

The Wonderful Eyeflash of Oz, part 3

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 03 Feb 1999

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William H. Ansley — 03 Feb 1999, 00:38

Here is my third posting on the Oz references in The Eyeflash Miracles.

The next Oz reference is a throw away line from Nitty. He is in a box car on a freight train with Mr. Parker and Little Tib. Mr. Parker is asleep in the back of the car. Nitty is sitting by the open door with Little Tib, and is describing the scenery outside the train to him. They are passing a large pine forest and Nitty says that he thinks there are a lot of animals in the woods. "You like animals, George?[8] Bears and big old cats." This is certainly another way of saying "Lions and tigers and bears" but without the "Oh, my."

The first miracle (or at least a possible one) occurs on the train. Little Tib appears to be feverish[9] and pale, which worries Nitty. Two railroad police women throw a tear gas grenade into the boxcar. There is a commotion as Nitty yells and tries to throw the grenade out of the car, Mr. Parker runs full tilt into a wall of the car and Little Tib is almost overcome by the gas. There is no Oz vision here, but Little Tib does have a vision or memory of the first home he can remember where there was a clear, ice-cold creek and a "kite-flying west wind was blowing."

The gas disappears. At first Nitty and Mr. Parker think that the grenade has fallen out of the car, but then they find it. It just stopped emitting gas, much sooner than it should have. Nitty seems to suspect that Little Tib had something to do with this and later events make him sure of this. One such later event is that Mr. Parker seems to have completely recovered his sanity ever since the grenade incident.

Little Tib continues to be feverish and falls asleep. He dreams of a place with apple and cherry trees with red leaves and red grass around their roots. The trees have faces in their trunks and talk to each other. There are red birds in the trees: cardinals.

Little Tib comes upon a little house painted with red and white stripes. Out the house comes a copper man with features, including a large moustache, stamped upon his face. He has three key holes in his back (like a clockwork toy) labeled 'Moving Action', 'Talking Action' and 'Thinking Action'. There is a loud hammering sound in the hills behind the little house. It is a giant woman with a giant broom hitting at and missing a giant rat, over and over. The woman is Little Tib's mother.

Little Tib wakes up crying in a doctor's office with Nitty and Mr. Parker. Next to him is a woman who has a little girl with a crippled, shrunken leg. Little Tib touches her leg and heals it. This is the second miracle as I am reporting them, although it is the first inarguable one. There is no direct Oz vision during the performance of this miracle, but the echoes of the Bam! Bam! Bam! from his most recent dream are still in his mind and Little Tib thinks about how his own legs felt in his earlier Oz dream when he was running from the spinning sunflowers to the green city.

There is a lot of Oz material here. The trees with faces in their trunks are from the movie (the scene in the apple orchard). The place where the leaves, grass, etc. are all red is in the Land of

Oz; it is the portion know as the Country of the Quadlings or Quadlingland. In the Oz books the Munchkins are only one of the four major groups who live in Oz. To the north live the Quadlings, to the east live the Munchkins (blue), to the south live the Gillykins (red) and to the west live the Winkies (yellow). And in the center is the Emerald City where things are, of course, green. Oz is first described this way in The Marvelous Land of Oz [10].

The copper man is Tiktok, Smith & Tinker's Patent Double-Action, Extra-Responsive, Thought-Creating, Perfect-Talking Mechanical Man, as it says at the beginning of his instruction manual. He is introduced in Ozma of Oz and appears in many books thereafter. Wolfe got a few details wrong (in the book he has one keyhole in the middle of his back and one under each arm and one key fits all of them) but his copper man is unmistakable Tiktok, who is often referred to as a copper man in the Oz books. One of the great pleasures of the Oz books is the illustrations [11]. Wolfe obviously remembers the pictures of the characters; the drawings often showed details that Baum did not describe but that Wolfe does, such as Tiktok's moustache.

The giant version of Little Tib's mother is based on a giant in Ozma of Oz. The giant in the book is another clockwork man, made of iron, by the same manufacturer as Tiktok. All the iron giant can do is pound the path that runs by him with his giant hammer; he is meant to discourage people from using the path. But if you move quickly and time it just right, you can run under his hammer. Otherwise you will be crushed.

Stay tuned for the next installment.

William Ansley

[8] Even though George Tibbs always thinks of himself as Little Tib, he tells people his full name when they ask him, so he is usually called George by adults in the story.

[9] Little Tib seems to have a fever whenever he works a miracle.

[10] Baum is very inconsistent about the colors of things in these countries in the different books or even in different places in the same book. At one point he will say that the predominant color of (for example) Muchkinland is blue: Munchkins paint their houses blue, wear blue clothes and grow blue flowers, and so on, even though Muchkinland grass is still described as green. But elsewhere he will say that everything is blue, the plants, the dirt, the people's hair (and perhaps skin). Or he will say everything has a blue tinge, although other colors show through.

[11] The illustrator of The Wonderful Wizard of Oz was W. W. Denslow. John R. Neill illustrated most of the rest of them. Unfortunately, I am re-reading these books in plain text form on my Palm III, so I can't say for sure who illustrated any given book, in general. (Many of the Oz books are now in the public domain.) But I read all the books in illustrated form originally and remember the pictures well. Plus I have a copy of The Road to Oz from our local library with the original illustrations to look at (a young relative is reading it).