RICHARD WATSON GILDER.

A Chat With the Editor of the Century Abo ut Mngazines and Magazine Writers.

The Cheap Magazines and Their Place in Literature—What Illustrations Cost Articles Worth Their Weight in Gold—Advice to New Writers—How a Great Magazine Was Founded—Editorials in Magazines—The Fight of the Century Against Political Machines and Other Matters—A Pen Picture of Mr. Gilder and the Story of His Career.

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Special Correspondence of the News.

NEW YORK, June 9th, 1897.

MEET Mr. Richard Watson Gilder in the editorial rooms of the Century Magazine the other day. Mr. Gilder has been editor-in-chief of the Century for the past sixteen years, and has been a part of the magazine since its foundation, in 1870. He is one of the brightest literary men of the country, and perhaps the ablest magazine editor that the United States has produced. Still the general public know but little about him. He is exceedingly modest, and is averse to having anything published about himself and his personality. Even as to matters relating to the magazine, he said he did not like to be interviewed, because in speaking he might seem to be taking upon himself credit for work which belonged in part to others. He told me that the success of the Century, such as it had been, was due, not to one man, but to a number, and that the publishers, his associate editors and the corps of artists and writers connected with them were all joined together in making the Century what it is. This I doubt not is to an extent true, but Mr. Gilder is too modest by half. His work for more than twenty years has shown his remarkable genius, and today the place the Century holds as a great literary-art magazine is largely due to him.

THE LIFE STORY OF AN EDITOR.

Richard Watson Gilder is a born editor. He was brought up on printers' ink. His father, the Reverend W. H. Gilder, was an eminent clergyman, who varied his ministerial and educational work by writing for the newspapers, and who was at one time editor of the Philadelphia Repository. Young Gilder's boyhood was spent about the printing office of the Long Island Times, in Southold. He learned to set type long before he was in his teens. His first composition was done when he was so small that he had to stand on the top of a soap box to reach the type cases. When he was twelve years old he published at Flushing a boys' newspaper, known as "The Sn. Thomas Regator," and four years later he and two other boys united in editing a campaign journal at Bordentown, N. J., in support of Bell and Everett for the presidency. When he was about twenty he was a reporter on one of the newspapers of Newark, N. J., and later, with a young companion, Newton Crane, started a paper in Newark, under the title of "The Morning Register." By this time young Gilder had become somewhat known in literary circles, and the Scribners made him first an editorial writer, and then the editor of their magazine known as "Hours at home." When Scribner's Monthly was founded, he became its associate editor, in connection with J. G. Holland, and about the time that the name of the magazine was changed to "The Century" he was made, at the death of Dr. Holland, editor-in-chief. Since then he has written for it in poetry and prose, and today many of the strongest of its editorials come from his pen.

THE CHEAP MAGAZINE.

My chat with Mr. Gilder covered a wide range. I first asked as to the influence of the ten-cent magazine upon those of higher prices. He replied:

"I suppose it may have some effect upon some of the higo-priced magazines, though how much I do not know. The cheaper magazines and illustrated journalism have a place in the reading of the people of today, and that place will not, I think, to any large degree affect ours. Such publications are possible through the cheapened processes of printing and art reproduction. A certain grade of such things have become so cheap that we seem to be approaching the time when any man may be his own author, editor and publisher. In the meantime, the finest processes, the best printing and the best literature cost more than ever. At least our expenses in these respects have been greater than ever before."

"Then I suppose the Century will not reduce its price, Mr. Gilder?" said I.

"I think not," was the reply. "The publishers have not thought of making any reduction."

COSTLY PICTURES.

"Are the pictures of a magazine an expensive element of its make-up?" I asked. "It depends upon the magazine," replied Mr. Gilder. "By the last process a photograph or sketch can be reproduced at so much per inch, but the finer methods of reproduction cost a great deal. With us the engravers must adapt themselves to the artist and not the artists to the engravers. We use different methods with different pictures, and only those which will bring out the best art results without regard to cost. If you can be done by engraving, the picture is given to the engravers. It by some other process we choose that. As to the cost of pictures, a single illustration sometimes costs more than an article. We have paid as high as three or four hundred dollars for a single illustration. We aim to have in every issue at least one picture which will be worth more than the price of the magazine."

