

BAUM LYMAN FRANK

THE WOGGLE-BUG BOOK

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The Woggle-Bug Book

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Содержание

The Unique Adventures of the Woggle – Bug	5
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	8

L. Frank Baum

The Woggle-Bug Book

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.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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