

FIGARO STORMS ATHENE

BY MAURICE S. SULLIVAN

THE most inattentive patron of American barber-shops cannot have failed to notice, of late, a new dignity in the attendant shearsmen. Those who stand disengaged are not plucking at banjos, or reading a pink journal designed to appeal to policemen, or even monkeying with the radio. The latest story about the drummer in the lower berth is not being recited aloud. The man in the chair is not obliged to cry out in torment: "No! I told you once! No!" And there are many other improvements.

The reason for all this is the epochal discovery, about five years ago, that barbering is not only an art, but also a science. The great white light of revelation burst upon Figaro when a horde of houris demanding bobs crashed the door of his shop. Suddenly he felt self-conscious; inferior socially. Delicate scents, filtering through the grosser reeks of his atelier, rose to his brain and set him off on an orgy of thinking. At once prophets popped up, crying "Education! Education!" Now, all over the nation, barbers are humped over books, learning big words.

But they are barbers no longer. Early in the first semester of the Enlightenment they became aware that the old name did not do them justice. It was as if a wrassler, having acquired a license as an osteopath, should continue to call himself a wrassler. So the brainy men in the profession applied themselves to the invention of a new one. For example, Mr. Joseph De Silvis of Philadelphia, creator of the Windblown Bob, and eminent as a writer in the barbaric periodicals. Thus he put it in the *Barbers' Journal*: "The word barber has run

its course. A new and more professional term must be coined. What shall it be?" At first he was hot for *beautician*, but then he favored *dermitonsor*. Meanwhile Mr. Fred W. Fitch, founder of the *Square Deal*, a magazine widely circulated in the profession, held out for *dermatician*, and the *Master Barber and Beauty Culturist*, formerly the *Master Barber*, "official organ of the Associated Master Barbers of America," proposed *chirotonsor*. Now the *Western Barber* lends aid to the *Master Barber*, and *chirotonsor* it seems likely to be. Bowing to the majority, Mr. Fitch gracefully abandons *dermatician*.

The problem of what to call the new professional suite also demanded thought. Mr. John O'Brien of Akron, O., named his a *dermatorium*, Mr. F. M. Chase of Newton, Kan., suggested *dermasbop* and *dermistry*, and Mr. G. L. Miller of De Quincy, La., nominated *dermatory*. But now *chirotonsory* is in the lead. The greatest boosters for it were in California, which has always been hospitable to the tendency that makes a real estate dealer a realtor, a beauty shop girl a cosmetologist, an undertaker a mortician, and a corn doctor a podiatrist. Not Hollywood, nor Hiram Johnson, nor even the cafeteria is the State's greatest glory. According to the president of the California State Master Chirotonisors' Association, Mr. Henry S. Guio, writing in the *Western Barber*, "the national adoption of the term *chirotonsory* is the biggest feather in California's cap."

Ten years ago, if you had suggested to any barber in his right mind that before he died he might attend a university to get a better knowledge of his trade, he would

have taken a quick look at your bumps and then yelled for Reilly the cop to call the wagon. But now, under the direction of the learned John Winter Rice, Ph.D., B.Sc., M.S., M.A., Bucknell University has instituted a course in sanitation and hygiene for barbers. Fifteen men signed up for the first term of twenty weeks. The white-coated collegians are given lectures, instruction by stereopticon slides and motion-pictures, and laboratory work, just as their coonskinned fellow students. Those who pass the examination receive certificates. Soon, according to Mr. Henry J. Oehman, president of the Master Barbers of Racine, Wis., there will be thousands of graduates, and every chirotonsor will have a coonskin coat. Thus, over the radio station WRJN, Mr. Oehman uttered his prophecy:

Possibly some of my listeners still retain the old conception of the barber. They see him in the old environment, with the spittoon in the corner, obscene literature on the tables, dirty mirrors, unkempt barbers' uniforms, the rows of individual mugs with owners' labels prominently displayed. All these things belong to the past century. The master barbers of today are educated. There is an existing law which requires at least an eighth-grade education before any man can study the barbering profession. Very soon this will be amended to require a high-school education, and *ultimately no man will be permitted to study barbering unless he has had a college training.*

Another chirotonsor who sees into a rosy future is Mr. M. Orton Shafer of Riverside, Cal., inventor of the Haywire Bob. Here is what he has to say in the *Master Barber*:

[Barbers] are preparing themselves by education, sponsored by the educational department of the Associated Master Barbers of America, and in time will have a professional signia as chirotonisors, and will in many cases leave the high overhead of ground floor space and go into buildings as other professionals, make appointments, and their services will be along scientific lines. . . . We will give our services as professionals and will get a price that will justify a few more luxuries than we have had in the past.

