



## Oh, Give Me Back My Soldiers

A P O S T W A R A N E C D O T E

**I**T was during our first days of basic training at Camp Lee, Virginia, and in our close-order drill we were the usual fumbling, stumbling rookies. Of course, every few minutes we were being reamed—roared at, verbally kicked in the fatigue pants—for doing things as snafu as only rookies can.

"To the rear . . . harch!" came the thunderous command. But only the rear ranks turned—the front ranks went right on marching forward. Finally we were assembled again, cowering at the thought of the verbal whaling we were going to get now.

To our popeyed astonishment, the lieutenant, a gentleman from the deep South, spoke in a sad, kindly manner.

"Men," he said, "you all just made me think of mah deah old mammy. When Ah was little, she gave me some wooden soldiers. Ah loved mah wooden soldiers—Ah ate with them, played with them all the time. But one day a little boy visited me and he wanted mah soldiers, and mah mammy said, 'Let him take yo' soldiers for a while.' Ah did, but oh, Ah was so unhappy! Ah couldn't eat or sleep or even play—Ah missed them so. And then mah mammy took me on her knee and said, 'Now, don't yo' cry, honey, 'cause someday'" — the lieutenant's voice suddenly jumped to a fearful bellow—" 'someday you'll get yo' little wooden soldiers back!'"

—HERMAN SHERMAN.