

BAUM LYMAN FRANK

THE SURPRISING
ADVENTURES OF THE
MAGICAL MONARCH OF
MO AND HIS PEOPLE

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

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L. Frank Baum

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

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.

L. FRANK BAUM.

June, 1903.

The First Surprise

THE BEAUTIFUL VALLEY OF MO

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.

The Second Surprise
**THE STRANGE
ADVENTURES OF THE
KING'S HEAD**

A GOOD many years ago, the Magical Monarch of Mo became annoyed by the Purple Dragon, which came down from the mountains and ate up a patch of his best chocolate caramels just as they were getting ripe.

So the King went out to the sword-tree and picked a long, sharp sword, and tied it to his belt and went away to the mountains to fight the Purple Dragon.

The people all applauded him, saying one to another:

"Our King is a good King. He will destroy this naughty Purple Dragon and we shall be able to eat the caramels ourselves."

But the Dragon was not alone naughty; it was big, and fierce, and strong, and did not want to be destroyed at all.

Therefore the King had a terrible fight with the Purple Dragon and cut it with his sword in several places, so that the raspberry juice which ran in its veins squirted all over the ground.

It is always difficult to kill Dragons. They are by nature thick-skinned and tough, as doubtless every one has heard. Besides, you must not forget that this was a Purple Dragon, and all scientists

who have studied deeply the character of Dragons say those of a purple color at the most disagreeable to fight with. So all the King's cutting and slashing had no effect upon the monster other than to make him angry. Forgetful of the respect due to a crowned King, the wicked Dragon presently opening wide its jaws and bit his Majesty's head clean off his body. Then he swallowed it.

Of course the King realized it was useless to continue to fight after that, for he could not see where the Dragon was. SO he turned and tried to find his way back to his people. But at every other step he would bump into a tree, which made the naughty Dragon laugh at him. Furthermore, he could not tell in which direction he was going, which is an unpleasant feeling under any circumstances.

At last some of the people came to see if the King had succeeded in destroying the Dragon, and found their monarch running around in a circle, bumping into trees and rocks, but not getting a step nearer home. So they took his hand and led him back to the palace, where every one was filled with sorrow at the sad sight of the headless King. Indeed, his devoted subjects, for the first time in their lives, came as near to weeping as an inhabitant of the Valley of Mo can.

"Never mind," said the King, cheerfully; "I can get along very well without a head; and, as a matter of fact, the loss has its advantages. I shall not be obliged to brush my hair, or clean my teeth, or wash my ears. So do not grieve, I beg of you, but be

happy and joyful as you were before." Which showed the King had a good heart; and, after all, a good heart is better than a head, any say.

The people, hearing him speak out of his neck (for he had no mouth), immediately began to laugh, which in a short time led to their being as happy as ever.

But the Queen was not contented.

"My love," she said to him, "I can not kiss you any more, and that will break my heart."

Thereupon the King sent word throughout the Valley that any one who could procure for him a new head should wed one of the princesses.

The princesses were all exceedingly pretty girls, and so it was not long before one man made a very nice head out of candy and brought it to the King. It did not look exactly like the old head, but the efface was very sweet, nevertheless; so the King put it on and the Queen kissed it at once with much satisfaction.

The young man had put a pair of glass eyes in the head, with which the King could see very well after he got used to them.

According to the royal promise, the young man was now called into the palace and asked to take his pick of the princesses. There were all so sweet and lady-like that he had some trouble in making a choice; but at last he took the biggest, thinking that he would thus secure the greatest reward, and they were married amid great rejoicing.

But, a few days afterward, the King was caught out in a

rainstorm, and before he could get home his new head had melted in the great shower of lemonade that fell. Only the glass eyes were left, and these he put in his pocket and went sorrowfully to tell the Queen of his new misfortune.

Then another young man who wanted to marry a princess made the King a head out of dough, sticking in it the glass eyes; and the King tried it on and found that it fitted very well. So the young man was given the next biggest princess.

But the following day the sun chance to shine extremely hot, and when the King walked out it baked his dough head into bread, at which the monarch felt very light-headed. And when the birds saw the bread they flew down from the trees, perched upon the King's shoulder and quickly ate up his new head. All but the glass eyes.