MONEY IN LITERATURE.

"Can you give me any idea of what magazines pay for their reading matter?"

"Different magazines pay different prices," replied Mr. Gilder. "The price paid in the Century differs very according to the value of the article, to the reputation of the writer and to other things. Some articles may cost five or more than five per thousand words, while for others we may pay as much or more than $100 per thousand words."

"Is it true that you paid Nicolay and Hay $25,000 for their Life of Abraham Lincoln?"

"Yes," said Mr. Gilder. "The Century Company paid that amount to secure the recollections of Nicolay and Hay for the magazine. We have several times paid from fifteen to eighteen thousand dollars for a series of articles. Joseph Jefferson received $12,000 for his recollections, and there are a number of other cases of high prices which I might mention."

THE UNKNOWN WRITER.

"But these men, Mr. Gilder, were all famous; how about the unknown writer? Has he any chance in the editorial rooms of the modern magazine? Many people believe that only the writings of men of established reputations are considered by you magazine editors."

"That is not true," replied the editor of the Century. "The new writer has every chance. The competition by good matter is too great to allow an editor to pass over any manuscript without consideration. The hope of every editor is that he may be able to secure some new light in the literary sky. He is so anxious to find that he often exaggerates the discovery of some slight talent. He is always discovering that he has made mistakes in the past, and I have said that an editor's hell is paved with the manuscripts which he has rejected, but which he wishes he had accepted. He has turned them down only to find that some other editor has discovered genius in them. The result is that he is afraid that he may miss finding the spark of genius in the new manuscripts before him, and he often gives the new writers too much chance."

HOW MAGAZINES TREAT MANUSCRIPTS

"Do you mean to tell me that every manuscript that comes to the office of the modern magazine is opened and read?"

"Yes. With us every article which is not specially ordered by the editors is read, and sometimes re-read, before it is submitted to the chief editors. We have a number of readers, and an article is sometimes read by five different persons before it is accepted. In some cases the article may be of such a character that the first reader sees that it will not do for the magazine, and it goes no farther. Articles that are ordered especially by us generally come to the editors without the examination of other readers. But at times the chief editors themselves are the first to look over the new manuscripts."

"Can a man hope to make a living by writing for the magazines, Mr. Gilder?" I asked.

"A number of persons are now doing so," was the reply.

WHY THE AMATEUR FAILS.

"What advice would you give to a young writer who is anxious to succeed?"

"To always write the very best that is in him, and to be never satisfied with anything less than his best."

"What is the chief trouble with new writers? Why do they not last?"

"I think it is because they write chiefly for the sake of getting their matter into print and not to do the best that is in them. The amateur often seems to think that if his articles can be published, that that is all that can be desired. Life is short, and after he has had one or two such publications, the magazines are open to him, and anything that he may write is good enough to publish. So he dashes off some thing and sends it on the round. Instead of putting all the inspiration, study and thought there is in him into his article to produce a work of art, instead of keeping the matter by him and working it over, he sends it off at the close of the first draft, content with mediocrity or at least with much less than the best work that is in him."

ONLY FOUR PER CENT. ACCEPTED.

"But after all, Mr. Gilder, only a very few articles are accepted out of those which the magazines receive."

"Yes," was the reply, "that is true. We can use only between four and five per cent. of the articles which are sent to us. The manuscripts which we usually receive amount to about 10,000. We can print only about 400; so you see we must reject many very good articles. As it is, we buy more than we should. There is a never-ending temptation to purchase new matter, and the result is that we have a great amount of literary capital stored away upon the pigments for which we receive no interest, and some of which we shall never be able to use."

