

ON TOP OF SINAI.

The July *Century* opens with a paper called Sinai and the Wilderness illustrated with photographs taken by the author Edward L. Wilson. From this article we quote the following: It does not seem high, because it was yet half hidden from our view by the intervening hill. As soon as this hill was mastered the plain of Er Raha, or "Plain of Assemblage," came into full view, with the Sinai range at its southern extreme. The combination was satisfying—convincing. Here was the one great feature the want of which prevented Mount Serbal from contesting for the honours of Sinai. There is no plain in the vicinity of Serbal extensive enough to accommodate an assemblage as large as Moses led. But here is a vast plateau of sufficient extent, and, as we shall presently see when we view it from Mount Sinai's summit, so located that Moses could overlook it all when he read the Law. This must be the "true Sinai,"—the very mountain upon which the glory of the Lord rested in the sight of the people. When facing its awful, stately grandeur, I felt as if I had come to the end of the world. How many pilgrims had come from all parts of the earth to this very spot to reverence, to sacrifice, and to worship!

I dismounted to contemplate the sublime panorama and Eliezer, my camel driver, sat down beside me. He hardly seemed to understand my actions, and at last interrupted my reverie by exclaiming, as he pointed to the lofty group, "Jebel Mousa—Tayeeb!" ("Mountain of Moses—good!") He also revered it, for he was a Mohammedan.

What impresses the American traveller most sensibly here is the fact that although mountains abound, and stream-beds are more plenty than in our own White Hills, a cascade or a water-fall is never heard. When the rains fall, the water rolls down these bare, rough diagonals unintercepted, and empties into wadies, which in turn impetuously roll the torrents into the sea with great speed, before the parched earth has time to absorb more than a mere surface.

What a surprise, then, when, arrived at the highest ridge of the vast plateau of Er Raha, to see a bright oasis full of trees laden with the rich blossoms of spring, backed by the strange, contrasting, gloomy walls of the Convent of Saint Catherine. No location could be more charming—in the narrowing valley, nestled at the feet of the closely protecting mountains. Upon the highest ramparts are set both the cannon and the cross. It was both castle and convent we were approaching. More than once the inmates have been obliged to defend themselves against the marauder. At one time every monk was massacred. Since then more care has been exercised. We were obliged to prove our friendship before we could gain admittance. We could not even encamp in the neighbourhood until our credentials were examined and approved.

Arriving at the convent wall we sent up a shout to the top. In the course of time the voice of a monk sent down a squeaky response. To a point near the top of the wall a tiny structure shaped like a dog-kennel is attached. From this a small rope was let down, to which we attached our firman, or letter of introduction, obtained at a branch institution at Suez. This was hauled up slowly and soon answered by a great rouse in the aerial kennel. Then a thick cable was lowered to us and we were asked to "Get in and come up." But the low gate in the wall was swung open at that moment, and we chose to enter the convent by it rather than go up by cable.

When we arrived at the quarters of the superior we saw that the cable was not let down hand over hand, but that a clumsy windlass, worked and turned by Bedouin serfs, was the power behind the throne. The combination is believed to be the first passenger elevator in the world.

It seems as though no semblance of humanity should remain in a place made sacred by so many holy associations, but the convent is inhabited by about sixty monks varying in grades of sanctity. Nine of them yielded to our camera. A beardless youth afforded us considerable amusement. Repeatedly he came to me, with tears in his eyes, and begged for some recipe to make his beard grow. He said that he would not be allowed to read chapel service until he had a beard; that nearly all the monks but him had beards.

THE FORCE OF NATURAL GAS.

Although the wells around Findlay are under control, the tubing is anchored, and the awful force is held under by gates and levers of steel, it is impossible to escape a feeling of awe in this region at the subterranean energies which seem adequate to blow the whole country heavenward. Some of the wells were opened for us. Opening a well is unscrewing the service pipe and letting the full force of the gas issue from the pipe at the mouth of the well. When one of these wells is thus opened the whole town is aware of it by the roaring and the quaking of the air. The first one exhibited was in a field a mile and a half from the city. At the first freedom from the screws and clamps the gas rushed out in such density that it was visible. Although we stood several rods from it, the roar was so great that one could not make himself heard shouting in the ear of his neighbour. The geologist stuffed cotton in his ears and tied a shawl about his head, and, assisted by the chemist, stood close to the pipe to measure the flow. The chemist, who had not taken the precaution to protect himself, was quite deaf for some time after the experiment. A four-inch pipe, about sixty feet in length, was then screwed on, and the gas ignited as it issued from the end on the ground. The roaring was as before. For several feet from the end of the tube there was no flame, but beyond was a sea of fire sweeping the ground and rising high in the air—billows of red and yellow and blue flame—force and hot enough to consume everything within reach. It was an awful display of power.