Again the good King was forced to go home to the Queen without a head, and the lady firmly declared that this time her husband must have a head warranted to last at least as long as the honeymoon of the young man who made it; which was not at all unreasonable under the circumstances.

So a request was sent to all loyal subjects throughout the Valley asking them to find a head for their King that was neat and substantial.

In the meantime the King had a rather hard time of it. When he wished to go any place he was obliged to hold out in front of him, between his thumbs and fingers, the glass eyes, that they might guide his footsteps. This, as you may imagine, made his

Majesty look rather undignified, and dignity is very important to every royal personage.

At last a wood-chopper in the mountains made a head out of wood and sent it to the King. It was neatly carved, besides being solid and durable; moreover, it fitted the monarch's neck to the T. So the King rummaged in his pocket and found the glass eyes, and when these were put in the new head the King announced his satisfaction.

There was only one drawback – he couldn't smile, as the wooden face was too stiff; and it was funny to hear his Majesty laughing heartily while his face maintained a solemn expression. But the glass eyes twinkled merrily and every one knew that he was the same kind-hearted monarch of old, although he had become, of necessity, rather hard-headed.

Then the King sent word to the wood-chopper to come to the palace and take his pick of the princesses, and preparations were at once begun for the wedding.

But the wood-chopper, on his way to the court, unfortunately passed by the dwelling of the Purple Dragon and stopped to speak to the monster.

Now it seems that when the Dragon had swallowed the King's head, the unusual meal made the beast ill. It was more accustomed to berries and caramels for dinner than to heads, and the sharp points of the King's crown (which was firmly fastened to the head) pricked the Dragon's stomach and made the creature miserable. After a few days of suffering the Dragon disgorged

the head, and, not knowing what else to do with it, locked it up in a cupboard and put the key in its pocket.

When the Dragon met the wood-chopper and learned he had made a new head for the King, and as a reward was to wed one of the princesses, the monster became very angry. It resolved to do a wicked thing; which will not surprise you when you remember the beast's purple color.

"Step into my parlor and rest yourself," said the Dragon, politely. Wicked people are most polite when they mean mischief.

"Thank you, I'll stop for a few minutes," replied the wood-chopper; "but I can not stay long, as I am expected at court."

When he had entered the parlor the Dragon suddenly opened its mouth and snapped off the poor wood-chopper's head. Being warned by experience, however, it did not swallow the head, but placed it in the cupboard. Then the Dragon took from a shelf the King's head and glued it on the wood-chopper's neck.

"Now," said the beast, with a cruel laugh, "you are the King! Go home and claim your wife and your kingdom."

The poor wood-chopper was much amazed; for at first he did not really know which he was, the King or the wood-chopper.

He looked in the mirror and, seeing the King, made a low bow. Then the King's head thought: "Who am I bowing to? There is no one greater than the King!" And so at once there began a conflict between the wood-chopper's heart and the King's head.

The Dragon was mightily pleased at the result of its wicked

stratagem, and having pushed the bewildered wood-chopper out of the castle, immediately sent him on his way to the court.

When the poor man neared the town the people ran out and said: "Why, this is the King come back again. All hail, your Majesty!"

"All nonsense!" returned the wood-chopper. "I am only a poor man with the King's head on my shoulders. You can easily see it isn't mine, for it's crooked; the Dragon didn't glue it on straight."

"Where, then, is your own head?" they asked.

"Locked up in the Dragon's cupboard," replied the poor fellow, beginning to weep.

"Here," cried the King's head; "stop this. You mustn't cry out of my eyes! The King never weeps."

"I beg pardon, your Majesty," said the wood-chopper, meekly, "I'll not do it again."

"Well, see that you don't," returned the head more cheerfully.

The people were greatly amazed at this, and took the wood-chopper to the palace, where all was soon explained.

When the Queen saw the King's head she immediately kissed it; but the King rebuked her, saying she must kiss only him.

"But it is your head," said the poor Queen.

"Probably it is," replied the King; "but it is on another man. You must confine yourself to kissing my wooden head."

"I'm sorry," sighed the Queen, "for I like to kiss the real head best."

"And so you shall," said the King's head; "I don't approve your

kissing that wooden head at all."

The poor lady looked from one to the other in perplexity. Finally a happy thought occurred to her.