HOW A GREAT MAGAZINE WAS FOUNDED.

"You have been with the Century since its beginning, Mr. Gilder; will you please tell me how the magazine was started?"

"What is now called the Century Magazine," replied Mr. Gilder, "was, strictly speaking, five ten years of its existence, known as Scribner's Monthly. It was founded by the Scribners, J. G. Holland and Roswell Smith. The idea of giving a popular magazine to the public originated with Roswell Smith. They had been publishing an illustrated monthly under the title of Hours at Home. Then Mr. Scribner proposed to Dr. J. G. Holland that he should come to New York and together they should found a magazine with illustrations. J. G. Holland was a literary man, one who had been the editor of the Springfield Republican, and his book has had a very wide sale. The Timothy Titcomb letters, which first appeared in the Republican, have been published in book form by the Scribners and had had an enormous circulation. Holland's Life of Lincoln had opened very wide the ears, and his name was room "Editor-Street." When Mr. Scribner asked Dr. Holland to join him in the founding of a magazine, Dr. Holland replied that he would do so, provided Mr. Scribner would allow him to choose a partner. To this Mr. Scribner consented, and Dr. Holland chose Mr. Roswell Smith, who took a third of the stock, and became the business manager of the new enterprise. Before Dr. Holland died, Mr. Smith bought a large part of his stock, having already bought up the Scribner interest. The principal writers on the magazine and on St. Nicholas, also became stockholders. The name of the magazine was changed to The Century."

SHOULD A MAGAZINE HAVE OPINIONS?

I here referred to the editorial features of the Century. It is, you know, the only magazine of the world which takes sides upon leading quest ons and which aims to discuss the great movements in art, science, society, politics and religion. I asked Mr. Gilder where the idea of the Century originated. He replied:

"There were editorials in the magazine from the start. Dr. Holland had a department entitled "Topics of the Time," which expressed the opinions of the editor upon things which were uppermost. We have the same department today."

"Do you think such editorials have much weight, Mr. Gilder?"

"I think that a magazine like this can do a great deal to help along the cause of reform. The Century has done what it could to bring about an honest victory for sound money. I think we accomplished something in aiding in the overthrow of the Louisiana lottery. The War Series and the Life of Lincoln have done much to moderate the feeling between the people of the North and South, and there are other similar things I might mention."

DOWN WITH THE BOSSES.

"What do you consider the leading issue before the country today?" I asked.

"We believe," replied the editor of the Century, "that one of the greatest movements going on in Christendom is the growing interest in the government of cities. We are helping to arouse public sentiment in this matter. We have published papers by Dr. Washington Gladden, Dr. Shaw and others relating to it, with a view to increasing civic patriotism among the people. We are advocating the separation of city politics from national politics, and we shall oppose the political machine wherever it interferes with civic development."

"What success are you having?"

"I think," replied Mr. Gilder, "that the people are now beginning to realize that our cities are behind those of the rest of the world in honest, efficient and progressive municipal government. Bosses have already discovered that their selfish and monopolistic distribution of patronage is being interfered with, and they are now making their last attack upon civil service reform."

"Do you mean by that, Mr. Gilder, that the days of bossism are numbered?"

"If by numbered you mean that bossism is about to die, I would say that I believe that it will be a long time before the system will entirely pass away. I do think, however, that our people are beginning to wake up to the fact that the political machines are mere labor bureaus, each having its respective clientage, the members of which it tries to keep in official work without regard to merit. On the other hand, it is said that the merit system may also be called a labor bureau, it can be asserted that it is also working for the interests of the whole people, and especially of those of the poor man."

Frank G. Carpenter

SCIENTIFIC MISCELLANY.

An Engineer's Views on Carriage Motors—Deforestation to South Africa—Sunjak—Systematic Consumption of the Body—Is the Earth Top-shaped?—The Relation of Evaporation to Water—The Coming Woman to be Bearded.