We had a like though only a momentary display at the famous Karg well, an eight million feet well. This could only be turned on for a few seconds at a time, for it is in connection with the general system. If the gas is turned off the fires in houses and factories would go out, and it is turned on again without notice the rooms would be

full of gas, and an explosion follow an attempt to relight it. This danger is now being removed by the invention of an automatic valve in the pipe supplying each fire, which will close and lock when the flow of gas ceases, and admit no more gas until it is opened. The ordinary pressure for house service is about two pounds to the square inch. The Karg well is on the bank of the creek, and the discharge-pipe through which the gas (though not in its full force) was turned for our astonishment extends over the water. The roar was like that of Niagara; all the town shakes when the Karg is loose. When lighted, billows of flame rolled over the water, brilliant in colour and fantastic in form, with a fury and rage of conflagration enough to strike the spectator with terror. I have never seen any other display of natural force so impressive as this. When this flame issues from an upright pipe, the great mass of fire rises eighty feet into the air, leaping and twisting in fiendish fury. For six weeks after this well was first opened its constant roaring shook the nerves of the town, and by night its flaming torch lit up the heaven and banished darkness. With the aid of this new agent anything seems possible.—*Charles Dudley Warner, in Harper's Magazine for July.*

THE HUMANISTIC DILEMMA.

The truth is, any humanistic scheme of religion finds itself in a dilemma. It admits a power above humanity it destroys its own first principle and goes over to the camp of supernaturalism. If it refuses to admit any such power and contents itself with a merely human object of worship, it is obliged to outdo the medieval realists in order to obtain a conception at all capable of calling forth the religious sentiments. This brings out the fundamental defect of all humanistic creeds. An adequate object of worship must contain a synthesis of knowable and unknowable attributes. It must transcend man and his powers of conception, and it must also come into the sphere of the thinkable and knowable. In other words, the God of the religious consciousness must be absolute, infinite and immutable. But He must also be the Father of men, and must possess attributes which will make him a fit object for the love and loyalty of his children. The humanistic creed repudiates the transcendental side of religion in advance, and hence is never able to provide such an object as the religious nature of man requires.—*Professor A. T. Ormond, in New Princeton Review for July.*

AUERBACH.

After 1839, Auerbach's life oscillates between Winters spent in Berlin with his family and Springs and Summer spent in wandering, mostly alone, in his dear native district and in Switzerland. It is sad to read how he constantly complains of loneliness, though he clearly had many friends, and these among the most eminent men of the land; warm friends, too, not mere acquaintances, whose death, as time goes on, affect him deeply on each occurrence, and he usually on these occasions writes a warm appreciative press of their characters to his correspondent. His own fame increased and he never lost pleasure in his work, was always full of more plans and projects than time would allow him to execute. "There is a ferment within me," he would say. His openly expressed, naive, childlike delight in what he had created laid him open in the cold Prussian capital to the charge of vanity. Kind friends brought this charge to his ears, and it hurt him greatly and often. In later life he frequently tried to check his spontaneous utterances, tried artificially to make himself self-conscious and reticent. Impossible. Directly the moment of excitement came the real true Auerbach got the better of the artificial man, and he had to blurt out all that was on his mind, all that moved his heart. It was this that made him so lovable; yet this too, that often brought him into awkward scrapes, for which, however, he was in the end always pardoned by all concerned, as we pardon a child that has not as yet its emotions under control. The same want of self-control made itself evident in his work. In moments of self-criticism he dimly apprehended this. Thus he once writes: "I am well and sticking to work, although here again I am experiencing that the strength of performance, which I can command, is not firm enough. Every look becomes usually quite another thing from what I had willed when under my pen." Indeed he understood as little as most Germans the doctrine of art for art's sake. In all he wrote he sought to instruct, and this must very specially be borne in mind in dealing with his writings. Their foundation was didactic. In his longer works more especially he neglected Goethe's advice: *Bilde Künstler, rede nicht*. Hence they were sharply criticised on their appearance, never had the full success of his village tales, and are almost entirely neglected even now. And his didactic manner is all the more tedious because Auerbach was not a clear—that is to say, precise—thinker. His emotions were stronger than his intellect.—*The National Review.*

A MARVEL IN STEEL.

There are 150,000 miles of railway in the United States; 300,000 miles of rails—in length enough to make twelve steel girdles for the earth's circumference. This enormous length of rail is wonderful—we do not really grasp its significance. But the rail itself, the little section of steel, is an engineering feat. The change of its form from the curious and clumsy iron pear head of thirty years ago to the present refined section of steel is a scientific development. It is now a beam whose every dimension and curve and angle are exactly suited to the tremendous work it has to do. The loads it carries are enormous, the blows it receives are heavy and constant, but it carries the loads and bears the blows and does its duty. The locomotive and the modern passenger and freight cars are great achievements; and so is the little rail which carries them all.—*From "Feats of Railway Engineering,"—John Bogart, in Scribner's Magazine for July.*

British and Foreign.

