

The Wonder

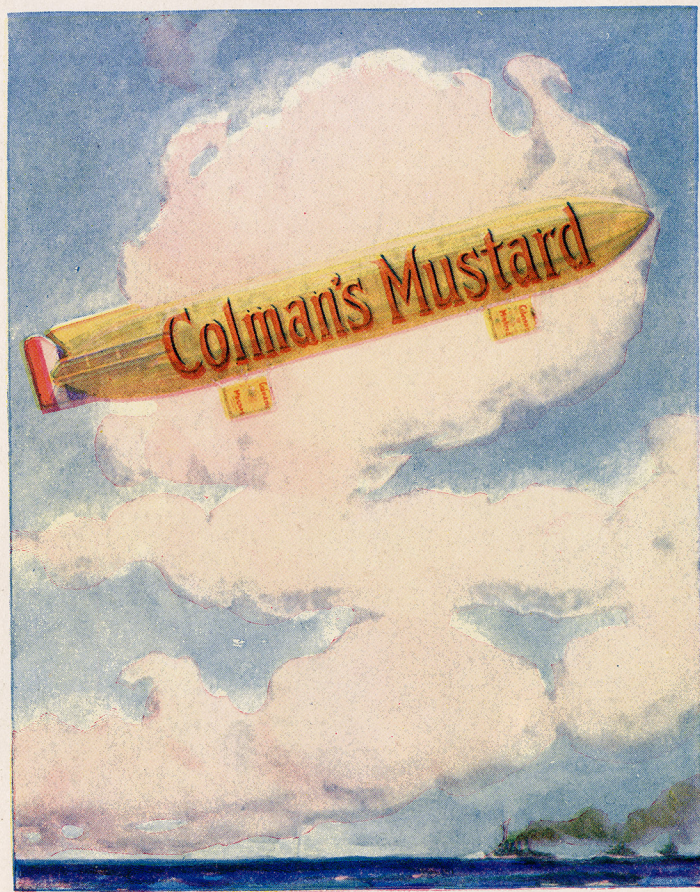
Written by

M. STUART MACRAE

Illustrated by

S. ABBEY





REACHES THE HIGHEST POINT OF QUALITY

18.-

THE WONDER

SHOWN BY THE FAIRY
TO HOBLIN & TWINKLES



BY
M STUART MACRAE
Illustrated by S. Abbey

J. & J. Colman's Xmas
Greetings to their young
friends all over the World.

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THE WONDER

WAKE UP," said the Fairy, giving Hoblin and me the teeniest taps on our heads; "the pink curtains are drawn, the fire is dancing up the chimney, and the humpties are set on the hearth just ready."

"But we haven't got any of these things," said Hoblin, sitting up in bed and rubbing his eyes with his knuckles. "This is our bedroom, isn't it, Twinkle?" Twinkle is me. "And we don't have pink curtains and humpties—and we *never* have a fire in our bedroom unless we're ill."

While Hoblin was talking I just jumped out of bed to see. And directly my toes touched the floor I knew things had happened, because the cottony rug had gone, and, instead of it, there was a great, thick, fluffy carpet, spreading everywhere. And, besides, there was the fire, and the humpties on the hearth, and the pink curtains, and the Fairy herself, standing up straight and tall, in a dress that looked like moonlit muslin, with spangles hidden in it.

"Be quick, Hoblin," said the Fairy, "because I am just going to touch your beds with my wand, and then they will vanish all away, and in their places there will be a WONDER."

Hoblin bounced out of bed, and said, "Oh!" when his feet sank into the carpet.



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The very next minute the Fairy touched our beds, and then we all three went and sat down on the hump-ties and watched our beds vanish away.

It was the wonderfulest thing you can imagine. They went, and went, and went ; thinner, and thinner, until they were like little shadow beds. We held our breaths until they were quite gone.

The Fairy slipped one of her kind arms round Hoblin, and the other round me ; and then we both felt Changes. When I looked down at my nightie, which is plain calico, without any prettiness, it simply wasn't *there*, for I was dressed in a gown of pink silk, and Hoblin's pyjgies had turned into a velvet suit, trimmed with knobby buttons made of real gold.

"Look, dears," said the Fairy, drawing our attention from our fine clothes. "The WONDER is beginning. You are to see living pictures of the greatest things that have happened for ages."

Hoblin and I just looked, and then we shivered a tiny little bit, because it seemed that it was going to be such a huge, big WONDER. For not only had our beds gone quite away, but the walls of the room had gone too ; and, in the place of everything, there was a room in a king's palace, and a fierce-looking king was sitting in a heavy throne-chair, with courtiers standing all round him. The king talked in a lordly voice, and we could hear all he said.

"I am the wisest and most mighty king that ever lived," he called out, "and I am determined to rule the whole world. The nation that resists me shall be destroyed. Go forth now, my courtiers,



"We felt changes"

and call together my trained soldiers, and tell them that The Day has come—The Day when we will begin to make war with the world.”