"Why don't you trade heads?" she asked.

"Just the thing!" cried the King; and, the wood-chopper consenting, the exchange was made, and the Monarch of Mo found himself in possession of his own head again, whereat he was so greatly pleased that he laughed long and merrily.

The wood-chopper, however, did not even smile. He couldn't because of the wooden face. The head he had made for the King he now was compelled to wear himself.

"Bring hither the princesses," commanded the King. "This good man shall choose his bride at once, for he has restored to me my own head."

But when the princesses arrived and saw that the wood-chopper had a wooden head, they each and all refused to marry him, and begged so hard to escape that the King was in a quandary.

"I promised him one of my daughters," he argued, "and a King never breaks his word."

"But he hadn't a wooden head then," explained one of the girls.

The King realized the truth of this. Indeed, when he came to look carefully at the wooden head, he did not blame his daughters for not wishing to marry it. Should he force one of them to consent, it was not unlikely she would call her husband a blockhead – a term almost certain to cause trouble in any family.

After giving the matter deep thought, the King resolved to go to the Purple Dragon and oblige it to give up the wood-chopper's head.

So all the fighting men in the kingdom were got together, and, having picked ripe swords off the sword-trees, they marched in a great body to the Dragon's castle.

Now the Purple Dragon realized that if it attempted to fight all this army, it would perhaps be cut to pieces; so it retired within its castle and refused to come out.

The wood-chopper was a brave man.

"I'll go in and fight the Dragon alone," he said; and in he went. By this time the Dragon was both frightened and angry, and the moment it saw the man it rushed forward and made a snap at his head.

The wooden head came off at once, and the Dragon's long, sharp teeth got stuck in the wood and would not come out again; so the monster was unable to do anything but flop its tail and groan.

The wood-chopper now ran to the cupboard, took out his head and placed it upon his shoulders where it belonged. Then he proudly walked out of the castle and was greeted with loud shouts by the army, which carried him back in triumph to the King's palace.

And, now that he wore his own head again, one of the prettiest of the young princesses willingly agreed to marry him; so the wedding ceremony was performed amidst great rejoicing.

The Third Surprise

THE TRAMP DOG AND THE MONARCH'S LOST TEMPER

ONE day the Monarch of Mo, having nothing better to do, resolved to go hunting blackberries among the bushes that grew at the foot of the mountains.

So he put on an old crown that would not get tarnished if it rained, and, having found a tin pail in the pantry, started off without telling any one where he was going.

For some distance the path was a nice, smooth taffy, that was very agreeable to walk on; but as he got nearer the mountains the ground became gravelly, the stones being jackson-balls and gum-drops; so that his boots, which were a little green when he picked them, began to hurt his feet.

But the King was not easily discouraged, and kept on until he found the blackberry bushes, when he immediately began to fill his pail, the berries being remarkably big and sweet.

While thus occupied he heard a sound of footsteps coming down the mountain side, and presently a little dog ran out from the bushes and trotted up to him.

Now there were no dogs at all in Mo, and the King had never seen a creature like this before; therefore he was greatly surprised, and said:

"What are you, and where do you come from?"

The dog also was surprised at this question, and looked suspiciously at the King's tin pail; for many times wicked boys had tied such a pail to the end of his tail. In fact, that was the reason he had run away from home and found his way, by accident, to the Valley of Mo.

"My name is Prince," replied the gravely; "and I have come from a country beyond the mountains and the desert."

"Indeed! are you in truth a prince?" exclaimed the monarch; "then you will be welcome in my kingdom, where we always treat nobility with proper respect. But why do you have four feet?"

"Because six would be too many," replied the dog.

"But I have only two," said the King.

"I am sorry," said the dog, who was something of a wag, "because where I come from it is more fashionable to walk on four feet."

"I like to be in the fashion," remarked the King, thoughtfully; "but what am I to do, having only two legs?"

"Why, I suppose you could walk on your hands and feet," returned the dog with a laugh.

"So I will," said the King, being pleased with the idea; "and you shall come to the palace with me and teach me all the fashions of the country from whence you came."

The King got down on his hands and knees, and was delighted to find he could get along in this way very nicely.

"How am I to carry my pail?" he asked.

