MAGAZINE NOTES.

Mr. Howells appropriately begins his new story, "An Open-Eyed Conspiracy," in the July number of "The Century." We say appropriately because there is in this "Idyl of Saratoga," as it is called in a subtitle, precisely the summer material in the treatment of which Mr. Howells is happiest; and there is every indication that he will carry Basil March and his wife, who reappear in the tale, through scenes as charming as some of those so bright and airy in "April Hopes," wherein he touches the highest level of what might be called his social vein. The figures of "An Open-Eyed Conspiracy" promise to be amusing, and they will undoubtedly fulfil the promise in the spirit—of Saratoga. That is the spirit in which Mr. Howells is working within these newest pages of his, and it is peculiarly welcome in the hot season, when it is the bounden duty of fiction, above all, realistic fiction, to hover between chiffon and claret-cup. The present number of "The Century" might profitably have hovered along these lines through more space than is occupied by Mr. Howells's novelette; but it is not easy to find fault with the various essays and other papers set forth, there is so much that is good among them. In fact, this is an uncommonly readable number for one of summer. Mr. Bryce continues to be interesting in his "Impressions of South Africa." The "Family Record of Ney's Execution" is a curious bit of data, worth preservation among Napoleonic archives and worth reading, too, though not half so important as the subject might lead one to expect. Mrs. Wharton's "Valley of Childish Things" is an uneven little performance, irresistibly funny in patches. It would be a melancholy reader that refused to smile over some of these "emblems," notably the first and tenth.

There is an opportunity provided in this very number of the magazine for an application of Mrs. Wharton's last emblem. It runs as follows: "There was once a man who had seen the Parthenon, and he wished to build his god a temple like it. But he was not a skilful man, and, try as he would, he could produce only a mud hut thatched with straw; and he sat down and wept because he could not build a temple for his god. But one who passed by said to him: 'There are two worse plights than yours. One is to have no god; the other is to build a mud hut and mistake it for the Parthenon.'" Now, any one reading Mr. Crawford's paper on St. Peter's, which is printed first in the table of contents, will see a beautiful illustration of one of the "worser" plights. Is it not better to write introductions to cheap guidebooks, we will say, than to write in the style of these passages on St. Peter's and call the stuff an essay? Never was such lamentable twaddle printed about one of the sublimest themes in Christendom. Verily, Mr. Crawford should return to novel writing without delay. His talents were not meant to be expended upon St. Peter's.

The editing of the last "Scribner" has been sagaciously managed. How cool the periodical is, with its opening pages devoted to Coney Island and with Sir W. Martin Conway talking in a captivating way, a little further on, about his Alpine climbs. The Alpine enthusiast has been having his innings to a most alarming degree of late, but after all, it is difficult to feel anything but enjoyment in the presence of his ardent prose. It is almost never mere prose. The baldest writer somehow gets something into his words when he is writing about an Alpine adventure which nothing else in the world will put there—something of strength and heroic beauty, something of air so clear that it seems to blow through a man's mind and soul. Sir W. Martin Conway has enjoyed his snowy travels, and he makes his reader enjoy them, too. Mr. Julian Ralph writes at the opposite pole from his Alpine colleague, but he is no less readable. It is his gift to make a familiar or common thing interesting. Such a gift is usually believed to be an appanage of genius alone, and Mr. Ralph is no genius; but who better than he could throw over the bald syllables of Coney Island a new and bewitching glamour? His paper on the great seaside resort of New-York is one of the best things presented in recent periodical literature. The facts are all there. Mr. Ralph having marshalled them with the care of an experienced reporter, but better still, the pages are full of the Coney Island flavor, the something that makes it a place of delight—to those who delight in it.

It would be so interesting to know why Mr. Barrie set out to write "Sentimental Tommy—The Story of His Boyhood." The twenty-sixth chapter is in evidence now, in July, and the work is "to be continued through the year." Is Tommy to have a manhood, we wonder? And is Mr. Barrie to tell us all about it? It is nice to know these things in time.

Mr. Ralph is as much a master of his pen in "Harper's" as in the magazine to which reference has just been made. He is perhaps less original, less delightful in "The Love Letters of Superfine Gold," than he has been in previous stories of a similar sort, but this is good work nevertheless. There is much entertaining fiction in this number, but the more important contributions are of a historical or semi-historical nature. President Thwing's paper on Ohio is instructive and apposite. And Senator Lodge's account of "English Elections" is even more so. At the opening of a campaign in which the genial Daniels of Mugwumpery will be holding the British voter and candidate up for the edification of the lost and utterly wicked American, it is worth while looking at the English election as it really is. Senator Lodge describes it as accompanied by violence and corruption to an extent that would hardly be credited were it less authoritatively stated. And the odd side of the situation is seen in the tepid tone of many of the English journals to whose comments on this or that piece of blackguardism Senator Lodge refers. The upshot of the matter is that while the Mugwump should no doubt continue in Mugwumpery, since that is his only mode of keeping alive, he ought not to ask people to believe in a British saint stuffed with sawdust. But this is to presuppose a sense of humor on the part of the Mugwump.

