

# THE TWO SOLDIERS

By EDWIN L. SABIN

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It was a brilliant holiday store, windows and the shelves and the cases ablaze with filigree and thronged with dolls and dishes and engines and trains and skates and sleds, and hobbyhorses that galloped, and cows that mooed, and mice that ran, and—and everything, absolutely everything, that ever enters the most rapturous Christmas dream.

In the center of the large show windows, fronting upon the gay street, stood two soldiers. They were by all odds the finest soldiers in the store, much superior to the personnel composing the different troops and regiments and companies stationed here and there along the aisles. The pair were made of tin, to be sure; but they were of heroic stature, eight inches tall, richly uniformed in black and yellow, and could be wound up so that they would present arms several times in succession.

The other soldiers, poor things, were compelled to remain the whole time at a "carry" or a "right shoulder" without relief.

Naturally these two soldiers were proud and of aspirations reaching be-



"OH, TO GET AWAY FROM THIS ETERNAL GUARD MOUNT!"

yond their present narrow quarters. They pined for a wider sphere. As they stood and stared with stern, fixed gaze through the plate glass into the gay street they talked together in toy language, and none, not even the most versatile linguists among the people passing and repassing, knew that they talked.

"Oh, to get away from this eternal guard mount over a lot of frippery!" sighed the one.

"With all my heart!" agreed the other. "The monotony is frightful."

"I'd give half my soldier to receive orders to report to some little boy," continued the first. "Oh, for a change!"

"But the majority of little boys are so rough and careless," responded the second. "I understand they scratch you and bend you and otherwise maltreat you without cause, and soon you're done for. I prefer duty of a more quiet, instructive nature, where I may teach by means of my department rather than by violent action."

"Well, I should enjoy a hard drill and a tussle, I believe," asserted the first.

"Our organism is too fine for such active service, my lad," indulgently corrected the second. "What—scratches and dents? No, no. Give me a post of more elegance, where my uniform will be treated as it deserves."

Christmas day had been over and gone a month when after their separation the two soldiers again encountered one another, but this time in a great heap of rubbish at the city dump, where the dump man had unwittingly thrown them out.

"Hurrah! Hello, old chap!" exclaimed the first soldier delightedly.

"Hello!" returned the second, with rather more reserve. "Goodness! Been through the Seven Years' war?"

"Well might he put this query. The other soldier was a perfect wreck. He had lost an arm and a foot, his head was sharply inclined forward upon his chest, he had only one eye, his body was twisted askew, his gun was broken, his cap was missing, his features were battered and distorted, and as for his uniform of black and yellow—there was hardly a spot of paint on him!"

"I—I've been having my tussle," announced the first, with a cracked laugh. "But you—why, you evidently found just what you were looking for."

"Yes," explained the second, "I fell into an excellent post. It was the hands of a little boy, sure enough, but he wasn't allowed to hurt me. See, I haven't a mark on me." And he exhibited himself proudly.

True, he was still in dress parade condition.

"Thunder and Mars!" chuckled the first. "And look at me! Do you mean to say that you never were stepped on?"

"Oh, no," replied the second. "I didn't lie around on the floor. I was put away just as soon as he was done playing with me. His mother had made him a very orderly little boy."

"So you never stayed out all night in the hall or in the middle of the sitting room?"

"Never," said the spick and span sol-

dier.

"And did he shoot at you with his rubber gun ever?"

"Never," said the spick and span soldier.

"And he didn't bite you to see how soft you were?"

"Never," said the spick and span soldier.

"Or drag you about among the chairs with a string?"

"Never," said the spick and span soldier.

"Or sick the terrier on you?"

"Never."

"Or take you to bed with him and roll on you?"

"Never. I was always placed on the shelf in the closet."

"Or kick you or whack you or throw you?"

"Never. Watch—I can present arms as well as ever."

"Or kiss you and hug you with all his might and cry for you when he was sick through eating too much candy?"

"Never. He used to forget me entirely for days and days. Did your joy really do all that to you?"

"Yes, all that and more," answered the battered soldier softly.

"And did he kiss you, you say?"

"And did he kiss you, you say?" asked the spick and span soldier a bit wistfully.

"Yes; he kicked me and he kissed me," laughed the first.

"And did you enjoy it?" pursued the second curiously.

"I had the time of my life," declared the other. "How did you find things—up to your expectations?"

The spick and span soldier hesitated; then he replied:

"Possibly. I can't complain. But—

but somehow I grew dreadfully enu-

ed. I almost longed at times for more excitement, more energy. We got tired of one another. After a day or so we exhausted all our programme of proper exercises, and he was so cau-

tious of wearing me out that I was laid aside, and—and, finally, here I am. I don't suppose he even knows

that I'm gone."

"Dear me!" mused the other. "I'm glad my little boy was not like yours. Of course there are the knocks; but,



THE VETERANS MEET.

Oh, our companionship was sweet! I bet he's crying for me at this instant, poor chum! Still, it is as well that I am carted to the dump. I am old and disfigured and a buck number, and I wanted to go before he would cease to miss me."

The spick and span soldier was silent.

"Hi, y!" soliloquized the veteran,

with a sigh and with a chuckle, stiffly rolling over on his back. "I'm past repairs, but it was sweet—aye, it was worth it! I—have—had—the—time—of—my—life."

And with his one eye he gazed through a chink in the debris up at the stars.

### Fetters.

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Customer—Didn't know I was being shaved.

Barber (flattered)—Very glad, I'm sure, sir.

Customer—I thought I was being handpapered.—London Pick-Me-Up.

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