"In your mouth, of course," replied the dog. This suggestion seeming a happy one, the King took the pail in his mouth and they started back toward the palace. But when his Majesty came to the gum-drops and jackson-balls they hurt his hands and knees, so that he groaned aloud. But the dog only laughed. Finally they reached a place where it was quite muddy. Of course the mud was only jelly, but it hadn't dried up since the last rain. The dog jumped over the place nimbly enough, but when the King tried to do likewise he failed, and came down into the jelly with both hands and knees, and stuck fast.

Now the monarch had a very good temper, which he carried in his vest pocket; but as he passed over the gum-drop pebbles on his hands and knees this temper dropped out of his pocket, and, having lost it, he became very angry at the dog for getting him into such a scrape.

So he began to scold, and when he opened his mouth the pail dropped out and the berries were all spilled. This made the dog laugh more than ever, at which the King pulled himself out of the jelly, jumped to his feet, and began to chase the dog as fast as he could. Finally the dog climbed a tall tree where the King could not reach him, and when safe among the branches he looked down and said: "See how foolish a man becomes who tries to be in fashion rather than live as nature intended he should! You can no more be a dog than I can be a king; so hereafter, if you are wise, you will be content to walk on two legs."

"There is much truth in what you say," replied the Monarch

of Mo. "Come with me to the palace, and you shall be forgiven; indeed, we shall have a fine feast in honor of your arrival."

So the dog climbed down from the tree and followed the King to the palace, where all the courtiers were astonished to see so queer an animal, and made a great favorite of him.

After dinner the King invited the dog to take a walk around the grounds of the royal mansion, and they started out merrily enough. But the King's boots had begun to hurt him again; for, as they did not fit, being picked green, they had rubbed his toes until he had corns on them. So when they reached the porch in front of the palace the King asked:

"My friend, what is good for corns?"

"Tight boots," replied the dog, laughing; "but they are not very good for your feet."

Now the King, not yet having found his lost temper, became exceedingly angry at this poor jest; so he rushed at the dog and gave it a tremendous kick.

Up into the air like a ball flew the dog, while the King, having hurt his toe by the kick, sat down on the door-step and nursed his foot while he watched the dog go farther and farther up, until it seemed like a tiny speck against the blue of the sky.

"I must have kicked harder than I thought," said the King, ruefully; "there he goes, out of sight, and I shall never see him again!"

He now limped away into the back garden, where he picked a new pair of boots that would not hurt his feet; and while he

was gone the dog began to fall down again. Of course he fell faster than he went up, and finally landed with a crash exactly on the King's door-step. But so great was the force of the fall and so hard the door-step that the poor dog was flattened out like a pancake, and could not move a bit.

When the King came back he said:

"Hullo! some kind friend has brought me a new door-mat as a present," and he leaned down and stroked the soft hair with much pleasure. Then he wiped his feet on the new mat and went into the palace to tell the Queen.

When her Majesty saw the nice, soft door-mat she declared it was too good to be left outside; so she brought it into the parlor and put it on the floor before the fire-place.

The good King was sorry he had treated the dog so harshly, and for fear he might do some other dreadful thing he went back to the place where he had lost his temper and searched until he found it again, when he put it carefully away in his pocket where it would stay.

Then he returned to the palace and entered the parlor; but as he passed the mat, his new boots were so clumsy, he stumbled against the edge and pushed the mat together into a roll.

Immediately the dog gave a bark, got upon its legs and said:

"Well, this is better! Now I can breathe again, but while I was so flat I could not draw a single breath."

The monarch and his Queen were much surprised to find that what they had taken for a mat was only the dog, that had fallen

so flat on their door-step; but they could not forbear laughing at his queer appearance. For, as the King had kicked the mat on the edge, the dog was more than six feet long, and no bigger around than a lead-pencil; which brought its front legs so far from its rear legs that it could scarcely turn around in the room without getting tangled up.

"But it is better than being a door-mat," said the dog; and the King and Queen agreed with him in this.

Then the King went away to tell the people he had found the dog again, and when he left the palace he slammed the front door behind him. The dog had started to follow the King out, so when the front door slammed it hit the poor animal so sharp a blow on the nose that it pushed his body together again; and, lo and behold! there was the dog in his natural shape, just as he was before the King kicked him.

