

To Save us from the Styptic.

BY JOSEPH DANA MILLER.

What would happen if our State legislators should forget us for a single session? Year after year between ourselves and impending calamities that we little suspect, these devoted guardians of the public welfare interpose precautionary bills. What matters it if unconscious alike of the dangers that threaten and the salutary influence of these measures we go our way unthinking?

Where do you get shaved? At some "tonsorial parlor," where the latest implements of the barber's art are used; or at some more modest resort? It does not matter. Wherever you go your life is in danger from the "styptic." Do you know what a styptic is? Unhappy man—that knowledge is also to be added to your already large and painful store of possible ills. The styptic is a stick of bichloride of iron and alum, which is dipped in water and used by barbers on cuts made by the razor.

It is clear that the large part of humanity which gets shaved at barber shops can escape the widespread danger of the styptic only through the strenuous efforts of our legislators. To this end the Pennsylvania Legislature has introduced a bill which is to be known as the Sanitary Barbers' Law. Massachusetts and New York are to follow the example set by Pennsylvania. A board of practicing barbers is to be appointed by the Governor, the secretary of which is to receive \$600 a year. Every barber engaged in business at the time of the passage of the act is to pay \$2 for a license. But all those desiring to become barbers subsequent to the act must pay \$10 for such license, and the board is to have power to revoke licenses where evidence shall be forthcoming that any of the rules laid down have been violated.

Some of these rules are interesting. The sanitary barber will use, in place of the styptic, a little wad of especially prepared cotton on each person; and he is not to

use it again on another person, in pain of forfeiture of his license. Just how the board are to discover violations of this rule we are not told. Under the Sanitary Barbers Act there is to be no "doubling up" of towels; the comb must be immediately steamed after use, and the hair-brush dipped in bichloride of mercury. The re-use of shaving cup, soap or brush is forbidden, and one of the plans proposed is to use discs instead of cups; the brush and disc to be disinfected after shaving, and the remaining soap thrown away. Apprentices are to serve three years before they shall be granted a license as full-fledged barbers.

This is not a subject for humor; it was not humorously intended; the Pennsylvania Legislature is dreadfully serious. The Barbers' Association of Pennsylvania are said to be in favor of the bill—hence the provision referring to apprentices, and that charging those who are already in \$2, and those who apply for admittance to the charmed circle of sanitary barbers five times as much!—a bare-faced attempt to restrict competition and to build up a barbers' trust that would make Rockefeller or Havemeyer pale with envy.

May we suggest to the makers of this bill some amendments:

The boy who brushes the coat of the customer when he descends from the chair shall not persist in his efforts when the latter exhibits any marked impatience.

In drying the face of the customer, the barber shall not press his fingers so hard upon the eyelids as to endanger the security of the eyeballs.

No barber shall have any "views" on free coinage, free trade, protection, or the single tax with which he may desire to inoculate his patron. No apprentice who can be proven to have any pronounced opinion on these subjects shall be granted a license.

No barber shall eat garlic, except on the eve of a vacation.

No barber shall recommend any hair tonic to his bald-headed customers. There are 5,000,000 specific remedies for bald-

ness, and about 10,000,000 bald-headed men in the United States.

There are other amendments that might be suggested; but let these suffice. There are many ills in this life, real and imaginary, and no doubt in the minds of our legislators that there is a cure for all of them. Certainly, for every ill there must be a law, say they, and, God helping us! we shall pass a law for every minute in the day, but we will keep this generation wise, wealthy, happy and virtuous! In all the history of devotion and dogma there is no more touching example of simple faith and trust than that of the legislator in the efficacy of law.