

CHAPTER XIII

A HIGHLY MAGNIFIED HISTORY

"It is but honest that I should acknowledge at the beginning of my recital that I was born an ordinary Woggle-Bug," began the creature, in a frank and friendly tone. "Knowing no better, I used my arms as well as my legs for walking, and crawled under the edges of stones or hid among the roots of grasses with no thought beyond finding a few insects smaller than myself to feed upon.

"The chill nights rendered me stiff and motionless, for I wore no clothing, but each morning the warm rays of the sun gave me new life and restored me to activity. A horrible existence is this, but you must remember it is the regular ordained existence of Woggle-Bugs, as well as of many other tiny creatures that inhabit the earth.

"But Destiny had singled me out, humble though I was, for a grander fate! One day I crawled near to a country school house, and my curiosity being excited by the monotonous hum of the students within, I made bold to enter and creep along a crack between two boards until I reached the far end, where, in front of a hearth of glowing embers, sat the master at his desk.

"No one noticed so small a creature as a Woggle-Bug, and when I found that the hearth was even warmer and more comfortable than the sunshine, I resolved to establish my future home beside it. So I

found a charming nest between two bricks and hid myself therein for many, many months.

"Professor Nowitall is, doubtless, the most famous scholar in the land of Oz, and after a few days I began to listen to the lectures and discourses he gave his pupils. Not one of them was more attentive than the humble, unnoticed Woggle-Bug, and I acquired in this way a fund of knowledge that I will myself confess is simply marvelous. That is why I place 'T.E.' Thoroughly Educated upon my cards; for my greatest pride lies in the fact that the world cannot produce another Woggle-Bug with a tenth part of my own culture and erudition."

"I do not blame you," said the Scarecrow. "Education is a thing to be proud of. I'm educated myself. The mess of brains given me by the Great Wizard is considered by my friends to be unexcelled."

"Nevertheless," interrupted the Tin Woodman, "a good heart is, I believe, much more desirable than education or brains."

"To me," said the Saw-Horse, "a good leg is more desirable than either."

"Could seeds be considered in the light of brains?" enquired the Pumpkinhead, abruptly.

"Keep quiet!" commanded Tip, sternly.

"Very well, dear father," answered the obedient Jack.

The Woggle-Bug listened patiently—even respectfully—to these remarks, and then resumed his story.

"I must have lived fully three years in that secluded school-house hearth," said he, "drinking thirstily of the ever-flowing fount of limpid knowledge before me."

"Quite poetical," commented the Scarecrow, nodding his head approvingly.

"But one, day" continued the Bug, "a marvelous circumstance occurred that altered my very existence and brought me to my

present pinnacle of greatness. The Professor discovered me in the act of crawling across the hearth, and before I could escape he had caught me between his thumb and forefinger.

"My dear children,' said he, 'I have captured a Woggle-Bug—a very rare and interesting specimen. Do any of you know what a Woggle-Bug is?'

"No!' yelled the scholars, in chorus.

"Then,' said the Professor, 'I will get out my famous magnifying-glass and throw the insect upon a screen in a highly-magnified condition, that you may all study carefully its peculiar construction and become acquainted with its habits and manner of life.'

"He then brought from a cupboard a most curious instrument, and before I could realize what had happened I found myself thrown upon a screen in a highly-magnified state—even as you now behold me.

"The students stood up on their stools and craned their heads forward to get a better view of me, and two little girls jumped upon the sill of an open window where they could see more plainly.

"Behold!' cried the Professor, in a loud voice, 'this highly-magnified Woggle-Bug; one of the most curious insects in existence!'

"Being Thoroughly Educated, and knowing what is required of a cultured gentleman, at this juncture I stood upright and, placing my hand upon my bosom, made a very polite bow. My action, being unexpected, must have startled them, for one of the little girls perched upon the window-sill gave a scream and fell backward out the window, drawing her companion with her as she disappeared.

"The Professor uttered a cry of horror and rushed away through the door to see if the poor children were injured by the fall. The scholars followed after him in a wild mob, and I was left alone in the school-room, still in a Highly-Magnified state and free to do as I pleased.

"It immediately occurred to me that this was a good opportunity to escape. I was proud of my great size, and realized that now I could safely travel anywhere in the world, while my superior culture would make me a fit associate for the most learned person I might chance to meet.

"So, while the Professor picked the little girls—who were more frightened than hurt—off the ground, and the pupils clustered around him closely grouped, I calmly walked out of the school-house, turned a corner, and escaped unnoticed to a grove of trees that stood near"

"Wonderful!" exclaimed the Pumpkinhead, admiringly.

"It was, indeed," agreed the Woggle-Bug. "I have never ceased to congratulate myself for escaping while I was Highly Magnified; for even my excessive knowledge would have proved of little use to me had I remained a tiny, insignificant insect."

"I didn't know before," said Tip, looking at the Woggle-Bug with a puzzled expression, "that insects wore clothes."

"Nor do they, in their natural state," returned the stranger. "But in the course of my wanderings I had the good fortune to save the ninth life of a tailor—tailors having, like cats, nine lives, as you probably know. The fellow was exceedingly grateful, for had he lost that ninth life it would have been the end of him; so he begged permission to furnish me with the stylish costume I now wear. It fits very nicely, does it not?" and the Woggle-Bug stood up and turned himself around slowly, that all might examine his person.

"He must have been a good tailor," said the Scarecrow, somewhat enviously.

"He was a good-hearted tailor, at any rate," observed Nick Chopper.

"But where were you going, when you met us?" Tip asked the Woggle-Bug.

"Nowhere in particular," was the reply, "although it is my intention soon to visit the Emerald City and arrange to give a course of lectures to select audiences on the 'Advantages of Magnification.'"

"We are bound for the Emerald City now," said the Tin Woodman; "so, if it pleases you to do so, you are welcome to travel in our company."

The Woggle-Bug bowed with profound grace.

"It will give me great pleasure," said he "to accept your kind invitation; for nowhere in the Land of Oz could I hope to meet with so congenial a company."

"That is true," acknowledged the Pumpkinhead. "We are quite as congenial as flies and honey."

"But—pardon me if I seem inquisitive—are you not all rather—ahem! rather unusual?" asked the Woggle-Bug, looking from one to another with unconcealed interest.

"Not more so than yourself," answered the Scarecrow. "Everything in life is unusual until you get accustomed to it."

"What rare philosophy!" exclaimed the Woggle-Bug, admiringly.

"Yes; my brains are working well today," admitted the Scarecrow, an accent of pride in his voice.

"Then, if you are sufficiently rested and refreshed, let us bend our steps toward the Emerald City," suggested the magnified one.

"We can't," said Tip. "The Saw-Horse has broken a leg, so he can't bend his steps. And there is no wood around to make him a new limb from. And we can't leave the horse behind because the Pumpkinhead is so stiff in his Joints that he has to ride."

"How very unfortunate!" cried the Woggle-Bug. Then he looked the party over carefully and said:

"If the Pumpkinhead is to ride, why not use one of his legs to make a leg for the horse that carries him? I judge that both are made of wood."