After this the dog and the King agreed very well; for the King was careful not to kick, since he had recovered his temper, and the dog took care not to say anything that would provoke the King to anger.

And one day the dog saved the Kingdom and all the Valley of Mo from destruction, as I shall tell you another time.

The Fourth Surprise

THE PECULIAR PAINS OF FRUITCAKE ISLAND

PRINCE ZINGLE, who was the eldest of all the princes of the Valley of Mo, at one time became much irritated because the King, his father, would not allow him to milk the cow with the golden horns. This cow was a great favorite with the King, because she gave as large a quantity of ice-cream at a milking as an ordinary cow does of milk, and in the warm days this was an agreeable luxury. The King liked to keep the cow with the golden horns for his own use and that of the Queen; so Prince Zingle thought he was being abused, having a great fondness for ice-cream himself.

To be sure, there was the great fountain of ice-cream soda-water playing constantly in the courtyard, which was free to every one; but the Prince longed for what he could not have.

Therefore, being filled with anger against his father, the King, he wandered away until he chanced to come near to the castle of the Purple Dragon.

When the wicked monster saw the Prince, it decided that here was a splendid opportunity to make mischief; so it said, politely:

"Good morning, King Zingle."

"I am not a king – I am only a prince," replied Zingle.

"What! not a king?" exclaimed the Dragon, as if surprised; "that is too bad."

"I can never be a king while my father lives," continued the Prince, "and it is impossible for him to die. So what can I do?"

"Since you ask my advice, I will tell you," answered the naughty Dragon. "Down near Rootbeer River, where the peanut trees grow, is a very deep hole in the ground. You must get the King to go and look into this hole, and while he is leaning over the edge, push him in. Of course, he will not die, for that, as you say, is impossible; but no one will know where to find him. So, your father being out of the way, you will be king in his place."

"That is surely good advice," said the Prince, "and I will go and do it at once. Then the cow with the golden horns will be mine, and I shall become the Monarch of Mo."

The Prince turned to go back to the palace, and as soon as he was out of sight, the horrid Dragon laughed to think what a fool it had made of the boy.

When Zingle saw his father he called him aside and said:

"Your Majesty, I have discovered something very funny at the bottom of the hole near the peanut trees. Come and see what it is."

So the King went with the Prince, without suspecting his evil design, and while he leaned over the hole the Prince gave him a sudden push. The next moment down fell the Monarch of Mo – way to the bottom!

Then Prince Zingle went back to the palace and began to milk

the cow with the golden horns.

Now when the King found himself at the bottom of the hole he at first did not know what to do; so he sat down and thought about it. Presently a happy idea came into his head. He knew if only he was at the other end of the hole, he would be at the top instead of the bottom, and could make his escape. So the King took hold of the hole, and exerting all his strength, turned the hole upside down. Being now at the top he stepped upon the ground and walked back to the palace, where he caught Prince Zingle milking the cow with the golden horns.

"Oh, ho!" he said, "you wish to be King, do you? Well, we'll see about that!" Then he took the naughty Prince by the ear and led him into the palace, where he locked him up in a room from which he could not escape.

The King now sat himself down in an easy chair and began to think on how he could best punish the Prince, but after an hour of deep thought he was unable to decide on anything that seemed a sufficient chastisement for so great an offense.

At last he resolved to consult the Wise Donkey.

The Wise Donkey lived in a pretty little house away at the end of the Valley, for he didn't like to mix with the gay life at the court. He had not always been wise, but at one time was a very stupid donkey indeed, and he acquired his wisdom in this way.

One Friday afternoon, just as school was letting out, the stupid donkey strayed into the school-house, and the teachers and scholars were all so anxious to get home that they never noticed

the donkey, but locked him up in the school-house and went away without knowing he was there.

No one came into the building from Friday afternoon until Monday morning; so the donkey got very hungry, and certainly would have starved had he not chanced to taste of a geography that was sticking out from one of the desks. The hungry donkey decided it was not so very bad, so he ate it all up. Then he ate an arithmetic, an algebra, and two first readers. After that he lay down and went to sleep; but becoming hungry again he awoke and commenced on the school library, which he completely devoured. This library comprised all the solid and substantial wisdom in the Valley of Mo, and when the janitor opened the school-house door on Monday morning, all the books of learning in the whole land had been eaten up by the stupid donkey.

