

The Woggle-Bug Book

By

L. Frank Baum

The Unique Adventures of the WOGGLE-BUG

ONE day Mr. H. M. Woggle-Bug, T. E., becoming separated from his comrades who had accompanied him from the Land of Oz, and finding that time hung heavy on his hands (he had four of them), decided to walk down the Main street of the City and try to discover something or other of interest.

The initials "H. M." before his name meant "Highly Magnified," for this Woggle-Bug was several thousand times bigger than any other woggle-bug you ever saw. And the initials "T. E." after his named meant "Thoroughly Educated"--and so he was, in the Land of Oz. But his education, being applied to a woggle-bug intellect, was not at all remarkable in this country, where everything is quite different than Oz. Yet the Woggle-Bug did not suspect this, and being, like so many other thoroughly educated persons, proud of his mental attainments, he marched along the street with an air of importance that made one wonder what great thoughts were occupying his massive brain.

Being about as big, in his magnified state, as a man, the Woggle-Bug took care to clothe himself like a man; only, instead of choosing sober colors for his garments, he delighted in the most gorgeous reds and yellows and blues and greens; so that if you looked at him long the brilliance of his clothing was liable to dazzle your eyes.

I suppose the Woggle-Bug did not realize at all what a queer appearance he made. Being rather nervous, he seldom looked into a mirror; and as the people he met avoided telling him he was unusual, he had fallen into the habit of considering himself merely an ordinary citizen of the big city wherein he resided.

So the Woggle-Bug strutted proudly along the street, swinging a cane in one hand, flourishing a pink handkerchief in the other, fumbling his watch-fob with another, and feeling his necktie was straight with another. Having four hands to use would prove rather puzzling to you or me, I imagine; but the Woggle-Bug was thoroughly accustomed to them.

Presently he came to a very fine store with big plate-glass windows, and standing in the center of the biggest window was a creature so beautiful and radiant and altogether charming that the first glance at her nearly took his breath away. Her complexion was lovely, for it was wax; but the

thing which really caught the Woggle-Bug's fancy was the marvelous dress she wore. Indeed, it was the latest (last year's) Paris model, although the Woggle-Bug did not know that; and the designer must have had a real woggly love for bright colors, for the gown was made of red cloth covered with big checks which were so loud the fashion books called them "Wagnerian Plaids."

Never had our friend the Woggle-Bug seen such a beautiful gown before, and it afflicted him so strongly that he straightaway fell in love with the entire outfit--even to the wax-complexioned lady herself! Very politely he tipped his to her; but she stared coldly back without in any way acknowledging the courtesy.

"Never mind," he thought; "'faint heart never won fair lady.' And I'm determined to win this kaliedoscope of beauty or perish in the attempt!" You will notice that our insect had a way of using big words to express himself, which leads us to suspect that the school system in Oz is the same they employ in Boston.

As, with swelling heart, the Woggle-Bug feasted his eyes upon the enchanting vision, a small green tag that was attached to a button of the waist suddenly attracted his attention. Upon the tag was marked: "Price 7.93--GREATLY REDUCED."

"Ah!" murmured the Woggle-Bug; "my darling is in greatly reduced circumstances, and

7.93 will make her mine! Where, oh where, shall I find the seven ninety-three wherewith to liberate this divinity and make her Mrs. Woggle-Bug?"

"Move on!" said a gruff policeman, who came along swinging his club. And the Woggle-Bug obediently moved on, his brain working fast and furious in the endeavor to think of a way to procure seven dollars and ninety-three cents.

You see, in the Land of Oz they use no money at all, so that when the Woggle-Bug arrived in America he did not possess a single penny. And no one had presented him with any money since.

"Yet there must be several ways to procure money in this country," he reflected; "for otherwise everybody would be as penniless as I am. But how, I wonder, do they manage to get it?"

Just then he came along a side street where a number of men were at work digging a long and deep ditch in which to lay a new sewer.

"Now these men," thought the Woggle-Bug, "must get money for shoveling all that earth, else they wouldn't do it. Here is my chance to win the charming vision of beauty in the shop window!"

Seeking out the foreman, he asked for work, and the foreman agreed to hire him.

"How much do you pay these workmen?" asked the highly magnified one.

"Two dollars a day," answered the foreman.

"Then," said the Woggle-Bug, "you must pay me four dollars a day; for I have four arms to their two, and can do double their work."

"If that is so, I'll pay you four dollars," agreed the man.