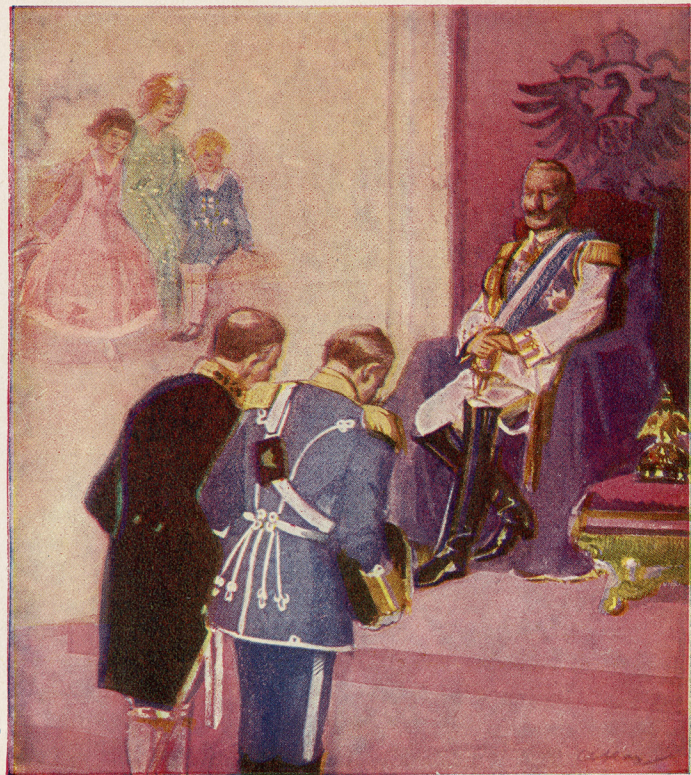
“The Day—the Day,” cried all the courtiers in chorus, and they made a loud clashing noise with their swords, and bowed humbly before the king.

At that moment a mist-curtain fell between us and the palace, and we were left alone with the Fairy.

“The king says truly that his Day has come,” remarked the Fairy. “He has been getting ready for war for years and years : and he rejoices to know that all his enemies are unprepared. His mind is set on conquering the nations before they have time to get ready to meet his trained armies in battle. Millions upon millions of soldiers and sailors will lay down their lives before the War is ended.”

As soon as the Fairy ceased speaking the WONDER began again—but the scene was now quite changed. We saw great armies gathering together in a pleasant land and spreading themselves out over the cornfields and among the green woods and valleys.

Wherever the Armies went desolation followed. Shells flew from their great guns and burst upon the villages and towns for miles around, and many women and children were killed. The villages were turned into flaming ruins ; and, when all their houses and churches were destroyed, the poor people fled in terror, blocking all the roads leading away from the centre of the War. It was such a very sad sight to see them hurrying along, carrying their little children, and their bundles of things saved from the fire and the



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"The villages were turned into flaming ruins."

ruins. Every now and then a sick old man, or a mother quite tired out with carrying her child, would sink by the roadside, in full reach of the war-guns.

Hoblin, who is a very tender-hearted little boy, and who cries even when our pet doggie is hurt, couldn't bear this dreadful sight, and he laid his dear little head in the Fairy's lap and began to sob.

Then, in an instant, the mist-curtain fell, and the WONDER was shut off from our sight.

"Children," said the Fairy; "do you remember that story in the Bible where the prophet prays God to open the eyes of his young manservant, and let him see the armies of the Lord, gathered in the hills round about the little town of Dothan?"

"Oh, yes," cried I gladly. "It is our very favourite story. God let the young man see. And



the poor people fled in terror."

he looked, and behold the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about the prophet."

"It is my wish that you, children, should now see the battlefield as I sometimes see it," said the Fairy.

Her voice was silver-sweet and low, as she spoke, and a hush seemed to fall upon us all as the mist-curtain began to melt away. Hoblin stopped crying and looked up, and his face was a picture.

We saw a battlefield, white in the moonlight, and it was strewn thickly with fallen soldiers, some dead, some badly wounded. For the first minute we saw only them, then the real WONDER began, and there seemed to grow upon us a new sight of many angel messengers, bending down over the suffering ones. We could see their shining faces, and their beautiful



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white hands ; and their clothes must have been quite real, because they fluffed out in the breeze.

Presently, among all the rest, there came one Splendid Messenger, and the Fairy whispered to us that they called him the White Brother. His face was wonderful, like the loveliest of white clouds with the light of the sun full on it, and Hoblin and I have never seen anything on earth so white as his robe.

The soldiers, even the worst wounded of them, raised themselves as he passed from them and looked at him with love and thanks in their eyes. Hoblin and I didn't want that beautiful WONDER ever to vanish away. But it did.

"How long will the fighting and killing go on ?" asked Hoblin, when the mist-curtain had come down.

"For four years and three months," said the Fairy. "First one country comes into it, then another ; and the terrors of revolution break out in the East, and many great armies leave off fighting the common enemy, and begin to fight each other. Merchant ships carrying food, and big stately liners carrying peaceful passengers, and hospital ships laden with wounded soldiers, and nurses, and doctors, are sunk to the bottom of the sea by the underwater mines and battle-boats of the king who made the war. Then there is the war in the air. Night and day thousands upon thousands of flying planes carry explosive bombs, which they drop on the places where they will do most damage and cause most terror. And there are deadly poison gases which are let off in the air, to be carried by the wind to the fighting lines, and whole armies are poisoned by them."