After a careful study of most of the self-propelled carriages, from the earliest times to the present day, Sir David Salomons concludes that steam is much the most suitable and advantageous motive power. In England, electric energy for carriages cannot be calculated at less than 40 per horse-power hour, and accumulators must be frequently recharged, with considerable loss in useless travel, unless charging stations are to be found throughout the locality. The cost of genuine gas would be about a tenth as great for the same power, steam, from petroleum fuel at 61 per gallon, costing about the same as the gas. The best existing motor the world has yet seen for its power, method of boiling, suspension springs, and traveling long distances before recharging, is one which is likely to remain with us for many a long year to come, whatever may be the future development of motor traffic. It is known and loved by all under the name of the horse.

The actual effects of deforestation upon climate are not definitely known, although trees are believed to exert a marked influence. In his recent lecture on Kimberly, Dr. William Crookes mentioned that over a million trees have been cut down to supply the diamond mines; and the country, within a radius of 100 miles, has been denuded of timber. The frequent dust storms of summer are among the injurious effects supposed to have been thus caused.

Anthropologists have ascertained that the Andaman Islanders, the smallest race of people in the world, average less than four feet in height, while the women weigh more than seventy-five pounds.

A new speaking tube for steamers has the pipe insulated by a wire spiral textile covering, which makes it easy to hear speech in the engine room from a distance of 300 feet.

Extraordinary excavations seem to have been built upon a new variety of squash, locally known as "Sunjak," which was, not long ago, found in large quantities in Barbadoes. It rests near the surface of the ground, it seems from one to two feet thick. It is supposed to have been formed by the drainage and consolidation of petroleum, which occurs with it, and, while in composition it is very similar to that of Trinidad pitch, the U.S. chemists of Gilsonite, and the Canadian asbestine, it is claimed to be superior to these in quality. It even rivals the Italian asphaltum. The material has been successfully used for electric insulation, for fine varnishes, for paving concrete, for fuel with peat or other organic matter, and for enriching coal gas. The production is made that it will even supplant rubber in all water proof work.

The latest guesses of M. Megnin have now made it possible to determine, with great precision, the time of death of a person, by noting the bacteria present in the body. He has conclusively proven that the successive forms always arrive in the same order from the time of death to that of complete disintegration of the body—a fact that has been shown by several striking examples to be of great practical value.

The director of the gas-works at Aix-les-Bains, France, has perfected a simple system of automatically lighting and extinguishing gas jets from any distance. The burner is closed by a steel plate, which is magnetized and drawn aside while an electric current is passing through it, the escaping gas being ignited either by a spark from the plate or the incandescence of a suitable material. The plate falls back over the burner, on being demagnetized.

From records extending back to 1689, M. Camille Flammarion finds that the rainfall of Paris has gradually increased about three inches, being now a little more than twenty-one inches a year. The amount of data seems to indicate that the increase is real and not due to greater accuracy of observation.

Evidence of the complexity of cathode rays is found by M. H. Delandres, in the fact that when a ray is turned aside by a neighboring body it is divided into several unequally deviated rays.

Nansen's discovery of a deep Arctic basin, has suggested to M. de Sapporta, that the real shape of the earth may be that of a top, with the South pole as its spinning point. This theory results from considering that the area we may now assign to the Arctic ocean, is almost the same as that given by Murray to the Antarctic continent (about 17,250,000 square miles), while the depths observed by Nansen correspond in order of magnitude to the heights observed by Ross. Such a supposition, it is added, would tend to reconcile the slightness of the ellipse of astronomers and geodesists as to the ratio of the polar and equatorial diameters. The latter base their value of the polar flattening (1 291) upon measurements made almost entirely in the northern hemisphere; and the value obtained by M. Tisserand, from the precession of the equinoxes (1,299), may prove equally correct, if the effect of a south polar protuberance upon the form of the sea surface is considered.