The fate that is in store for the patients of these new doctors of chirotonsic science may be guessed from these words in the *Master Barber*:

The chirotonsor is still stumbling along asking customers what they want, and for the most part

trying to give what the customer asks for. Can you beat it? . . . With this stock of information peculiar to the service the chirotonsor could step into a professional office and dictate to clients coming in. He could explain to them what they could have or ought to have, and collect a professional fee that no one would complain of. The chirotonsor really deserves to stand above either of the professions [dentistry and optometry] mentioned in comparison in this article.

Nobody, however, has gazed into the crystal ball and seen more than Mr. J. C. Shanessy, president of the Journeymen Barbers' International Union of America. Addressing the dermatonsors of Memphis, Tenn., he solemnly averred, according to the *Square Deal*:

It is within the power of the barbers of America not only to direct the trend of public opinion, but also to elect the mayors, Governors and Senators that govern the land. The man at the barber chair shaves the leaders of his community. No better opportunity is offered any professional for influencing men of affairs than is afforded the barber profession. It is my sincere belief that, if the barbers of America will stand together, it is within their power to elect even the President of the United States. . . . A new day is about to dawn for the barber profession.

Mr. Jule Gordon, editor of the *Square Deal*, relates an incident which shows how the wind is blowing. A prominent manufacturer of barbers' supplies once told him he was "thoroughly disgusted" with the trade and had about decided to divert his business into other lines. The sales of his products had fallen off tremendously during the last five years.

"The fault is with you, not with the barber profession," Mr. Gordon replied. "The last five years have wrought a remarkable change and you have not adapted your product and policies to this change. As a matter of fact there are enough great minds within the barber profession and enough collective intelligence to lead the profession to undreamed-of heights—and I'll prove it to you."

With that Mr. Gordon pulled from a portfolio a folder containing hundreds of letters received from entrants in the *Square Deal* Prize Contest, the object of which was to find out what its readers thought of the *Square Deal*, a magazine founded by Mr. Fred W. Fitch, of the F. W. Fitch Company.

I spread these letters before his startled eyes and read passages that might have been written by the best minds of any industry or profession. I showed him visible and overwhelming evidence of the powers of leadership within the profession, long dormant, but now finding expression. All of this was a revelation to him. . . . Make no mistake about it—there is plenty of intelligence within the barber profession.

The winner of the \$15 first prize in Mr. Fitch's contest was Mr. Wilfred Harrison. His replies to the first two questions of the contest follow:

- Q. What feature have you enjoyed most in this particular issue?
 A. Fred Fitch's Own Page. . . .
 Q. What features have you enjoyed most in previous issues?
 A. Fred Fitch's Own Page.

II

Of course, as in every great forward movement, some scoffers are encountered; low fellows who write letters to the trade papers and put derisive quotes on the word profession. They show their contempt for education by intoning the old barber school yell:

Cut on the chin, cut on the jaw,
 Leave the face raw, raw, raw!

These Bolsheviki have received plenty of warning. Their day of doom is upon them. Already twenty-six States have license laws which set forth how much experience a man must have before he may engage in practice as a chirotonsor. These laws also guard the profession against persons of immoral, intemperate or felonious character, and prescribe the scientific standards which must be lived up to. In the more enlightened States an eighth-grade education, at the least, is required of all intending shearsmen. In Illinois, the colored brother, beginning to feel his oats and rye, is giving opposition to this eighth-grade idea. Indeed, he lately went so far as to have introduced in the Legislature a bill to repeal the entire barber law, but White Supremacy was on its toes and won out in committee by the score of 11-0.