You can readily understand that after he had digested all this knowledge he became very wise, and thereafter the King and the people often consulted the Wise Donkey when their own intelligence was at fault.

So now the monarch went to the donkey's house and told him of the Prince's wickedness, asking how he could best punish him.

The Wise Donkey thought about the matter for a moment and then replied:

"I do not know a worse punishment than a pain in the stomach. Among the books I ate in the school-house was a trigonometry, and before I had digested it I suffered very severe pains indeed."

"But I can not feed the Prince a trigonometry," returned the

King. "You ate the last one yourself."

"True," answered the donkey; "but there are other things that cause pain in the stomach. You know there is a certain island in Rootbeer River that is made of fruit cake of a very rich quality. I advise you to put the Prince on this island and allow him nothing to eat except the fruit cake. Presently he will have violent pains in his stomach and will be punished as greatly as you could desire."

The King was well pleased with this plan, and having thanked the donkey for his wise advice hurried back to the palace.

Prince Zingle was now brought from his room and rowed in a boat to the Fruit Cake Island in Rootbeer River, where he was left without any way to escape. He knew how to swim, to be sure, but it was forbidden by law to swim in the Rootbeer, as many people came to this river to drink.

"You shall stay here," said the King, sternly, "until you are sorry for your wickedness; and you shall have nothing to eat but fruit cake."

The Prince laughed, because he thought the punishment was no punishment at all. When the King had rowed away in the boat and Zingle was left alone, he said to himself:

"Why, this is delightful! I shall have a jolly time here, and can eat all the cake I want, without any one scolding me for being greedy."

He broke off a large piece of the island where the raisins and citron were thickest, and commenced to eat it. But after a time he became tired of eating nothing but fruit cake, and longed for

something to go with it. But the island did not contain a single thing except the cake of which it was composed.

Presently Prince Zingle began to have a pain inside him. He paid no attention to it at first, thinking it would pass away; but instead it grew more severe, so that he began to cry out; but no one heard him.

The pain steadily increased, and the Prince wept and rolled on the ground and began to feel exceeding sorry he had been so wicked. Finally he seized the telephone, which was connected with the palace, and called up the King.

"Hullo!" said the King's voice, in reply; "what's wanted?"

"I have a terrible pain," said the Prince, with a groan, "and I'm very sorry indeed that I pushed your Majesty down the hole. If you'll only take me off this dreadful island I'll be the best prince in all the Valley from this time forth!"

So the King sent the boat and had the Prince brought back to the palace, where he forgave his naughty actions. Being a kind parent he next fed his suffering son a blossom from a medicine tree, which quickly relieved his pain and led him to appreciate the pleasure of repentance.

The Fifth Surprise

THE MONARCH CELEBRATES HIS BIRTHDAY

THERE were great festivities in the Valley of Mo when the King had a birthday. The jolly monarch was born so many years ago that so every one had forgotten the date. One of the Wise Men said the King was born in February; another declared it was in May, and a third figured the great event happened in October. So the King issued a royal decree that he should have three birthdays every year, in order to be on the safe side; and whenever he happened to think of it he put in an odd birthday or two for luck. The King's birthdays came to be regarded as very joyful events, for on these occasions festivities of unusual magnificence were held, and everybody in the kingdom was invited to participate.

On one occasion the King, suddenly recollecting he had not celebrated his birthday for several weeks, announced a royal festival on a most elaborate scale. The cream-puff crop was an unusually large one, and the bushes were hanging full of the delicious ripe puffs, which were highly prized by the people of Mo.

So all the maidens got out their best dresses and brightest ribbons, and the young men carefully brushed their hair and

polished their boots, and soon the streets leading to the palace were thronged with gay merry-makers.

When the guests were all assembled a grand feast was served, in which the newly-picked cream puffs were an important item.

Then the King stood up at the head of the table and ordered his ruby casket to be brought him, and when the people heard this they at once became quiet and attentive, for the Ruby Casket was one of the most curious things in the Valley. It was given the King many years before by the sorceress, Maetta, and whenever it was opened something was found in it that no living person had seen before.

So the people, and even the King himself, always watched the opening of the Ruby Casket with much curiosity, for they never knew what would be disclosed.