The Woggle-Bug was delighted.

"In two days," he told himself, as he threw off his brilliant coat and placed his hat upon it, and rolled up his sleeves; "in two days I can earn eight dollars--enough to purchase my greatly reduced darling and buy her seven cents worth of caramels besides."

He seized two spades and began working so rapidly with his four arms that the foreman said: "You must have been forewarned."

"Why?" asked the Insect.

"Because there's a saying that to be forewarned is to be four-armed," replied the other.

"That is nonsense," said the Woggle-Bug, digging with all his might; "for they call you the foreman, and yet I only see one of you."

"Ha, ha!" laughed the man, and he was so proud of his new worker that he went into the corner saloon to tell his friend the barkeeper what a treasure he had found.

It was just after noon that the Woggle-Bug hired as a ditch-digger in order to win his heart's desire; so at noon on the second day he quit work, and having received eight silver dollars he put on his coat and rushed away to the store that he might purchase his intended bride.

But, alas for the uncertainty of all our hopes! Just as the Woggle-Bug reached the door he saw a lady coming out of the store dressed in identical checks with which he had fallen in love!

At first he did not know what to do or say, for the young lady's complexion was not wax--far from it. But a glance into the window showed him the wax lady now dressed in a plain black tailor-made suit, and at once he knew the wearer of the Wagnerian plaids was his real love, and not the stiff creature behind the glass.

"Beg pardon!" he exclaimed, stopping the young lady; "but you're mine. Here's the seven ninety-three, and seven cents for candy."

But she glanced at him in a haughty manner, and walked away with her nose slightly elevated.

He followed. He could not do otherwise with those delightful checks shining before him like beacon-lights to urge him on.

The young lady stepped into a car, which whirled away rapidly. For a moment he was nearly paralyzed at his loss; then he started after the car as fast as he could go, and this was very fast indeed--he being a woggle-bug.

Somebody cried: "Stop, thief!" and a policeman ran out to arrest him. But the Woggle-Bug used his four hands to push the officer aside, and the astonished man went rolling into the gutter so recklessly that his uniform bore marks of the encounter for many days.

Still keeping an eye on the car, the Woggle-Bug rushed on. He frightened two dogs, upset a fat gentleman who was crossing the street, leaped over an automobile that shot in front of him, and finally ran plump into the car, which had abruptly stopped to let off a passenger. Breathing hard from his exertions, he jumped upon the rear platform of the car, only to see his charmer step off at the front and walk mincingly up the steps of a house. Despite his fatigue, he flew after her at once, crying out:

"Stop, my variegated dear--stop! Don't you know you're mine?"

But she slammed the door in his face, and he sat down upon the steps and wiped his forehead with his pink handkerchief and fanned himself with his hat and tried to think what he should do next.

Presently a very angry man came out of the house. He had a revolver in one hand and a carving-knife in the other.

"What do you mean by insulting my wife?" he demanded.

"Was that your wife?" asked the Woggle-Bug, in meek astonishment.

"Of course it is my wife," answered the man.

"Oh, I didn't know," said the insect, rather humbled. "But I'll give you seven ninety-three for her. That's all she's worth, you know; for I saw it marked on the tag."

The man gave a roar of rage and jumped into the air with the intention of falling on the Woggle-Bug and hurting him with the knife and pistol. But the Woggle-Bug was suddenly in a hurry, and didn't wait to be jumped on. Indeed, he ran so very fast that the man was content to let him go, especially as the pistol wasn't loaded and the carving-knife was as dull as such knives usually are.

But his wife had conceived a great dislike for the Wagnerian check costume that had won for her the Woggle-Bug's admiration. "I'll never wear it again!" she said to her husband, when he came in and told her that the Woggle-Bug was gone.

"Then," he replied, "you'd better give it to Bridget; for she's been bothering me about her wages lately, and the present will keep her quite for a month longer."

So she called Bridget and presented her with the dress, and the delighted servant decided to wear it that night to Mickey Schwartz's ball.

Now the poor Woggle-Bug, finding his affection scorned, was feeling very blue and unhappy that evening. When he walked out, dressed (among other things) in a purple-striped shirt, with a yellow necktie and pea-green gloves, he looked a great deal more cheerful than he really was. He had put on another hat, for the Woggle-Bug had a superstition that to

change his hat was to change his luck, and luck seemed to have overlooked the fact that he was in existence.

