

Mr. Boggs Gets A Wish

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By Allan Updegraff



MR. J. BROUGHTON BOGGS, Incorporated (the "Incorporated") is a simple joke, perpetrated by a friend of Mr. Boggs, and referring to the "corporation" which that gentleman carried around with him, was waiting in the ante room of Mr. Hallowell, head of the Hallowell Advertising Agency. The Hallowell Agency employed Mr. Boggs, and Mr. Boggs shed splendor and profit on the Hallowell Agency. His large size, in itself, enabled him to display a larger amount of dazzling haberdashery than was possible in the case of the ordinary advertising salesman, and in the days when dazzling haberdashery played as large a part in the advertising business as it now does in ward politics, this was a decided advantage. But even ten years ago, those days were passing. Mr. Boggs's presence in Mr. Hallowell's ante room was occasioned by the fact that the resident "live wire" engaging personality was not hanging in as much business as formerly. Mr. Boggs was the last one to realize the changing state of affairs. In proportion as his cigars, luncheons and rebates—all the same discarded tools of a by gone age of advertising—ceased to be efficacious, he put on the commodity commonly known as "front." Naturally enough, he debited his decreasing business to the "times."

"Mr. Hallowell will see Mr. Boggs," announced "Buttons," suddenly bobbing into view.

Mr. Boggs entered the Presence, as it was, with a sort of dignified humility. Mr. Hallowell sat a glass conspicuously short of him, and nodded toward a chair. Mr. Boggs sank into it, nursing his white fedora hat.

"I have sent for you, Mr. Boggs," he announced sharply, "to tell you that your results for the past month or so—in fact, I may say, for the last three months—have been extremely unsatisfactory, and I am forced to consider a reduction in your salary. As you probably know, fifty dollars a week is a good deal more than we pay our other salesmen. I've got an alternative to offer you—an alternative to cutting your salary to forty per cent. Like to hear it?"

Mr. Boggs admitted that he would.

"It's like this; you may know that there's several new advertising agencies started up lately. New ideas, you know, sensational methods, and all that sort of rot. There's one in particular, run by that young Leonard fellow, that I fired about a year ago. Well, my idea is just this: I want to investigate his methods. Now suppose I got you to investigate, eh? You could hire to him, you understand, and just get a good, systematic idea of his methods. He's working out a lot of statistical tables and things, from what I see in his advertisements."

"It's easy enough for me to get it," remarked Mr. Boggs, as if to himself.

"I suppose you're thinking about what there is in it," interrupted the manager. "Well, I'll give you a contract for a year longer at your present salary, if you get anything worth while, and after you're through with Leonard, there are two or three other agencies you can investigate in the same way. It'll be easy work. What do you say?"

Mr. Boggs, judging from the manager's voice, that any attempt to increase the offer would be futile, consented. He left the office with the satisfaction of having made a good bargain lighting his pudgy features. Nevertheless, the more he thought of the details of his assignment, the more disgusted he became with the position in which it would put him. As he left the office building and rolled ponderously up Broadway, he let his mind dwell upon the impossible pleasure of punning his employer in the solar plexus.

Mr. Boggs, in spite of his professed friendship with Leonard, was forced to locate the Agency through the medium of a telephone directory. The number proved to be that of a tobacco store: "Bucher's Havana Tobacco Emporium." Mr. Boggs entered. There was a little other, near the front of the store, in which a bald, benevolent German was dictating to a very pretty young lady stenographer. The German arose and came out into the store.

"How do you do, sir," he said. "And what may I do for you this morning?"

Mr. Boggs looked at the German and asked him: "There was nothing at the eternal American Bureau about this store-keeper, was there?"

It was a man after Mr. Boggs's own leisurely heart.

"Well, Herr Teuton," he returned, "I was looking for an ad. agency, but I reckon Central's gone and I give me the wrong number. So I'll just take a couple of cigars for distribution—you make 'em ten-centers, and have one yourself."