A supply of spring water at Kiel, Germany, is so strongly charged with iron, as to be unsuitable for use. To improve it, the authorities first cause it to traverse a system of metallic channels and cascades, then to pass through a bed of coke ten feet thick, and finally through sand filters, each about sixty-five feet long and forty-nine feet wide. The treatment has proven successful in removing all iron, leaving the water unobjectionable in color, taste and smell. The bed of coke is divided into eight compartments, which are washed free from iron once a week by isolating a compartment at a time, and sand filters are cleansed by replacing a thin upper layer with clean sand.

Darwin's view that the human beard is a hereditary remnant of animal growth, is directly opposed by A. Brandt. This writer believes that it has been acquired in man's development, and, that the occasional beard of women, is prophetic of a coming time when all women will be bearded.

"Growing pains" are a myth, says Dr. Irving S. Haynes. The pains mean Potts' disease of the spine, and the ignorant or lazy doctor does not find it out until the lump, or the hump on the back appear.

HIS ROMANCE.

"Of course there's a romance in my life," asserted Fromer, when it was intimated that there was nothing of sentiment in his composition.

"I felt when I saw her, 'tis she or none on earth,' is what Schiller wrote in his 'Bride of Messina.' That is exactly what I felt when I met the woman of my romance. Nobody can describe a woman. You can say she wears her classic features, her speaking eyes, her neck like a pillar of marble touched with life, the graceful psyche knot that she twists to a crown of beauty, and all that kind of stuff, but after it is done you can meet the woman and not know her. When I can picture a soul, I'll go into the business.

"Of course I was young when I met her. Otherwise I would have shown some slight imitation of sense and surrendered by degrees. Love at first sight is not uncommon, but it is restrained by a sense of propriety, by pride or by some other modifying influence. Every force in my being was co-operative. All impelled me to fall in love. There was no check, and I fell to the very depths.

"She refused me very prettily and very properly. I asked her if I could cherish no hope, intimating that to deprive me of hope would be immediately fatal. She gave me a very scant allowance. Then I went proudly away to win a fortune that I might lay it at her feet as an additional inducement. In four years I returned. The woman was there, just as I had left her, but not my ideal. While I was trying for moral strength enough to recall my vows she was mustering courage sufficient to tell me she was engaged to another man. She spoke first. Then I was so mad at the other fellow, whom I should have blessed, that I insisted she had broken my heart."—Detroit Free Press.

Marrying Made Pleasant.

All Gretna Green justices are not as frank as is E. C. Roberts of Lapeer, Mich. Squire Roberts—he is a justice of the peace, according to his stationery—makes a neat candid bid for matrimonial fees. His letter heads are in themselves a piece of art. Sacred honesty of declaration, and if there is any yearning couple in the neighborhood of Lapeer that couple certainly yearns without pause, for the justice makes plain provision for the fulfillment of his purpose. A letter head of his, sent hither by an admirer of his way of announcing himself, is decorated with a half tone portrait of the "judge," a schlitzly looking fellow, in very stiff and tight clothes, an auctioneer, and under the cut is the designation, "The original and only exclusively matrimonial magistrate." Close beside and printed in cunning little letters is this alluring statement, "Office at the elevator or First National bank parlors or wherever most convenient to swain," and below a further assertion is, "A fine line of high grade bridesmaids and groomsmen constantly on hand to assist in the service." Here are some other solicitations from the most remarkable letter head:

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Certainly if matrimony languishes in Michigan it is not the fault of advertising or of Judge Roberts.—Chicago Record.

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If in the enjoyment of good health, and the system is regular, laxatives or other remedies are not needed. If afflicted with any actual disease, one may be commended to the most skilled physicians, but if in need of a laxative, one should have the best, and with the well-informed everywhere, Syrup of Figs stands highest and is most largely used and giving most general satisfaction.

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40-inch Organdies and Lenos Stripes, worth 10c for.....5c
Regular 50c Novelty Dress Goods.....25c
Cashmeres and Henriettas, worth 40c, for.....25c
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Ladies' 25c Lisle Tinted Hose for.....15c
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