Every up-and-coming professor of chirotonsic science now has in his possession

the Standardized Barbers' Manual, originally compiled by Mr. A. B. Moler (founder of the first barber school in Christendom) and revised by the National Educational Council. As the preface states, "the fact that barbering is a profession necessitates this standardized textbook, that the students . . . may learn the theoretical, ethical, legal and scientific principles or elements of the profession in order to be skilled professional practitioners."

Quite properly the manual begins by impressing on the chirotonsor that the earliest records of barbers show that they were always the foremost men of their tribes—how gifted dermaticians ruled in ancient Asia; how highly respected the depilatory engineers were in Egypt of old; how the tonsorial art was so important in Greece that a candidate for public office was once defeated because his opponent's beard showed evidence of more scientific servicing; how the dermitonsors were so well regarded in Rome that a statue was erected to the memory of the first professor to practice there; how they reached the uttermost pinnacle of their glory as the barber-surgeons of the Middle Ages, when chirurgery and dentistry were but minor branches of their ancient art. Later, as the book records—and plainly there is a lesson in this for those who are not responding to the new educational movement—the more progressive members of the profession, as surgeons, hauled away from the stick-in-the-muds, who remained common barbers.

It is to provide an antidote for lethargy that the manual contains chapters of instruction in anatomy, electricity and chemistry as well as in honing and stropping, shaving, haircutting, ethics, hair dye, facial treatments, salesmanship and business conduct. Credit for the scientific material in the book is given to Edgar B. Wilson, D.C., Ph.C. Dr. Wilson himself was once a cutter of hair. Now, as a learned chiropractor, he is the Big Brother to the Barber, teaching him and seconding him in his scuffles with *levator labii superioris alae que nasi* and *depressor anguli oris*.

How Dr. Wilson stands with the profession may be judged from this tribute to him by Mr. Dominick Nenna, owner of the Independent Barber College, San Diego, Cal., as recorded in the *Master Barber*:

May I mention here the name of one of our greatest leaders in the field of Barber Science, to whom I owe a great deal of my success, if not all, and by whom I was inspired to grasp the opportunity of future barbering? This man is none but our old friend, Dr. E. B. Wilson. To him I would say: "Teach them, Doc, old boy! Keep up your good work and the reward will be great. When you are through in the East, come out West, for we need you and need you badly. Barbers are cutting hair out here for as low as fifteen cents.

In the margins of the manual, under the heading "Things to Remember," are short instructions designed to edify and inspire the student. For example:

A sloppy mug driveth away patronage.

To rattle your brush in the mug keeps your customer awake. If he wants to sleep, let him.

The reward for good hair-combing is like the reward for painting a good picture. The pleasure of looking at it. Artistic temperament recognizes this.

To gracefully handle linen is high art. Get the swing of spreading the chair cloth and handling the towels.

A shear and comb artist has the same opportunity to display skill as does the sculptor or painter; therefore acquire skill and become famous.

A handbook of such laudable purpose would not be complete if it neglected poesy. So there is included a stanza, somewhat improved, from one of the great New England skalds:

Tell me not in mournful numbers,
Life is but an empty dream,
Nor the soul is dead that slumbers,
And we are what the barber makes us seem.

Clambering up to his new heights, the professor of chirotonsory has bumped smack into the mysterious thing called ethics. Even as those other men of science, in the law and in leechcraft, he has found that this ethics is most lamentably intertwined with the absolutely essential business of getting enough currency to keep the wolf off the Welcome mat. So it is not surprising that there is a division of opinion in the ranks about tipping. Some are violently opposed to it, but the majority seem inclined to tolerate it. When a doctor of

chirotonsory, they say, exerts himself to perform a particularly skillful operation in accordance with the most advanced principles of depilatory science, it is not unethical to accept a silver offering. This offering, it is maintained, is an acknowledgment by the patient that he has received Super-Service, and it should be accepted in the spirit in which it is given.