"You offer-power me wit' your kindness, Mr. American!" declared the German, going

behind his counter. "Is it that you have something to sell?"

Mr. Boggs roared with delight. "Not on your life, Dutchy!" he replied. "I'm settin' 'em up without any strings attached." By the way, he added, "you don't know anything of an ad. agency around here—the Leonard Advertising Agency? Run by a good lookin' young chap—kinder stuck up, between you and—"

"Oh, dat?" interrupted the German. "Sure! He hangs him out in here—desk room back there." He pointed to a roll top desk under the skylight in the rear of the store. "He is out now; but he comes back in ten minutes, at ten o'clock."

Mr. Boggs looked surprised, and somewhat chagrined, at the Leonard Agency's accommodations.

"Furry punko, I should say," he remarked.

"Not a very fine place, eh?" returned the German. "Well, he is going to move soon, dat—that young man. He is what you call a swift proposition. He stays now only because—" he nodded mysteriously toward the office.

"Ha! Little romance, eh?" suggested Mr. Boggs, thinking of the pretty stenographer.

"A big large one," replied the German, with a paternal grin. "Ugh! The way they do go on, when they think of Uncle Bucher ain't looking! You was—you are a friend of Mr. Leonard's?" he asked, suddenly catching himself up.

"Sure's your Dutch!" declared Mr. Boggs, looking and feeling slightly pained at having his friendliness questioned. "Why, me and Jimmy worked together when he wasn't knee-high to a grasshopper."

He continued to enlarge upon his friendliness with the young manager, the German nodding frequent appreciation. Leonard came in while they were talking.

He shook hands with Mr. Boggs rather coldly, considering the friendship which that gentleman had been professing, and escorted him back to the Agency's desk. As Mr. Boggs sank into a neighboring chair, his countenance and posture expressed extreme dejection. He laid carefully thought out the part he should play, and he played it well. He explained that he was getting old, that he had been discharged by Hallowell, and that the other agencies were looking for younger men, and ended by offering to work on commission.

Jimmy was placed in the uncomfortable position, common enough with every successful businessman of having either to "turn down" an unlikely associate of other days or to employ an inefficient assistant. It was his first experience of the kind; and he did what almost any young business man would have done under similar circumstances. He accepted the alternative of hiring an inefficient assistant.

On the following morning Jimmy carefully explained to him the Agency's method of approach. The Leonard Agency's tactics struck him as rather absurd; young Leonard's insistence on treating advertising as a purely business proposition was especially disgusting to the seasoned "live wire." In common with most other "live wires" of that period, he looked upon ad. getting as a sort of legitimate graft, much, in fact, as the ward politician looks upon the emoluments of office. He decided, however, that it would be best to adopt his new employer's methods for the present.



Mr. Hallowell sits to Mr. Boggs.

The results somewhat surprised him. Mr. Boggs was known among advertising managers as a slow-going, conservative solicitor; a bit too conservative and slow-going, in fact. The combination of his conservatism with the Leonard Agency's radicalism, of his experience with the Agency's youth, did much to give advertisers confidence in the venture.

"Never too old to learn," he told the first

man he approached. "I've seen the error of my ways. This young Leonard fellow is a corner. He's got all the old ideas tied to the post. You noticed I didn't out with any two-fer cigar when I came in. No, sir, it's the plain business proposition from now on. Give us a trial, and see."

Within three days, he had accomplished the apparently impossible feat of believing this



No need to get excited, Dutchy.

talk. Its success was the strongest argument for the truth of it. He began to make money.

Considering the above facts, he was paradoxically irritated at the receipt of a curt note from Mr. Hallowell. The note, which came in an envelope blank of return address, began with a business-like "Dear Sir." It proceeded as follows:

I believe that you have had all the requisite time to complete the matter for which I engaged you. You will probably understand that it is not my purpose to pay you a salary to work indefinitely for another agency. Kindly inform me when you expect to come to this office with a full report.