The hat may really have altered his fortunes, as the Insect shortly met Ikey Swanson, who gave him a ticket to Mickey Schwartz's ball; for Ikey's clean dickey had not come home from the laundry, and so he could not go himself.

The Woggle-Bug, thinking to distract his mind from his dreams of love, attended the hall, and the first thing he saw as he entered the room was Bridget clothed in that same gorgeous gown of Wagnerian plaid that had so fascinated his bugly heart.

The dear Bridget had added to her charms by putting seven full-blown imitation roses and three second-hand ostrich-plumes in her red hair; so that her entire person glowed like a sunset in June.

The Woggle-bug was enraptured; and, although the divine Bridget was waltzing with Fritzie Casey, the Insect rushed to her side and, seizing her with all his four arms at once, cried out in his truly educated Bostonian way:

"Oh, my superlative conglomeration of beauty! I have found you at last!"

Bridget uttered a shriek, and Fritzie Casey doubled two fists that looked like tombstones, and advanced upon the intruder.

Still embracing the plaid costume with two arms, the Woggle-Bug tipped Mr. Casey over with the other two. But Bridget made a bound and landed with her broad heel, which supported 180 pounds, firmly upon the Insect's toes. He gave a yelp of pain and promptly released the lady, and a moment later he found himself flat upon the floor with a dozen of the dancers piled upon him--all of whom were pummeling each other with much pleasure and a firm conviction that the diversion had been planned for their special amusement.

But the Woggle-Bug had the strength of many men, and when he flopped the big wings that were concealed by the tails of his coat, the gentlemen resting upon him were scattered like autumn leaves in a gust of wind.

The Insect stood up, rearranged his dress, and looked about him. Bridget had run away and gone home, and the others were still fighting amongst

themselves with exceeding cheerfulness. So the Woggle-Bug selected a hat which fit him (his own having been crushed out of shape) and walked sorrowfully back to his lodgings.

"Evidently that was not a lucky hat I wore to the ball," he reflected; "but perhaps this one I now have will bring about a change in my fortunes."

Bridget needed money; and as she had worn her brilliant costume once and allowed her friends to see how becoming it was, she carried it the next morning to a second-hand dealer and sold it for three dollars in cash.

Scarcely had she left the shop when a lady of Swedish extraction--a widow with four small children in her train--entered and asked to look at a gown. The dealer showed her the one he had just bought from Bridget, and its gay coloring so pleased the widow that she immediately purchased it for

3.65.

"Ay tank ets a good deal money, by sure," she said to herself; "but das leedle children mus' have new fadder to mak mind un tak care dere mudder like, by yimminy! An' Ay tank no man look may way in das ole dress I been wearing."

She took the gown and the four children to her home, where she lost no time in trying on the costume, which fitted her as perfectly as a flour-sack does a peck of potatoes.

"Das beau--tiful!" she exclaimed, in rapture, as she tried to see herself in a cracked mirror. "Ay go das very afternoon to valk in da park, for das man-folks go crazy-like ven he sees may fine frocks!"

Then she took her green parasol and a hand-bag stuffed with papers (to make it look prosperous and aristocratic) and sallied forth to the park, followed by all her interesting flock.

The men didn't fail to look at her, as you may guess; but none looked with yearning until the Woggle-Bug, sauntering gloomily along a path, happened to raise his eyes and see before him his heart's delight the very identical Wagnerian plaids which had filled him with such unbounded affection.

"Aha, my excruciatingly lovely creation!" he cried, running up and kneeling before the widow; "I have found you once again. Do not, I beg of you, treat me with coldness!"

For he had learned from experience not to unduly startle his charmer at their first moment of meeting; so he made a firm attempt to control himself, that the wearer of the checked gown might not scorn him.

The widow had no great affection for bugs, having wrestled with the species for many years; but this one was such a big-bug and so handsomely dressed that she saw no harm in encouraging him--especially as the men she had sought to captivate were proving exceedingly shy.

"So you tank Ay I ban loavely?" she asked, with a coy glance at the Insect.

"I do! With all my heart I do!" protested the Woggle-Bug, placing all four hands, one after another, over that beating organ.

"Das mak plenty trouble by you. I don'd could be yours!" sighed the widow, indeed regretting her admirer was not an ordinary man.

"Why not?" asked the Woggle-Bug. "I have still the seven ninety-three; and as that was the original price, and you are now slightly worn and second-handed, I do not see why I need despair of calling you my own."

