Valley.

The people are merry, light-hearted folk, who live in beautiful houses of pure crystal, where they can rest themselves and play their games and go in when it rains. For it rains in Mo as it does everywhere else, only it rains lemonade; and the lightning in the sky resembles the most beautiful fireworks; and the thunder is usually a chorus from the opera of Tannhauser.

No one ever dies in this Valley, and the people are always young and beautiful. There is the King and a Queen, besides several princes and princesses. But it is not much use being a prince in Mo, because the King can not die; therefore a prince is a prince to the end of his days, and his days never end.

Strange things occur in this strange land, as you may imagine; and while I relate some of these you will learn more of the peculiar features of the Beautiful Valley.