"Night and day, thousands upon thousands of flying planes carry explosive bombs which they drop on the places where they will do the most damage, and cause the most terror."

"It seems to nearly everybody as if the war is going to last for ever," continued the Fairy, "but we must always remember, dears, that the very longest earth-thing that ever could happen must have an end. And, in the case of a war, in the very end, **RIGHT** conquers **MIGHT**. After four years of bitter fighting, and just when things seemed to be looking very black for **RIGHT**, and very hopeful for **MIGHT**, they suddenly change, and go quite the other way. In three months the face of the world is entirely changed. See! The mist-curtain is melting away. This, I think, will be a new sort of **WONDER**."

We saw, just at once, a scene in our own big, dear old London, when all the people were nearly mad with joy because the fighting had come to an end; **RIGHT** had conquered **MIGHT**, and **WE** had won the War. Oh! it was lovely beyond words. People sang and danced in the streets, bonfires were lit in the squares, thanksgiving services were held in the churches, and people seemed just as if they didn't at all know how best to show their joy. Hoblin and I got up and waved and cheered with the rest, and the Fairy laughed and clapped her hands. Then, for the very last time, the picture changed; and we saw the **END WONDER**.

It was the king who made the war. He has now no crown, no throne, no palace of his very own, no courtiers; and he knows well that his country is being torn to pieces by Revolution.

We looked at him for a long minute as he sat in a big gloomy room in a house far away from his once



*"We stood up and waved and cheered
with the rest."*

royal palace, and I didn't quite know whether to be sorry for him or not. Because, you see the war wasn't just a *mistake*; he *made* it on purpose to try and show that he was greater than any other king.

"I suppose," said Hoblin, speaking suddenly, "that king will be eaten of worms some day soon."

The Fairy looked rather surprised.

"Oh!" said I, remembering just at once. "Hoblin means 'eaten of worms, and he died'—like Herod, in the Bible. Herod let the people call him a god, and this king called himself a god, so we suppose it is just about the same, don't we, Hoblin?"

"I don't know about the worms," said the Fairy, "but I do know that this king will have to reap with his own hands, in this life and the next, the terrible harvest of the seeds he has sown over the wide fields of the earth—harvest of pain, and desolation and terror. He will reap every field."

"It will be worse than worms," said Hoblin, shivering with dread and clinging to the Fairy.

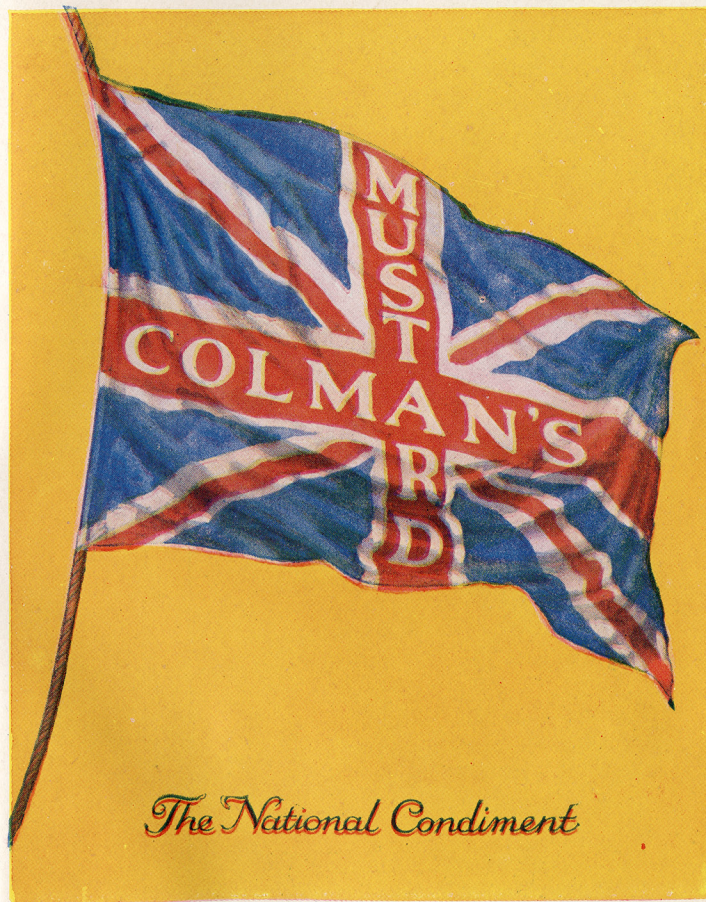
She undid his hands gently and kissed him, and then she kissed me too.

"It is THE END, my darlings," she said. "Sunrise-time is nearly here, and your Fairy can never stay the teeniest minute after the sun is up."

She held us tightly to her for a moment, then we both seemed to breathe a deep breath, and the walls came back, and our beds, and everything; and we are now just the same Hoblin and Twinkle as we were before, except that we have seen THE WONDER.



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for him or not."*



The National Condiment

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