It is very queer, when we think of it, that the Woggle-Bug could not separate the wearer of his lovely gown from the gown itself. Indeed, he always made love directly to the costume that had so enchanted him, without any regard whatsoever to the person inside it; and the only way we can explain this remarkable fact is to recollect that the Woggle-Bug was only a woggle-bug, and nothing more could be expected of him. The widow did not, of course, understand his speech in the least; but she gathered the fact that the Woggle-Bug had id money, so she sighed and hinted that she was very hungry, and that there was a good short-order restaurant just outside the park.

The Woggle-Bug became thoughtful at this. He hated to squander his money, which he had come to regard a sort of purchase price with which to secure his divinity. But neither could he allow those darling checks to go hungry; so he said:

"If you will come with me to the restaurant, I will gladly supply you with food."

The widow accepted the invitation at once, and the Woggle-Bug walked proudly beside her, leading all of the four children at once with his four hands.

Two such gay costumes as those worn by the widow and the Woggle-Bug are seldom found together, and the restaurant man was so impressed by the sight that he demanded his money in advance.

The four children, jabbering delightedly in their broken English, clambered upon four stools, and the widow sat upon another. And the Woggle-Bug, who was not hungry (being engaged in feasting his eyes upon the checks), laid down a silver dollar as a guarantee of good faith.

It was wonderful to see so much pie and cake and bread-and-butter and pickles and dough-nuts and sandwiches disappear into the mouths of the four innocents and their comparatively innocent mother. The Woggle-Bug had to add another quarter to the vanished dollar before the score was finally settled; and no sooner had the tribe trooped out restaurant than they turned into the open portals of an Ice-Cream Parlor, where they all attacked huge stacks of pale ice-cream and consumed several plates of lady-fingers and cream-puffs.

Again the Woggle-Bug reluctantly abandoned a dollar; but the end was not yet. The dear children wanted candy and nuts; and then they wanted pink lemonade; and then pop-corn and chewing-gum; and always the Woggle-Bug, after a glance at the entrancing costume, found himself unable to resist paying for the treat.

It was nearly evening when the widow pleaded fatigue and asked to be taken home. For none of them was able to eat another morsel, and the Woggle-Bug wearied her with his protestations of boundless admiration.

"Will you permit me to call upon you this evening?" asked the Insect, pleadingly, as he bade the wearer of the gown good-bye on her door-step.

"Sure like!" she replied, not caring to dismiss him harshly; and the happy Woggle-Bug went home with a light heart, murmuring to himself:

"At last the lovely plaids are to be my own! The new hat I found at the ball has certainly brought me luck."

I am glad our friend the Woggle-Bug had those few happy moments, for he was destined to endure severe disappointments in the near future.

That evening he carefully brushed his coat, put on a green satin necktie and a purple embroidered waist-coat, and walked briskly towards the house of the widow. But, alas! as he drew near to the dwelling a most horrible stench greeted his nostrils, a sense of great depression came over him, and upon pausing before the house his body began to tremble and his eyes rolled wildly in their sockets.

For the wily widow, wishing to escape her admirer, had sprinkled the door-step and the front walk with insect Exterminator, and not even the Woggle-Bug's love for the enchanting checked gown could induce him to linger longer in that vicinity.

Sick and discouraged, he returned home, where his first act was to smash the luckless hat and replace it with another. But it was some time before he recovered from the horrors of that near approach to extermination, and he passed a very wakeful and unhappy night, indeed.

Meantime the widow had traded with a friend of hers (who had once been a wash-lady for General Funston) the Wagnerian costume for a crazy quilt and a corset that was nearly as good as new and a pair of silk stockings that were not mates. It was a good bargain for both of them, and the wash-lady being colored--that is, she had a deep mahogany complexion--was delighted with her gorgeous gown and put it on the very next morning when she went to deliver the wash to the brick-layer's wife.

Surely it must have been Fate that directed the Woggle-Bug's steps; for, as he walked disconsolately along, an intuition caused him to raise his eyes, and he saw just ahead of him his affinity--carrying a large clothes-basket.

"Stop!" he called out, anxiously; "stop, my fair Grenadine, I implore you!"

The colored lady cast one glance behind her and imagined that Satan had at last arrived to claim her. For she had never before seen the Woggle-Bug, and was horrified by his sudden and unusual appearance.

"Go 'way, Mars' Debbil! Go 'way an' lemme 'lone!" she screeched, and the next minute she dropped her empty basket and sped up the street with a swiftness that only fear could have lent her flat-bottomed feet.

