

Ward Number Ten

JOHN H. SPEARS

Most of the men on ward ten had been brought in the evening before. They were engaged in adjusting themselves to another hospital of the chain of field, evacuation and general hospitals stretched around the globe. They were also getting around to the jovial kidding and banter that is one of the pastimes of every soldier. The patients were arranged so that the most serious cases were placed at the front of the ward. One of these was a youth of about twenty-two whose bed was being prepared for traction by a captain and a nurse.

The other patients, knowing that this was just routine hospital procedure, continued in their wisecracking, banter, and reveries. The doctor and nurse talked at length and looked at the patient in a doubtful manner. It was obvious that they were uncertain about what should be done and who should perform the next step. This drew the attention of some of the patients who had arrived the previous evening. The captain threw up both hands and left hurriedly. The nurse remained, doing what

she could do make the patient as comfortable as possible.

The captain returned, followed by a cool-looking, keen-eyed major who carried a drill in his hand. The major looked at the patient, motioned to the nurse to use the hypodermic needle, then examined and replaced the X-rays which hung at the foot of the bed. The major then very swiftly and expertly removed the cast and bandages from the right arm. The ward was silent — except for the steady grinding of the drill through bone. The new patients looked at the youth, then stared at the major, and then at each other. Some shook their heads. Others hung theirs resignedly as if wondering, "To what kind of place have I been sent? Will that happen to me?"

The major ceased grinding, inserted the pin, adjusted the weights, which applied the required amount of tension and traction, gave the captain and nurse their instructions, then turned with drill in hand and left as coolly as he had entered. The patients on ward ten hesitatingly resumed their jargon, banter, and reveries.

Sampling . . .

The trees are the greatest tattlers. Even the conservative old cherry tree, which clings to its modest green long after the other trees have donned reds and yellows, whispers the news through a few dry

leaves. The maple just a few yards away boasts a complete coat of yellow and has strewn the yard with hills and valleys of leaves. The peach tree droops after a heavy season, but still manages to produce a thin, circular rug of gold.

Autumn Comes to Our Back Yard
ARNOLD WAJENBERG