The controversy began to sputter at Des Moines, Ia., in November, 1926, when the Associated Master Barbers of America officially condemned tipping. The resolution was introduced by Mr. F. J. Cahal, chairman of the Kansas State legislative committee. Since then he has been obliged to defend it against a multitude of critics. Thus he answers back in the *Square Deal*:

You say doctors, lawyers, dentists all accept tips. I do not agree with you. In the first place, they charge enough for their services so that they do not have to put themselves in the same position as a porter or waiter who throws all self-respect aside and is always looking with his hand out for a measly ten or twenty-five cent tip. I cannot feature anyone employing a lawyer or doctor, paying them a fee of from ten to one hundred dollars, and then tipping them ten cents. . . . Barbering is a profession. The Supreme Court of Kansas has so ruled, and any profession must maintain a certain dignity.

But a Mr. Wallace, writing on the other side, cites a most depressing occurrence:

A few years ago I had been reading a lot of bunk on psychology of honor, and how to attain to special dignity in whatever vocation one might follow for a livelihood. . . . I was converted to this new thought almost instantaneously, and . . . I refused a two-bit tip on the next day. The customer I tried it on was a very staid gentleman. His conversation was interesting, pertaining mostly to music of the operas, in which I too am quite interested. . . . As I finished my task, he proffered me twenty-five cents side money as with an assuring smile he prefaced his silver offering with "Have a smoke on me. That job made me feel like a new man." I smiled benignly as I rejoined, "I'd rather appreciate your patronage above your tip, and I trust I may have the pleasure of serving you again. . . ." That man never again entered my chair for services. I had hurt his feelings beyond repair.

The subject appears to be loading up with dynamite against the day when the entire profession will be organized and it will be possible to enforce a code of ethics on penalty of excommunication. The prob-

lem is worthy of intensive study by the best minds the ranks of chirotonsory can produce. Obviously, if the profession is to keep on the heights to which it is now scrambling something must be done about the churl referred to by a contributor to the *Western Barber*:

The barber who has got nerve enough to actually stick out his hand for a tip very seldom gets one and never gets the same man to work on twice. Nothing gets a business man's goat any quicker than this.

III

There is a tendency in the tonier studios to foster the belief that silence is golden; but the profession at large is by no means convinced that a doctor of chirotonsory is doing the right thing by his patients in speaking only when spoken to. It is acknowledged by all that the chirotonsor has treasures of information not available to the ordinary citizen and by making a vice of reserve he is, perhaps, losing an opportunity for Service in a really big way.

The public press has taken a hand in the attempt to solve the difficulty. Thus, the celebrated Inquiring Reporter of the *Chicago Tribune*, proceeding on the theory that five men can't be wrong, went to the Man in the Street and asked: "Do you prefer a silent or a talkative barber?" The result was very depressing. Four out of the five citizens were in favor of throttling the chirotonsor.

An ungallant editorial writer in the renowned *Leader* of Eau Claire, Wis., hints that the voluble dermatician has been discounted by the superior fluency of the other sex:

The last of its old characteristics the barber-shop lost when it admitted the bobbed-hair hordes was the barber who talked faster than he clipped. . . . The theory that the old-time barber was loquacious because his patrons were good listeners suggests that the taciturn barber is the product of the feminine invasion of the tonsorial parlor. The thought should be the source of much gratification to vengeful men who in the old days were talked to death by a barber.

Despite this tendency of the newspapers to consider the issue settled, the *Square*

Deal avers that so far as it is concerned the question is still an open one:

We venture to say that the question asked by the inquiring reporter was hardly fair. The word talkative has an odious meaning. A barber may talk and not be talkative. A talkative barber is one who talks too much, and such a barber would hardly be preferred by anybody.

Finally the *Western Barber* makes it clear to the layman just why there has been a generous reduction in quantity (though not in quality) of conversation in the clinics:

Expert observer says the barber of today isn't talking so much as the barber of ten years ago. That's easy: He's thinking more!

Since he attained to professional status, indeed, the chirotonsor has had impressed upon him that his primary purpose in life is not making money but rather Service. He has a duty toward mankind. So he has been cudgelling his brain to figure out more ways of discharging this duty, for, as the *Journeyman Barber* piously affirms: "A life of Service is a godly life."

In this field a former editor of the *Master Barber*, Mr. Henry Wever, has hit upon a pregnant idea. Mr. Wever would have the chirotonsor educate his patients to the use of perfume. In explaining his plan he pauses to say:

I wish at this point to bring the idea home to every operator in the world that the chirotonsor is the champion of delicate differences, and the disciple of beautiful details and refinement.