Nevertheless, the Woggle-Bug might have overtaken her had he not stepped into the clothes-basket and fallen headlong, becoming so tangled up in the thing that he rolled over and over several times before he could free himself. Then, when he had picked up his hat, which was utterly ruined, and found his cane, which had flown across the street, his mahogany charmer in the Wagnerian Plaids had disappeared from view.

With a sigh at his latest misfortune he returned home for another hat, and the agitated wash-lady, imagining that the devil had doubtless been lured by her beautiful gown, made haste to sell it to a Chinaman who lived next door.

Its bright colors pleased the Chink, who ripped it up and made it over into a Chinese robe, with flowing draperies falling to his heels. He dressed himself in his new costume and, being proud of possessing such finery, sat down on a bench outside his door so that everyone passing by could see how magnificent he looked.

It was here the wandering Woggle-Bug espied him; and, recognizing at once the pattern and colors of his infatuating idol, he ran up and sat beside the Chinaman, saying in agitated but educated tones:

"Oh my prismatic personification of gigantic gorgeousness!--again I have found you!"

"Sure tling," said the Chink with composure.

"Be mine! Only be mine!" continued the enraptured Woggle-Bug.

The Chinaman did not quite understand.

"Two dlolla a day," he answered, cautiously.

"Oh, joy," exclaimed the insect in delight; "I can then own you for a day and a half--for I have three dollars left. May I feel your exquisite texture, my dearest Fabric?"

"No flabic. No feelee. You too flesh. I man Chinaman!" returned the Oriental calmly.

"Never mind that! 'Tis your beautiful garment I love. Every check in that entrancing dress is a joy and a delight to my heart!"

While the Woggle-Bug thus raved, the Chinaman's wife (who was Mattie De Forest before she married him) heard the conversation, and decided this love affair had gone far enough. So she suddenly appeared with a broomstick, and with it began pounding the Woggle-Bug as fiercely as possible--and Mattie was no weakling, I assure you.

The first blow knocked the Insect's hat so far over his eyes that he was blinded; but, resolving not to be again cheated out of his darling, he grasped firmly hold of the Wagnerian plaids with all four hands, and tore a goodly portion of it from the frightened Celestial's body.

Next moment he was dashing down the street, with the precious cloth tucked securely underneath an arm, and Mattie, being in slight dishabile, did not think best to follow him.

The triumphant joy of the Woggle-Bug can well be imagined. No more need he chase the fleeting vision of his love--no more submit to countless disappointments in his efforts to approach the object of his affection. The gorgeous plaids were now his own (or a large part of them, anyway), and upon reaching the quiet room wherein he lodged he gloated long and happily over its vivid coloring and violent contrasts of its glowing hues. To the eyes of the Woggle-Bug nothing could be more beautiful, and he positively regretted the necessity of ever turning his gaze from this bewitching treasure.

That he might never in the future be separated from the checks, he folded them, with many loving caresses, into compact form, and wrapped them in a sheet of stout paper tied with cotton cord that had a love-knot at the end. Wherever he went, thereafter, he carried the parcel underneath his left upper arm, pressed as closely to his heart as possible. And this sense of possession was so delightful that our Woggle-Bug was happy as the day is long.

In the evening his fortunes changed with cruel abruptness.

He walked out to take the air, and noticing a crowd people standing in an open space and surrounding a huge brown object, our Woggle-Bug stopped to learn what the excitement was about.

Pushing his way through the crowd, and hugging his precious parcel, he soon reached the inner circle of spectators and found they had assembled to watch a balloon ascension. The Professor who was to go up with the balloon had not yet arrived; but the balloon itself was fully inflated and tugging hard at the rope that held it, as if anxious to escape the blended breaths of the people that crowded around. Just below the balloon was a small basket, attached to the netting of the gas-bag, and the Woggle-Bug was bending over the edge of this, to see what it contained, when a warning cry from the crowd caused him to pause and glance over his shoulder.

Great horrors and crumpled creeps! Springing toward him, with a scowl on his face and a long knife with a zig-zag blade in his uplifted hand, was that very Chinaman from whose body he had torn the Wagnerian plaids!

The plundered Celestial was evidently vindictive, and intended to push the wicked knife into the Woggle-Bug's body.

Our hero was a brave bug, as can easily be proved; but he did not wait for the knife to arrive at the broad of his back. Instead, he gave a yell (to show he was not afraid) and leaped nimbly into the basket of the balloon. The descending knife, missing its intended victim, fell upon the rope and severed it, and instantly the great balloon from the crowd and soared majestically toward the heavens.