"Durn his nerve!" remarked Mr. Boggs, after carefully reading this communication. He scratched his head thoughtfully, and read it again. The second reading produced even stronger evidences of disapprobation.

"Dam 'im!" he muttered. "Gettin' gay like that, after all I've done for him! I'd like—" he hesitated, seeking a suitable punishment. "I'd like to give him a good punch in his old fat solar plexus! Yes, sir, that's what 'ud do me good!"

But, after reflecting upon the consequences of such an action, and especially upon the discontinuance of the fifty dollars a week, he concluded to compose a soft answer. He wrote Mr. Hallowell, in such convincing terms as he could muster, that he had not yet had an opportunity to complete his investigations. For good measure, he added that Jimmy's maps, statistics and plans were so numerous and complicated that considerable time was necessary to copy them. He concluded with a eulogy of the business success of the Leonard Agency, and the importance of the matter he would bring to the Hallowell office when his work was complete. He was inspired, by a review of the importance of his work, to add a postscript deploring the fact that he had been put to considerable expense in securing this valuable information. Mr. Hallowell's reply was more satisfactory than he had dared to hope. With a gasp of surprise, he unfolded a check for \$50 to cover past and subsequent unusual expenses. The note began, "Dear Mr. Boggs," and concluded with an admission for him to take his time and be thorough.

This unexpected answer was unfortunate in that it inspired Mr. Boggs to impossible, imaginary expenses. Mr. Hallowell grudgingly "shook down" another \$25 check. Mr. Boggs deplored the smallness of the contribution, and suggested that he would have to skimp his investigations—which were most important—unless more was forthcoming immediately. Mr. Hallowell replied with a peremptory order for Mr. Boggs to visit the Hallowell offices, at his earliest convenience, bringing with him such data as he had already collected.

In view of the fact that Mr. Boggs had collected no data, this order was disconcerting, not to say impolite.

"I'd like to punch that suspicious old gazabo," remarked Mr. Boggs, after reading this last communication. "It 'ud certainly give me great joy to land a good one in his old suspicious solar! Tryin' to get me to do his dirty work, betrayin' my best friends, and all that, and him unwilling! to contribute a few cents to the necessary expenses."

There was another contingency, he reflected; he might notify Mr. Hallowell that he had experienced a change of heart, and resign forthwith. But this would involve

trouble in connection with the \$75 already received. To do him justice, he really wished to resign. He was not, at bottom, the sort of man that melodramatic villains are made of. Conditions, which he had been too weak and near-sighted to resist, had made him a grafter, a liar, a braggart, a thief, an irresponsible rascal. In his business, and with his opportunities, it was as hard for him to be anything



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else as it is for the modern politician to be anything better. A very ancient and widely applicable saying applied to him: his morals weren't anything to speak of, but he had a good heart.

He decided, at length, to make a bluff of sending Mr. Hallowell some data, enclosing his resignation. Then he would make a clean breast of the whole matter to young Leonard, if Mr. Hallowell continued obstreperous, and throw himself upon the young man's mercy. Jimmy had a good deal of mercy, he reflected, and he thought that he could throw himself in such an artistic manner that he would have no difficulty in falling upon it. At the worst, there was the job in Omaha. He set about preparing some data for Mr. Hallowell's consumption. It was, in all respects, remarkable data. Probably no data closely resembling that data has ever been prepared outside of an insane asylum.

Nevertheless, that data looked good to Mr. Boggs. Especially the maps. He traced these from an atlas, as he had a recollection of seeing Jimmy do, and colored certain parts of them with colored pencils. Then he stuck in figures which represented his idea of the density of population in the colored portions, and other symbols to show whether the people were devoted to mining, agriculture, manufacturing, or what not. He was not much accustomed to making neat figures, nor to tracing maps. But he made up for the deficiencies by a liberal use of the colored pencils. With many another artist, his drawing wasn't much, but his color scheme was a wonder of impressionism.