It is proposed to fix a Temperance Sunday for all the Australian churches.

THE Minister of Justice in New South Wales intends to suppress lotteries in connection with Anglican bazaars.

"THE ecclesiastical Gordon" is the not inapt title bestowed by one of his admirers on Bishop William Taylor, of Africa.

THE Rev. John Thompson, Bonhill, was ordained there lately to the mission station of Impolweni, South Africa. Mr. Barry, of Dumbarton, preached.

A BELL has been placed on the church at Sleat, Skye, the gift of the late Mr. Lachlan M'Kinnon, of Duisdale. It is the first church bell ever heard in the parish.

THE Rev. A. Scott Matheson, who recently resigned the charge of Claremont Church, Glasgow, has received an invitation from Trinity Church, Canonbury, London.

FULLARTON Church, Irvine, celebrated its jubilee on a recent Sunday. Rev. William Ewan, of Kinning park, Glasgow, and Mr. Paton, the pastor, were the preachers.

MR. GEORGE WALKER, ex-senior bailie of Aberdeen, says that statistics compiled from the corporation records prove the average annual loss to that city in connection with the parish churches to be \$7,410.

THE Rev. M. P. Johnstone, minister-elect of Fraserburg, preached his farewell sermon in Cadzow parish church, recently, to an overflowing congregation, which included many representatives of other churches.

A TABLET has been placed in the entrance lobby of St. Bernard's, Edinburgh, to the memory of the late Rev. William Fraser, M.A., who was pastor of the church for many years before his translation to Brighton.

A MEMORIAL window, by the same artist who executed the beautiful windows in the Bishop's palace, at the Glasgow exhibition, is about to be placed in Trinity Church, Glasgow, in honour of the late Dr. William Pulsford.

THE green sward in front of Killin Church has been fixed upon as the site for the obelisk about to be erected in memory of the great Gaelic scholar, Dr. Stewart, who translated the New Testament and part of the Old into Gaelic.

DR. J. MURRAY McCULLOCH, Dumfries, a life-long advocate of temperance and from its start one of the most conspicuous Scottish members of the United Kingdom Alliance, died lately within a fortnight of completing his eighty-fourth year.

THE Gaelic sermon delivered by Mr. Blair, of Cambslang, in Crown Court Church, London, gave great satisfaction to the Celts of the metropolis, some of whom declared it to be the best Gaelic sermon ever heard in London.

THE Rev. Mr. Bain, of Duthill, refuses to retract remarks he has made derogatory to Abernethy Presbytery, which refuses to take certain steps he recommends in connection with the sanitary condition of his manse and its surroundings. Mr. Bain has appealed to the Synod.

THE yearly increase of ordained men in the Anglican Church is vastly in excess of requirements. The clerical deaths last year were 460, and there were seventy new churches built; but there were 734 ordinations. The unbeneficed clergy in England now number from 10,000 to 11,000.

THE Rev. Jacob Primmer, at the breakfast which closed the recent Protestant Commemoration in Edinburgh, declared that there was a secret Romanising conspiracy in the Church of Scotland which he had studied for twenty years. There were, he added, a great many foxes in the pulpits.

THE most important incident of the Irish Methodist Conference, was the notice of motion by Mr. William Greenhill, of Belfast, which was accepted for next year, declaring that the time has come when the three years' limit of ministerial service, especially in cities and large towns, may be modified.

THE Melbourne Y. M. C. A. has made its basis of membership more exclusive. The qualifications henceforth is to be a profession of personal acceptance of Christ and a desire to follow Him. Young men who are unable to subscribe to this basis may be admitted as associates.

A PLEASANT meeting of the juvenile union of the Church of England Temperance Society was held at Fulham Palace. The grounds were thrown open to the children, and the Bishops of London and Marlborough helped to entertain them. Mrs. Temple also took a conspicuous part in the proceedings.

THE Rev. S. D. Scammel has been lecturing in his church at Chatham on a trip to Egypt and the rabbi of the Jewish synagogue at Rochester, Rev. J. B. Salomons, presided. He remarked that from the kindly feeling that seemed to exist among his audience, surely they were possessed of the true religion.

THE Rev. A. Frater, a worthy Aberdonian, who is minister of the Ancient Presbyterian Church at Flushing, which dates from the days when Queen Elizabeth's troops occupied the town, is actively engaged founding a sailors' home, which besides bedrooms will have a good reading room and supply of healthful refreshments.

THE Rev. Mr. Mackenzie, a Presbyterian minister in Auckland New Zealand, has shown more economical than ecclesiastical prudence. Having fallen into dispute with his deacons as to his salary, he was shrewd enough to hold the communion plate as security till his claims were settled, and only handed it back on receipt of the balance of cash awarded him.