The chief service rendered to the reader of summer magazines by the July "McClure's" is a titillation of his eagerness to see some day a copy of "The Rag," or, as it should more respectfully be styled, "The Civil and Military Gazette." On this Indian paper Rudyard Kipling and E. Kay Robinson were collaborators, and, the latter being the kind of man who could write about Kipling as he does in his reminiscences, published in "McClure's," we feel sure that "The Rag" must have been a picturesque journal in their day. Of course it may be expected that some time an enterprising ghoul will reprint a lot of the stuff, and Kipling's name will be foisted upon the book. He has already suffered attentions of this sort. But no one wants to see that book; what one wants is a copy of "The Rag" itself. The Lincoln papers in "McClure's" go on steadily, and, it may be admitted, with more justification of themselves as they proceed than the author's commonplace methods would have seemed to promise.

The current issue of "The Cosmopolitan" is announced as a "fiction and travel number," but, except for the concluding instalment of Mr. Stockton's tale, "Mrs. Cliff's Yacht," there is nothing embraced by this announcement which is of any consequence. Does Mr. Walker's study of "Aerial Athletes and The Coming Race" come under the head of travel? If so, Mr. Stockton's excellent pages have companionship. But how boresome Mr. Zangwill is in "Uriel Acosta," how very boresome! In fact, Mr. Zangwill's is one of those hastily acquired reputations which are none the less depressing because they refuse to die a sudden death. "Something lingering," runs the line in "The Mikado," "something with boiling oil in it." Memory recalls that touching passage when a clever writer, having done his best, absolutely refuses to stop. There is something very boiling-oily about Mr. Zangwill's would-be witty prose.

Mr. William Waldorf Astor is his own proprietor in "The Pall Mall Magazine," but his story of "The Wraith of Cliveden Reach" must plainly have been accepted on its merits. It is a skilful bit of writing, perhaps too facile in its use of archaic forms of speech, for the prose creaks a little; but this is quickly forgotten in the author's undoubted sympathy for natural things. There are some pleasant landscape passages in this quaint fragment.

Never has Henry James been more readable than in his slightly fantastic story in the current "Atlantic." It is impossible to read it with complete, soul-filling satisfaction, Mr. James having no disposition for so solemn a task, as he would regard it, as the filling of souls. But how winningly he talks on, luring the reader through pages that every now and then he feels half inclined to abandon! In the long run one reads every page and feels a trifle impatient for the next chapters. Mr. George Birkbeck Hill's further batch of letters written by Dante Rossetti does not strike us as very rich; and in places it illustrates perfectly the fatuous way in which a man's friends will sometimes publish his correspondence. To some it is possible that the little note, numbered sixteen in the series, may convey a world of meaning in its allusions to the R. A. of 1856, "full of P. R. work." The last clause is something, but it is passing trivial to print a whole letter for, with "notes," Mr. G. W. Cable, by the way, writing in this number of "The Atlantic," shows himself in a new and unexpected light. "The Speculations of a Story-Teller" is serious enough; Mr. Cable could not help being serious, but there is a brighter, a gayer, a freer touch about the thing than he has shown since he wrote his anecdotic papers on Old Louisiana.

BOOKS OF THE WEEK.

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A DISRAELI MYSTERY.

From The Jewish Chronicle.

Every now and then there crops up in the newspapers—especially those of the "Notes and Queries" type—an inquiry with regard to the identity of a certain Benjamin Disraeli, who lived in Dublin during the latter years of the last and the early years of the present centuries. Some curious particulars of this gentleman's transactions as a lottery-ticket vendor have lately been published—not for the first time—by "The Irish Times." This Benjamin Disraeli, who is said by T. P. O'Connor to have been an uncle of Lord Beaconsfield, was a public notary, lottery-office keeper and member of the Dublin Stock Exchange. He lived at No. 105 Grafton-st., Dublin, and seems to have made a fortune early in life, for he retired from business before 1811, built himself a fine residence at Beechey Park, County Carlow, and was High Sheriff of the county when he died, aged forty-eight, in 1814. If the exact date of his birth were known, the legend of his relationship to his namesake, Lord Beaconsfield, could be tested. The facts, so far as they are known, are not unfavorable to Mr. O'Connor's theory. Benjamin Disraeli, the grandfather of Lord Beaconsfield, married his second wife, Sarah Villareal de Seyprut, on May 28, 1765. By this marriage he had a son, Isaac, the author of "Curiosities of Literature," who was born in May, 1766. There is no record of any other son of Benjamin Disraeli, but it is not a little curious to notice that if he had a second son, say in May, 1767, the date would agree with the record on the Dublin Disraeli tombstone that he was forty-eight—or rather in his forty-eighth year—in August, 1814. On the other hand, it is strange that there is no record of his birth in the Bevis Marks registers, where the birth of Isaac Disraeli in 1766 is duly recorded. It is also to be noted that at the time of his death Benjamin Disraeli the elder was still alive—he died in 1816—and it is not customary among Jews to name children after a living grandfather. The custom is not very strictly observed at the present day, but a century ago it was scrupulously respected, especially among the Sephardim. That there should have been two Benjamin Disraelis in the British Isles at the same time is not extraordinary. "Le nom de famille Israel," wrote Isidore Loeb some years ago, "est, ou au moins était, assez répandu à Venise." It is so even now, and not only in Venice, but throughout the Jewries of southern and eastern Europe. A recent Todes-Nachricht in the "Neue Freie Presse" contains, for example, the names of Mosco Disraeli, Rosa Disraeli, Mitzi Disraeli, Paula Disraeli, Alexander Disraeli and Abram Disraeli, all members of the Turco-Israelitish Congregation in Vienna.

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