The King placed the casket on a small table before him, and then, after a solemn look at the expectant faces, he said, slowly: "Giggle-gaggle-goo!" which was the magic word that opened the box.

At once the lid flew back, and the King peered within and exclaimed: "Ha!"

This made the guests more excited than before, for they did not know what he was saying "ha!" about; and they held their breaths when the King put his thumb and finger into the box and drew out a little wooden man about as big as my finger. He wore a blue jacket and a red cap and held a little brass horn in his hand.

The King stood the wooden man upon the table and then

reached within the box and brought out another wooden man, dressed just the same as the other, and also holding a horn in his hand. This the King stood beside the first wooden man, and then took out another, and another, until ten little wooden men were standing in a row on the table, holding drums, and cymbals, and horns in their small, stiff hands.

"I declare," said the King, when he had stood them all up, "it's a little German band. But what a shame it is they can not play."

No sooner had the King uttered the word "play" than every little wooden man put his horn to his mouth, or beat his drum, or clashed his cymbal; and immediately they began to play such delicious music that all the people were delighted, and even the King clapped his hands in applause.

Just then from out the casket leaped a tiny Baby Elephant, about as large as a mouse, and began capering about on its toes. It was dressed in short, fluffy skirts, like those worn by a ballet-dancer, and it danced so funnily that all who saw it roared with laughter.

When the elephant stopped to rest, two pretty Green Frogs sprang from the casket and began to play leapfrog before the astonished guests, who had never before seen such a thing as a frog. The little green strangers jumped over each other quick as a flash, and finally one of them jumped down the other's throat. Then, as the Baby Elephant opened his mouth to yawn, the remaining frog jumped down the elephant's throat.

The audience was so much amused at this feat that the Baby

Elephant thought he would see what he could do to please them; so he stood on his head and gave a great jump, and disappeared down his own throat, leaving the musicians to play by themselves.

Then all the young men caught the girls about their waists and began spinning around in a pretty dance of their own, and the fun continued until they were tired out.

The King thanked the tiny wooden musicians and put them back in the Ruby Casket. He did not offer to take up a collection for them, there being no money of any kind in the Valley of Mo. The casket was then carried back to the royal treasury, where it was guarded with much care when not in use.

Just then a young man approached the King, asking permission for the people to skate on the Crystal Lake, and his Majesty graciously consented.

As it was never cold in the Kingdom of Mo there was, of course, no ice for skating. But the Crystal Lake was composed of sugar-syrup, and the sun had candied the surface of the lake, so it had become solid enough to skate on, and was, moreover, as smooth as glass.

It was not often the King allowed skating there, for he feared some one might break through the crust; but as it was his birthday he could refuse the people nothing. So presently hundreds of the boys and girls were skating swiftly on the Crystal Lake and having rare sport; for it was just as good as ice, without being cold or damp.

In the center there was one place where the crust was quite

thin, and just as the merriment was at its height, crack! went the ice – or candy, rather – and down into the sugar-syrup sank the Princess Truella, and the Prince Jollikin, and the King's royal chamberlain, Nuphsed.

Down and down they went until they reached the bottom of the lake; and there they stood, stuck fast in the syrup and unable to move a bit, while all the people gathered on the shore to look at them, the lake being as clear as the clearest water.

Of course, this calamity put an end to further skating, and the King rushed around asking every one how he could get his daughter and his son and his royal chamberlain out of the mass. But no one could tell him.

Finally the King consulted the Wise Donkey; and after he had thought the matter over and consulted his learning, the donkey advised his Majesty to fish for them.

"Fish!" exclaimed the King; "how can we do that?"

"Take a fish-line and put a sinker on it, to make it sink through the syrup. Then bait the end of the line with the thing that each one of them likes best. In that way you can catch hold of them and draw them out of the lake."

"Well," said the King, "I'll try it, for of course you know what you are talking about."

"Have you ever eaten a geography?" demanded the Wise Donkey.

"No," said the King.

"Well, I have," declared the donkey, haughtily; "and what I

don't know about lakes and such things isn't in the geography."

So the King went back to the Crystal Lake and got a strong fish-line, which he tied to the end of a long pole. Then he put a sinker on the end of the line and was ready for the bait.

"What does the Princess Truella like best?" he asked the Queen.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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