

## On The Veranda

(By one who is there)

It is morning; the patients on the veranda are eagerly expecting their morning meal; the orderlies seem a little late this morning—last night was pay night, but of course that has nothing to do with it. At last they are here, and No. 1 comes out hurriedly with two plates; his bootlaces are untied and trailing behind him; he trips and falls; the plates do a fantastic dance along the floor. No. 2, who is following him with cups of tea, kneels suddenly down on him, at the same time emptying a cup of hot tea down his neck. They regain their feet, and after heated words from the one stimulated by the hot tea, they recapture the eggs, which by the way, are none the worse for their accident, and breakfast is served at last.

Breakfast over, the duties of the day proceed, there is a restlessness about the orderlies which is always apparent when they are crowded for time. Now I see No. 1 massaging a patient's back. No. 2 is further along the veranda with bottles, empty and full, in his hands, putting them down by the bedside of a patient, he proceeds to draw the cork of one bottle; suddenly a face appears above the veranda rail and makes a remark about orderlies having a fondness for Stout: this is the last straw which breaks the back of No. 2's temper, and he stoops down and hurls the bottle at his tormenter, who, being a ball player, catches it adroitly, finds it is full; disappears. No. 2 realizes that for the first time in his life he has thrown away a full bottle, tears his head madly, upsets a locker, cannons into a light-duty patient with a tray of egg nogs, knocks over a couple of screens, yelling the while "May the ould Divil floi away wid ye", thus proving he is NOT a native of Kent.

A tall soldier is mopping the floor with scrubber and bucket, whistling loudly "Sprinkle me with kisses". No. 2 catches the sprinkle part of it and empties the bucket over him. The effect from an artist's point of view is magnificent: the tall soldier gasps and flees, the orderly's lips move quickly, presumably in prayer. The Ward-Sergeant arrives on the scene and survey the mess. The air assumes a filmy blue appearance, orderlies start flying about: Sister looks round the corner, puts her hands to her ears and retreats: all is chaos..

Things are straightened up, everything is trim and neat, and a voice inside calls "Shun! Inspecting Officer." Orderly No. 1 has his face washed and the wild look has left his eyes. No. 2, arrayed in a tunic four sizes too small for him, is afraid to move in case of an accident; the Ward-Sergeant does his best to look pleasant. The Officer is passing them, a button, which can stand the strain no