



By THE AUTHOR of
THE WIZARD OF OZ
THE LAND OF OZ
FATHER GOOSE Etc.

L. FRANK BAUM'S NEW WONDER STORY FOR CHILDREN John Dough AND The Cherub. Pictures by John R. Neill.

IS THE CHERUB
A GIRL
OR A BOY?



THE GREAT ELIXIR



VER the door appeared a weather-worn sign that read: "Jules Grogande, Baker." In one of the windows, painted upon a sheet of cardboard, was another sign: "Home-made Bread by the Best Modern Machinery." There was a third sign in the window beyond the doorway, and this was marked upon a bit of writing paper, and said: "Fresh Gingerbread Every Day."

When you opened the door, the top of it struck a brass bell suspended from the ceiling and made it tinkle merrily. Hearing the sound, Madame Leontine Grogande would come from her little room back of the shop and stand behind the counter and ask you what you would like to purchase.

Madame Leontine—or Madame Tina, as the children called her—was quite short and quite fat, and she had a round, pleasant face that was good to look upon. She moved somewhat slowly, for the rheumatism troubled her more or less; but no one minded if Madame was a bit slow in tying



"Poured every drop into the bowl."

up her parcels. For surely no cakes or buns in all the town were so delicious or fresh as those she sold, and she had a way of giving the biggest cakes to the smallest boys and girls who came into her shop, that proved she was fond of children and had a generous heart.

People loved to come to the Grogande Bakery. When one opened the door an exquisite fragrance of newly baked bread and cakes greeted the nostrils; and, if you were not hungry when you entered, you were sure to become so when you examined and smelled the delicious pies and doughnuts and gingerbread and buns with which the shelves and showcases were stocked. There were trays of French candies, too; and because all the goods were fresh and wholesome the bakery was well patronized and did a thriving business.

The reason no one saw Monsieur Jules in the shop was because his time was always occupied in the bakery in the rear—a long, low room filled with ovens and tables covered with pots and pans and dishes which the skillful baker used for mixing and stir-

ring, and long shelves bearing sugars and spices and baking powders and sweet-smelling extracts that made his wares taste so sweet and agreeable.

The baker's room was three times as big as the shop, but Monsieur Jules needed all the space in the preparation of the great variety of goods required by his patrons, and he prided himself on the fact that his edibles were fresh made each day. In order to have the bread and rolls ready at breakfast time he was obliged to get up at 3 o'clock every morning, and so he went to bed about sundown.

On a certain forenoon the door of the shop opened so abruptly that the little brass bell made a furious jingling.

An Arab dashed into the room, stopped short, looked around with a bewildered air, and then rushed away again and banged the door after him.

Madame looked surprised, but said nothing. She recognized the Arab to be a certain Ali Dubh, living in the neighborhood, who was accustomed to purchase a loaf from her every morning. Perhaps he had forgotten his money, Madame thought.

When the afternoon was half over he entered again, running as if fiends were at his heels. In the center of the room he paused, slapped his forehead despairingly with both palms, and said in a wailing voice:

"They're after me!"

Next moment he dashed away at full speed, even forgetting to close the door; so Madame came from behind the counter and did it herself. She delayed a moment to gaze at the figure of Ali Dubh racing up the street. Then he turned the corner of an alley and disappeared from view.

Things did not startle Madame easily, but the Arab's queer behavior aroused in her a mild curiosity, and while she stood looking through the glass of the door, and wondering what had excited the man, she saw two strange forms glide past her shop with a stealthy motion and proceed in the same direction Ali Dubh had taken.

They were also Arabs, without a doubt; for, although their forms were muffled in long cloaks, the turbans they wore and the glint of their dark, beady eyes proclaimed them children of the desert.

When they came to the alley where Ali Dubh had disappeared the two strangers were joined by a third, who crept up to them with the sly, cat-like tread Madame had noted, and seemed to confer with them. Afterward one turned to the east, a second continued up the street, and the third stole into the alley.

"Yes," thought Madame, "they are after Ali Dubh, sure enough. But if they move so slowly they are not likely to catch the poor fellow at all."

Now, Madame knew very little of her queer customer; for, although he made a daily visit to the bakery for a loaf and a few cakes, he was of a gloomy disposition and never stopped for a chat or a bit of gossip. It was

his custom to silently make his simple purchases and then steal softly away.

Therefore his excited actions upon this eventful day were really remarkable, and the good lady was puzzled how to explain them.

She sat late in the shop that evening, burning a dingy oil lamp that swung in the center of the room. For her rheumatism was more painful than usual, and she dreaded to go to bed and waken Monsieur Jules with her moanings. The good man was slumbering peacefully upstairs—she could hear his lusty snores even where she sat—and it was a shame to disturb him when he must rise so early.