The Woggle-Bug had escaped the Chinaman, but he didn't know whether to be glad or not.

For the balloon was earning him into the clouds, and he had no idea how to manage it, or to make it descend to earth again. When he peered over the edge of the basket he could hear the faint murmur of the crowd, and dimly see the enraged Professor (who had come too late) pounding the Chinaman, while the Chinaman tried to dissect the Professor with his knife.

Then all was blotted out; clouds rolled about him; night fell. The man in the moon laughed at him; the stars winked at each other as if delighted at the Woggle-Bug's plight, and a witch riding by on her broomstick yelled at him to keep on the right side of the road, and not run her down.

But the Woggle-Bug, squatted in the bottom of the basket and hugging his precious parcel to his bosom, paid no attention to anything but his own thoughts.

He had often ridden in the Gump; but never had he been so high as this, and the distance to the ground made him nervous.

When morning came he saw a strange country far beneath him, and longed to tread the earth again.

Now all woggle-bugs are born with wings, and our highly-magnified one had a beautiful, broad pair of floppers concealed beneath ample coat-tails. But long ago he had learned that his wings were not strong enough to lift his big body from the ground, so he had never tried to fly with them.

Here, however, was an occasion when he might put these wings to good use, for if he spread them in the air and then leaped over the side of the basket they would act in the same way a parachute does, and bear him gently to the ground.

No sooner did this thought occur to him than he put it into practice.

Disentangling his wings from his coat-tails, he spread them as wide as possible and then jumped from the car of the balloon.

Down, down the Woggle-Bug sank; but so slowly that there was no danger in the flight. He began to see the earth again, lying beneath him like a sun-kissed panorama of mud and frog-ponds and rocks and brushwood.

There were few trees, yet it was our insect's fate to drop directly above what trees there were, so that presently he came ker-plunk into a mass of tangled branches--and stuck there, with his legs dangling helplessly between two limbs and his wings caught in the foliage at either side.

Below was a group of Arab children, who at first started to run away. But, seeing that the queer creature which had dropped from the skies was caught fast in the tree, they stopped and began to throw stones and clubs at it. One of the missiles struck the tree-limb at the right of the Woggle-Bug and jarred him loose. The next instant he fluttered to the ground, where his first act was to fold up his wings and tuck them

underneath his coat-tails again, and his next action was to assure himself that the beloved plaids were still safe.

Then he looked for the Arab children; but they had scuttled away towards a group of tents, and now several men with dark skins and gay clothing came from the tents and ran towards the Woggle-Bug.

"Good morning," said our hero, removing his hat with a flourish and bowing politely.

"Meb-la-che-bah!" shouted the biggest Arab, and at once two others wound coils of rope around the Woggle-Bug and tied the ends in hard knots.

His hat was knocked off and trampled into the mud by the Shiek (who was the big Arab), and the precious parcel was seized and ruthlessly opened.

"Very good!" said the Shiek, eyeing the plaids with pleasure. "My slaves shall make me a new waistcoat of this cloth."

"No! oh, no!" cried the agonized Insect; "it is taken from a person who has had small-pox and yellow-fever and toothache and mumps--all at the same time. Do not, I bet you, risk your valuable life by wearing that cloth!"

"Bah!" said the Shiek, scornfully; "I have had all those diseases and many more. I am immune. But now," he continued, "allow me to bid you good-bye. I am sorry to be obliged to kill you, but such is our custom."

This was bad news for the Woggle-Bug; but he did not despair.

"Are you not afraid to kill me?" he asked, as if surprised.

"Why should I be afraid?" demanded the Shiek.

"Because it is well-known that to kill a woggle-bug brings bad luck to one."

The Shiek hesitated, for he was very superstitious.

"Are you a woggle-bug?" he asked.

"I am," replied the Insect, proudly. "And I may as well tell you that the last person who killed one of my race had three unlucky days. The first his suspenders broke (the Arab shuddered), the second day he smashed a looking-glass (the Arab moaned), and the third day he was chewed up by a crocodile."

Now the greatest aversion Arabs have is to be chewed by a crocodile, because these people usually roam over the sands of the desert, where to meet an amphibian is simply horrible; so at the Woggle-Bug's speech they set up a howl of fear, and the Shiek shouted:

"Unbind him! Let not a hair of his head be injured!"