As he surveyed his finished productions, Mr. Boggs was moved, by his admiration of them, to change a part of his program. He decided to omit sending his resignation with them; they would surely impress Mr. Hallowell so favorably that the resignation, even if sent, would not be accepted. Therefore he sent a polite little note instead, in which he gently suggested a small contribution to enable him to continue his research in art and economics.

Mr. Boggs was informed of Mr. Hallowell's receipt of his efforts shortly after the noon hour the next day. The information came over the telephone. Jimmy had gone out to luncheon. Mr. Bucher and Miss Hildreth were in the front office.

"Yes, this is Mr. Boggs," said the "live wire," speaking into the transmitter. "Oh—Mr. Hallowell!—Eh? Well, I'm downright sorry; you see—"

He listened for a few seconds, his face assuming the purplish tinge of a fat gentleman who is having hard things said to him.

"No, I ain't comin' now nor any other time!" he bellowed, unconscious that the loudness of his talk and the closeness of his lips to the mouth-piece prevented the transmission of a word.

"You heard me all right!" he shouted, a second later. "I won't take such langwidge offen you, nor any other man!" He raised his voice to a thunderous climax. "You wouldn't have the nerve to say them things to my face, so you wouldn't!"

The next words from the receiver seemed to surprise him. Mr. Hallowell, who had heard not a word of his wrathful denunciation, had quietly asked him whether Leonard was in.

long; in about an hour, I reckon. He usually gets back around one o'clock." He quickly recovered from the surprise which the question had caused him, and squared his face belligerently toward the receiver. "As I was saying, Mr. Hallowell, I don't stand for no such—" He stopped abruptly and hung up the receiver. The disgusted expression of a man who has been cut off in the middle of a remark over-spread his face.

After a second of infuriated inaction, he jerked the receiver from its place, and called up the Hallowell offices. He was informed that Mr. Hallowell had gone out.

"What's the matter, eh, Boggselein?" called the German. "You haf a beller like a very peevish bull."

"Dutchy," replied the "live wire," striding toward the front of the store, "gimme a seegar. I need something to quiet my nerves."

"Sure, Mike," replied the German, going over and opening one of the show-cases. "I am astonished to discover that you possess them."

"Yep, I have 'em all right, Dutchy," he confided, absent-mindedly picking up the dime which Mr. Bucher had refused. "I reckon I don't get credit for half the things I do have."

He sighed deeply, reflecting that he would probably need all the sympathy he could acquire to combat the storm he had aroused. "Dutchy," he continued, "I've been done dirt by a man that's supposed to be my friend. Been done the dirtiest kind of dirt!"

"Too bad!" commented the German. "But ven a friend's done you dirt, he iss no longer your friend—see? And so, why worry ofer such things?"

But the thought of such things aroused Mr. Boggs's anger anew.

"If it wasn't for the damages, and notoriety and all that, Dutchy," he confided to the German, lowering his voice that Miss Hildreth might not hear, "I'd go to his office and have it out with him! Dammim!" He crushed the end of his cigar between his teeth, and stuck out his big jaw. "I wish I could soak him just once—just one good, soul-satisfyin' soak—in his old suspicious solar plexus!"

"That's a very un-Christian wish, Boggselein," said the German seriously. "Better forget it."

Miss Hildreth interrupted them by coming out with her hat on, evidently bound luncheonward.

As she opened the outer door, a man, built much after the physical plan of Mr. Boggs, pushed by her. He came straight in, looking neither to right nor to left. He was evidently irritated and in a hurry.

As he looked into this man's face, Mr. Boggs's countenance underwent a quick transformation. He let his tiger fall unnoticed to the floor, and stared at him.

"Oh, Boggs," said the stranger, coming quickly forward; "it's you, is it? Can you give me a few minutes of your valuable time?"