So she sat in her little room at the end of the counter, trying to knit by the light of a flickering candle, and rocking back and forth in her chair with a monotonous motion.

Suddenly the little bell tinkled and a gust of air entered the shop, sending the mingled odors of baked stuff whirling and scurrying about the

must help me," returned the Arab, hastily. "Lock your door and come with me into your little room, so that no one can see us through the street windows."

Madame hesitated. The request was unusual, and she knew nothing of the Arab's history. But she reflected that if the man attempted robbery or other mischief she could summon Monsieur Jules with a cry. Also, her interest had been aroused by Ali Dubh's queer behavior during the day.

While she thought the matter over the Arab himself locked the street door and hurried into the little room, where Madame composedly joined him a moment later.

"How can I help you?" she asked, picking up her knitting again.

"Listen!" said the Arab. "I must tell you all. You must know the truth! He put his hand in a pocket of his loose robe and drew out a small flask. It was no bigger than two fingers, and was made of pure gold,

to gain it. So I escaped and wandered over the world. I came here, thinking I was safe from pursuit. But they have followed me!"

"All the way from Arabia?" asked Madame.

"Yes. Today I saw them. They know my lodgings. They are secretly hidden near, and before morning I know they plot to kill me and secure the Great Elixir. But for a time I have escaped them. I came here unseen. You must help me. You must take charge of the Great Elixir and keep it safely for me."

"Nonsense!" cried Madame, becoming aroused at last.

"Do not say that, I beg of you," exclaimed the eager Arab. "You are honest—I know you are! And they will never suspect you of having the Golden Flask."

"Perhaps not," said Madame, "and then, again, they may. My business is to tend the shop, and I am not going to get myself killed by a lot of desperate foreigners just to oblige you, Monsieur Ali Dubh! Take



"AN ARAB DASHED INTO THE ROOM."

room in a most fragrant manner. Then the door closed, and Madame laid down her knitting and turned to greet the newcomer.

To her astonishment, it proved to be Ali Dubh. His brown cheeks were flushed, and his glittering black eyes roamed swiftly over the shop before they turned full upon the Madame's calm face.

"Good!" he exclaimed. "You are alone."

"It is too late for trade. I am going to bed presently," said Madame. "I am in great trouble, and you

upon which strange characters had been richly engraved.

"This," said the Arab, in a low, impressive voice, "is the Great Elixir!"

"What does that mean?" asked Madame, glancing at the flask doubtfully.

"The Great Elixir? Ah! it is the Essence of Vitality, the Water of Life—the Greatest Thing in all the World!"

"I don't understand," said Madame.

"Not understand? Why, a drop of the priceless liquid which this Golden Flask contains, if placed upon your tongue, would send new life coursing through your veins. It would give you power, strength, vitality, greater than youth itself! You could do anything—accomplish wonders—perform miracles—if you but tasted this precious liquid!"

"How odd!" exclaimed Madame, beginning to feel bewildered. And then she asked: "Where did you get it?"

"Ah! This is the story. That is what you must know," answered Ali Dubh. "It is centuries old, the Great Elixir. There is no more of it in all the world. The contents of this flask came into the keeping of the Ancestor of the Chief of my Tribe—whom we call a Sheik—and has been handed down from father to son as an heirloom more priceless than diamonds. The Chief of my Tribe, its last owner, carried the flask always hidden in his breast. But one day, when he and I were hunting together, a mad camel trampled the Sheik to his death, and with his last breath he gave the Great Elixir into my keeping. The Sheik had no son, and the flask was really mine. But many other Arab Sheiks longed for the treasure and sought

your Great Elixir to someone else. I don't want it."

For a minute the Arab seemed in despair. Then his face suddenly brightened.

"You suffer from rheumatism, do you not?" he asked.

"Yes, it's pretty bad tonight," she replied.

"Then I will cure it! I will cure your pains forever if you will keep my precious Elixir in secret until I come to reclaim it."

Madame hesitated, for just then she had a very bad twinge indeed.

"You think you can cure my pains?" she asked.

"I know it!" declared the Arab. He put his hand in a pocket and drew out another flask—a mate to the one containing the Great Elixir; only this was made of solid silver instead of gold.

"This flask," said Ali Dubh, "con-

tains a positive cure for rheumatism. It will not fail. It never has failed. Take it and use it to make yourself well. Five drops in a bowl of water are enough. Bathe well the limbs that ache, and all pain will be gone forever. Accept it, gracious Madame, and keep for me the other flask in safe hiding until my enemies have gone away.

Madame was a practical woman and it seemed an easy thing to do as the Arab desired. If she could get relief from those dreadful pains it would be well worth while to undertake a little trouble and responsibility by caring for Ali Dubh's other and more precious flask.