At once the knots in the ropes were untied, and the Woggle-Bug was free. All the Arabs united to show him deference and every respectful attention, and since his own hat had been destroyed they wound about his head a picturesque turban of an exquisite soiled white color, having stripes of red and yellow in it.

Then the Woggle-Bug was escorted to the tents, where he suddenly remembered his precious plaids, and asked that the cloth he restored to him.

Thereupon the Shiek got up and made a long speech, in which he described his grief at being obliged to refuse the request.

At the end of that time one of the women came up to them with a lovely waistcoat which she had manufactured out of the Wagnerian plaids; and when the Shiek saw it he immediately ordered all the tom-toms and kettle-drums in the camp destroyed, as they were no longer necessary. Then he put on the gorgeous vestment, and turned a deaf ear to the Woggle-Bug's agonized wails.

But there were some scraps of cloth left, and to show that he was liberal and good-natured, the Shiek ordered these manufactured into a handsome necktie, which he presented Woggle-Bug in another long speech.

Our hero, realizing a larger part of his darling was lost to him, decided to be content with the smaller share; so he put on the necktie, and felt really proud of its brilliance and aggressive elegance.

Then, bidding the Arabs farewell, he strode across the desert until he reached the borders of a more fertile and favored country.

Indeed, he found before him a cool and enticing jungle, which at first seemed deserted. But while he stared about him a sound fell upon his ear, and he saw approaching a young lady Chimpanzee. She was evidently a personage of some importance, for her hair was neatly banged just over her eyes, and she wore a clean white pinafore with bows of pink ribbon at the shoulders.

"Good morning, Mr. Beetle," said she, with merry laughter.

"Do not, I beg of you, call me a beetle," exclaimed our hero, rather peevisly; "for I am actually a Woggle-Bug, and Highly-Magnified at that!"

"What's in a name?" laughed the gay damsel. "Come, let me introduce you to our jungle, where strangers of good breeding are always welcome."

"As for breeding," said the Woggle-Bug, "my father, although of ordinary size, was a famous Bug-Wizard in his day, and claimed descent from the original protoplasm which constituted the nucleus of the present planetary satellite upon which we exist."

"That's all right," returned Miss Chim. "Tell that to our king, and he'll decorate you with the medal of the Omnipotent Order of Onerous Orthographers, Are you ready to meander?"

The Woggle-Bug did not like the flippant tone in which maiden spoke; but he at once followed her.

Presently they came to a tall hedge surrounding the Inner Jungle, and without this hedge stood a patrol of brown bears who wore red soldier-caps and carried gold-plated muskets in their hands.

"We call this the bearier," said Miss Chim, pointing to the soldiers, "because they oblige all strangers to paws."

"I should think it was a bearicade," remarked the Woggle-Bug.

But when they approached the gateway the officer in charge saluted respectfully to Miss Chim, and permitted her to escort the Woggle-Bug into the sacred precincts of the Inner Jungle.

Here his eyes were soon opened to their widest capacity in genuine astonishment.

The Jungle was as clean and as well-regulated as any city of men the Insect had ever visited. Just within the gate a sleek antelope was running a pop-corn stand, and a little further on a screech-owl stood upon a stump playing a violin, while across her breast was a sign reading: "I am blind--at present."

As they walked up the street they came to a big grey monkey turning a hand-organ, and attached to a cord was a little nigger-boy whom the monkey sent into the crowd of animals, standing by to gather up the pennies, pulling him back every now and then by means of the cord.

"There's a curious animal for you," said Miss Chim, pointing to the boy. "Those horrid things they call men, whether black or white, seem to me the lowest of all created beasts."

"I have seen them in a highly civilized state," replied the Woggle-Bug, "and they're really further advanced than you might suppose."

But Miss Chim gave a scornful laugh, and pulled him away to where a hippopotamus sat under the shade of a big tree, mopping his brow with a red handkerchief--for the weather was somewhat sultry. Before the hip was a table covered with a blue cloth, and upon the cloth was embroidered the words: "Professor Hipmus, Fortune Teller."

"Want your fortune told?" asked Miss Chim.

"I don't mind," replied the Woggle-Bug.

"I'll read your hand," said the Professor, with a yawn that startled the insect. "To my notion palmistry is the best means of finding out what nobody knows or cares to know."

He took the upper-right hand of the Woggle-Bug, and after adjusting his spectacles bent over it with an air of great wisdom.