To put this service over on his patient, Mr. Wever counsels, the dermatician must be tactful, because, as he warns, "the customer must not be surprised or startled by radical changes." The canny method of procedure is this: the patient should be reminded of the odors with which he comes in contact in daily life, and how anyone can smell the difference, for example, between unvarnished pine wood and walnut. From this simple beginning he should be led through the appetizing aromas of pure milk, butter, cheese, etc.

These pleasing smells, the editor recalls, ascend from things which have emerged from the interior of mammals. This fact

naturally leads to the scientific truth that ambergris, a most desirable perfume, may be obtained only from the seat of fortitude in an indisposed whale. Similarly, other well-known scents have their origin in the hidden recesses of quadrupeds.

As the originator of this idea points out, "the only way to teach any human mind anything is to talk to it about things it already knows and mix in things which are new." The new barber, as Mr. Wever calls him—meaning the rebuilt lad who has become a chirotonsor—will do this "slowly and patiently, teaching his customer things which the customer did not know before."

That done, the patient is ripe for the sales talk. He should be given the opportunity to select a smell, because, as Mr. Wever remarks:

A human being simply loses one chance for individual strength, strength of character, delicate enjoyment and appreciation of the possible joys of living if he neglects to associate himself with a delicate perfume of his choice.

If, in addition to getting the glow which arises from a sense of having done his duty, the chirotonsor gets a little cash, well and good. "Any increase of business that puts a few more dimes into the cash register," says Mr. Wever, "must also increase the barber's standing in the customer's estimation. Business growth always means increase of prestige as well as increase in cash results."

Another notable contribution to the field of Service is the discovery of Mr. B. O. Mitchell, a chirotonsor of Los Angeles, Cal. Under the heading, "Pet Behind the Ears," in the *Western Barber*, he writes:

If the subject is in an irritable frame of mind, he is nervous and unable to remain still while being shaved. This is a bad condition and should be remedied. By stepping behind the man after he has seated himself comfortably in a chair, and moving your fingers in a circular movement around the main facial nerves that lay just under the ears he is soon relaxed and settled, ready for the clippers or the razor.

Mr. Mitchell adds that he has found this service "pleasing to practically all of my customers"; but he neglects to record,

clinically, the reactions of those patients who were not pleased.

All these may seem to be minor matters, but they are the little touches which make the difference between the barber and the chirotonsor. The really big wallop for Service, however, is put across in Look Well Week. This Look Well Week is not to be compared with Eat More Bran Week, National Sauerkraut Week, Be Kind to Your Husband Week and similar inventions, for all of them are manifestly money-getting devices. The object of Look Well Week is Service alone.

To begin with, a slogan had to be manufactured, because it is well known that little can be done in this Republic without a slogan. The British brothers have what they probably consider a slogan and they have put up \$50,000 to get it across. It is, however, crude and brusque: "Get Your Hair Cut!" The free-born American citizen would paste in the eye any practitioner who should be so devoid of tact as to try such an insult on him. Here a craftier and more elegant refrain for the pibroch was devised: "It Pays to Look Well."

Just before the Third Annual Look Well Week, in the Summer of 1929, the *Master Barber* issued its final preparatory message:

To our everyday patrons we are going to impress the lesson of "It Pays to Look Well." In the hands of the barber rests the personal appearance of the population. Sometimes our patrons forget this. It is our privilege and our duty, as their caretakers, to remind them of the advantages of keeping their exterior in tune with their higher personalities. It is up to us, and our profession only, to help our patrons bring out the best that is in them. . . . No higher duty, no more sacred privilege, exists, and Look Well Week is for the simple purpose of spreading the truth of this.

But, the writer warns, the public will not know it unless the chirotonsors deliver their message. The way to do it, he says, is to advertise Look Well Week and advertise it "along the lines indicated." Besides the use of posters, newspapers, theatre programmes and direct mail, one of the lines thus indicated is free haircuts for orphans. Throughout the land that week the big heart that beats in the bosom of the chiro-

tonsor became as visible as if it lay pounding on his vest. How many orphans received free haircuts will, perhaps, never be known, but it is certain that multitudes were placed on the road to fortune, as is evident from this in the *Master Barber*:

We are going to start the children of the nation on the right road in life. Before they become older and set in slipshod ways, we are going to instruct them in the value of neatness, orderliness, attention to personal detail. In this way they will learn that like begets like, and that the good things of life come to those who look as though they were accustomed to them.