Mr. Boggs's emotions were in too great a turmoil to permit of his making a reply. He turned, without a word, and led the way back to the Leonard Agency's desk-room. Customary deference to his employer struggled with a desire to turn and do him bodily injury.

"And now," said Mr. Hallowell, as soon as they were seated, "I want to know what in blankety blankety blank you meant by sending me such a blankety blankety bunch of drivel as I received this morning? What do you take me for? Why—why—"

He stopped, for want of words to express himself.

This uncontrolled outburst was unfortunate for Mr. Hallowell. Mr. Boggs had never seen the manager lose control of himself before. That the great Mr. Hallowell could be such a loose-speeched person astonished and pleased him. It also helped him to keep

hesitate about accepting your invitation at first."

He bowed again, while Miss Hildreth graciously expressed her thanks. And then, with that last lie on his lips and a vast satisfaction in his heart, he seized the staid German's arm and executed a double-shuffle.

"It's great to be honest, Dutchy!" he declared. "I ain't felt so fine for a month o' Sundays! Say we hit up some swell joint, where we can get eats that is? Does that Wurzbücher suit you that they serve over in the Hoffman House?"

cool; and, keeping cool, he felt that he was, by that much at least, superior to his employer.

"Hallowell," he said, with a noticeable absence of the "Mr.," "Hallowell, when a person so far forgets himself as to address me like that, I say to him: 'Go to the devil.' Go to the devil, Hallowell. In other words, skiddoo. Beat it. Get out of my office!"

"Why, you blankety blank!" roared the manager, springing to his feet. Mr. Boggs, also, arose. Mr. Hallowell, finding speech inadequate to express his feelings, began to wave his arms and move his feet. Possibly he meant no physical harm to Mr. Boggs by waving his arms; possibly the fact that one of them lightly struck Mr. Boggs on the shoulder was purely an accident. Mr. Boggs, however, was in no condition to weigh the facts in the matter calmly. He promptly put his own arms into commission; and in an amazingly short space of time, Mr. Boggs had got his wish.

When Mr. Bucher, alarmed by the fracas, reached the scene, Mr. Hallowell was leaning over the back of a revolving chair, in a most undignified position, gasping for breath. Mr. Boggs was noticeable for great calmness and a very large display of lower jaw.

"No need to get excited, Dutchy," he said. "The durned old hypocrite insulted me, and I soaked him one." He looked at the manager's gasping figure with comparatively scientific interest. "And from his subsequent actions," he continued, "I should say that that there soak landed eggs-actly in the proper spot. In the solar plexus, to be exact, Dutchy. And he ain't got any ground for legal action, because he hit me first. He came here to insult me, Dutchy," concluded Mr. Boggs, with a show of righteous indignation, "me, that was doing more for him than you nor anybody else but us two can realize; and so I licked him. Ain't he done up brown, though? Notice the way he pants."

Mr. Hallowell slowly freed himself from the back of the chair and looked around for his hat. His face was distorted by the peculiar distressing pain incidental to a blow upon the spot which Mr. Boggs had mentioned. Mr. Bucher, alarmed, pitying, distressed, picked up the unfortunate manager's hat and handed it to him. Mr. Hallowell stumbled toward the door, gaining confidence and erectness as he walked. He disappeared without once looking back.

"Come out to luncheon on me, Dutchy," said Mr. Boggs, sticking his hands in his pockets and balancing on his heels. "Gee, but I feel fine!"

Four blocks from the office, they met Miss Hildreth, returning to work. Mr. Boggs stopped her, baring his head and bowing like a dancing master.

"I just wanted to say, Miss Hildreth," he announced, "that I'll be simply tickled to death to accept your invitation. My previous hesitation was caused solely by the fear that I had forgot some of the card games which are customary at such functions as the one you so kindly mentioned. I find that I remember 'em perfectly. It will be the greatest pleasure in the world for me to come to your party. Only the fear that I had dis-

recollected some of those games made me



Jimmy shook hands rather coolly.