"You have been in love," announced the Professor; "but you got it in the neck."

"True!" murmured the astonished Insect, putting up his left lower hand to feel of the beloved necktie.

"You think you have won," continued the Hip; "but there are others who have 1, 2. You have many heart throbs before you, during your future life. Afterward I see no heart throbs whatever. Forty cents, please."

"Isn't he just wonderful?" asked Miss Chim, with enthusiasm. "He's the greatest fortune teller in the jungle."

"On account of his size, I suppose," returned the Woggle-Bug, as they walked on.

Soon they came to the Royal Palace, which was a beautiful bower formed of vines upon which grew many brilliant-hued forest flowers. The entrance was guarded by a Zebra, who barred admission until Miss Chim whispered the password in his ear. Then he permitted them to enter, and the Chimpanzee immediately ushered the Woggle-Bug into the presence of King Weasel.

This monarch lay coiled upon a purple silk cushion, half asleep and yet wakeful enough to be smoking a big cigar. Beside him crouched two prairie-dogs who were combing his hair very carefully, while a red squirrel perched near his head and fanned him with her bushy tail.

"Dear me, what have we here?" exclaimed the King of the Jungle, in a querulous tone, "Is it an over-grown pinch-bug, or is it a kissing-bug?"

"I have the honor to be a Woggle-Bug, your Majesty!" replied our hero, proudly.

"Sav, cut out that Majesty," snapped the King, with a scowl. "If you can find anything majestic about me, I'd like to know what it is."

"Don't treat him with any respect," whispered Miss Chim to the Insect, "or you'll get him riled. Sneer at him, and slap his face if you get a chance."

The Woggle-Bug took the hint.

"Really," he told the King. "I have never seen a more despicable creature than you. The admirable perspicacity inherent in your tribe seems to have deteriorated in you to a hyperbolated insousancy." Then he reached out his arms and slapped the king four times, twice on one side of his face and twice on the other.

"Thanks, my dear June-Bug," said the monarch; "I now recognize you to be a person of some importance."

"Sire, I am a Woggle-Bug, highly magnified and thoroughly educated. It is no exaggeration to say I am the greatest Woggle-Bug on earth."

"I fully believe it, so pray do not play any more foursomes on my jaw. I am sufficiently humiliated at this moment to recognize you as a Sullivanthauros, should you claim to be a member of that extinct race."

Then two little weasels--a boy weasel and a girl weasel--came into the bower and threw their school-books at the squirrel so cleverly that one hit the King upon the nose and smashed his cigar and the other caught him fairly in the pit of his stomach.

At first the monarch howled a bit; then he wiped the tears from his face and said:

"Ah, what delightful children I have! What do you wish, my darlings?"

"I want a cent for chewing gum," said the Girl Weasel.

"Get it from the Guinea-Pig; you have my assent. And what does my dear boy want?"

"Pop," went the Weasel, "our billy-goat has swallowed the hare you gave me to play with."

"Dear me," sighed the King, "how often I find a hair in the butter! Whenever I reign people carry umbrellas; and my son, although quite polished, indulges only in monkey-shines! Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown! but if one is scalped, the loss of the crown renders the head still more uneasy."

"Couldn't they find a better king than you?" enquired the Woggle-Bug, curiously, as the children left the bower.

"Yes; but no worse," answered the Weasel; "and here in the jungle honors are conferred only upon the unworthy. For if a truly great animal is honored he gets a swelled head, and that renders him unbearable. They now regard the King of the Jungle with contempt, and that makes all my subjects self-respecting."

"There is wisdom in that," declared the Woggle-Bug, approvingly; "a single glance at you makes me content with being so excellent a bug."

"True," murmured the King, yawning. "But you tire me, good stranger. Miss Chim, will you kindly get the gasoline can? It's high time to eradicate this insect."

"With pleasure," said Miss Chim, moving away with a smile.

But the Woggle-Bug did not linger to be eradicated. With one wild bound he cleared the door of the palace and sprinted up the entrance of the Jungle. The bear soldiers saw him running away, and took careful aim and fired. But the gold-plated muskets would not shoot straight, and now the Woggle-Bug was far distant, and still running with all his might.

Nor did he pause until he had emerged from the forest and crossed the plains, and reached at last the city from whence he had escaped in the balloon. And, once again in his old lodgings, he looked at himself in the mirror and said:

"After all, this necktie is my love--and my love is now mine forevermore! Why should I not be happy and content?"

THE END.