On the steppes of Kansas, where, according to the *Barbers' Journal*, barbers believe in getting together and doing things right, the members of the Master Barbers' Association of Junction City, Fort Riley and Milford motored to the Rebekah-Odd Fellows Home at Eureka Lake. Sixty-six children received chirotonsic attention, and eighty-two old men got both haircuts and shaves. From one end of the country to the other reports poured in of similar feats of Service performed by the depilatory engi-

neers. Millions of free Americans, to use a phrase of the *Barbers' Journal*, were made "barber shop conscious."

Of course it was unavoidable that a good deal of free newspaper publicity should follow the haircuts. In fact, the correspondents of the chirotonsic gazettes seemed to over-emphasize the importance of this phase of the Service rendered. But if, after so much publicity, receipts in the tonsoria increased, it only goes to show that the virtuous do not always have to wait for a better world to get their well-earned reward.

There seems to be more than a hint of that in the following stanzas from a poem by Mr. Jack Carter of Saginaw, Mich., printed in the *Square Deal*:

"It Pays to Look Well" in the morning light;
 "It Pays to Look Well" at high noon bright;
 "It Pays to Look Well" as evening doth loom;
 To follow this rule each day is a boon.

In this great old world of conflict and strife,
 Where we battle each day for gain and life,
 The winners have proved this slogan old
 "It Pays to Look Well" opened wide gates of gold.

MORE TALES FROM OKLAHOMA

BY GEORGE MILBURN

Yellow Paint

WHEN news that the armistice had been signed reached our town Mayor Esterbrook proclaimed a special holiday. All the merchants signed an agreement to close their stores, the firebell rang all day long and there was a celebration. Fords drove up and down Broadway tooting their horns and a bunch of men who had been exempt from the draft got up on the roofs of the three-story buildings on the west side of Broadway and began to shoot off firearms. Birdshot hailed down on the shingle roof of the Kentucky Colonel Hotel that whole afternoon.

Along toward night some of the farmers who had come to town that day without knowing that it was going to be a holiday began to want to get their goods and get back home. But all the stores were closed, and it looked as if they would have to drive back home and come back to town the next day to do their buying.

Some of the farmers had come long distances, seven, ten and fifteen miles. Some of them were out of food at home. Four or five of these went down to Old Man Farnum's house and asked him if he wouldn't open his store so that they could get some of the things they had to have, like kerosene and dry salt meat and compound lard and coffee.

Old Man Farnum called himself "The Square Deal Merchant" and he ran a general merchandise store on the east side of Broadway which he called "The Old Iron-clad." He called it that because its framework was covered with galvanized sheet-

iron pressed in imitation of imitation cut-stone concrete blocks.

Old Man Farnum had a wide reputation for honesty, but he had some queer ways. He never would advertise in the *Weekly Recorder*, always saying that a satisfied customer was the best advertisement. He never carried any fancy groceries like most of the other stores in town, but only staples.

In the general merchandise part of his store, however, he allowed his fancy to wander and he would sometimes stock things he knew, in reason, he couldn't sell. He seemed to buy such things because they were what he would have liked when he was a child. Once he got two dozen tambourines. He kept them on his shelves for years. Another time he got a lot of little bisque shepherdesses which he finally gave away as premiums.

He was very proud, and even though he had gray hair he walked very straight and he would not stand for anyone calling him Old Man to his face. Once he ordered a farmer out of his store for calling him Grandpap.

Well, Old Man Farnum told the farmers who came to him that he absolutely couldn't sell them any goods that day, because he had signed an agreement to close up. He saw the fix they were in, though, and they persuaded him so earnestly that he finally agreed to accommodate them by opening up the back end of his store.

Ellis Grice, the United States marshal in our town, came up the back alley just as Old Man Farnum was helping a farmer put some goods in his wagon. Ellis was an