"Very well," said she. "I agree." The Arab's face flushed with joy. "Good," he cried, "I am saved! Guard well my precious flask—the one of gold. Show it to no one—not even to your good husband. Remember that diamonds and rubies could not buy the Great Elixir—the marvelous Essence of Vitality. As for the silver flask, I give it to you freely. Its contents will cure all your ailments. And now, good night, and may Allah bless you!"

Swiftly he stole from the room, unlocked the street door and vanished into the darkness. And Madame sat looking thoughtfully at the flasks.

Presently she remembered that the front door was yet unlocked. So she trotted out into the shop, bolted the door securely, drew down the curtains and put out the dim light that had burned over the counter. Then Madame returned to the little room and looked at the two flasks again.

Aside from her rheumatism the good lady had one other physical weakness; she was color-blind. That is, she could seldom distinguish one color from another, and was quite liable to think blue was green and green was yellow. Many people have this trouble with their eyes; but it never had bothered Madame especially in waiting upon her customers.

Now, however, when she came back into her room and gazed at the two flasks upon her table, she had no idea which one was of gold and which of silver, for the weakness of her eyes prevented her from telling them apart by means of their color.

"Let me see," she murmured; "this must be the flask which the Arab first drew from his pocket. No—I think this was the one." But the more she hesitated the more confused she became, and in the end she told herself honestly that she had not the faintest clue to guide her in knowing which flask contained the Essence of Vitality and which the cure for rheumatism.

And the pains were now so bad that she was anxious to cure them without a moment's delay.

The engraving on the two flasks was nearly the same, and if some of those queer foreign characters really differed, Madame did not know it. Also in size and shape the flasks were exactly alike. Truly Madame was in a fine quandary, and there seemed no way of getting out of it with safety.

She had almost decided to hide both flasks until the Arab returned, when several sharp twinges of pain caught her and made her long most earnestly for relief. If she went to bed now she would be sure to suffer all night, and in one of the flasks was a sure cure.

"This flask," said Ali Dubh, "con-

"I'll guess at it, and take the chances!" declared Madame, firmly. And then, choosing at haphazard, she hid the silver flask behind the mirror and put the gold one in her pocket. Afterward she picked up the lamp and walked as silently as possible through the short passage that led to Monsieur Jules' baker's room.

The big place was still and dark, and the little lamp only brightened a small part of it. But Madame did not care for that. Those pains were getting extremely hard to bear, and she had even ceased to care whether or not she had selected the right flask.

Taking a brown bowl from the shelf she drew it nearly full of water and then placed it upon a corner of the long, white mixing-table, beside the lamp. Next she took the golden flask from her pocket.

"How much did the Arab say to put in the water," she wondered, pausing in perplexed thought. "I declare, I've actually forgotten! But he said it was sure to cure me, so I may as well use all the flask contains. For, after I am cured, I shall not need any more of it."

Reasoning thus, Madame removed the stopper and poured into the bowl every drop of that precious Elixir



"With lighter steps than she had known for years."

which Ali Dubh had prized more than life itself, and which his wild countrymen had come all the way from Arabia to America to possess. For generation after generation the priceless liquor had been preserved with jealous care, and now the baker's wife was rubbing it upon her limbs in an endeavor to cure the pangs of rheumatism!

She used very little of the contents of the bowl, after all. The touch of the Elixir upon her skin, although it was diluted with so much water, sent a glow of exhilaration throughout all her stout body.

The pains were suddenly eased, and Madame began to feel as light and airy as a fairy, in spite of her great mass of flesh.

It occurred to her that she would like to dance; to run and shout; to caper about as she used to do as a girl. But soon her shrewd common sense returned, and she told herself this was but the effect of the wonderful medicine, and that the wisest thing she could do was to go to bed and sleep soundly while she might.

Being still somewhat bewildered, the good woman picked up the lamp and, leaving the bowl containing the Elixir standing upon the table, mounted the stairs with lighter steps than she had known in years.

Five minutes later she was in bed, snoring as loudly as Monsieur Jules himself.

The Great John Dough Mystery

Several millions of children between the ages of 6 and 60 have come to expect a new story from L. Frank Baum each year. Six years ago he gave them the "Wizard of Oz," which has since been published in five different languages, and besides was dramatized and played upon the stage in every prominent city in the United States, running successfully for a period of five years.

The story for this year is "John Dough and the Cherub," which begins in this paper today, and will run each Sunday for 12 weeks. "John Dough and the Cherub" abounds in unique Baum characters, and also contains a deep mystery to be solved by the children themselves; viz.: Is the Cherub a girl or a boy?

Chick, the Cherub, is one of the two most important personages in the book, but the author has failed to state whether or not the youngster is a girl or a boy. The children are left to decide for themselves. Begin with the first chapters and do not miss a word of this great story.



"THIS," SAID THE ARAB, "IS THE GREAT ELIXIR."