

OUR FOREIGN CORRESPONDENCE.

SHERM-EL-SHEIKH, PENINSULA OF }
MOUNT SINAI, JAN. 3, 1879. }

EDITOR WEST SHORE: With the observer supposed to be looking nearly N. N. W., the illustration accompanying this letter presents a very truthful view of the southern extremity of what is popularly known as the Peninsula of Mount Sinai, called by the Bedouins *Ras Mohammed*; the word *ras* being the Arabic equivalent for "cape." It will be observed that the view is taken from on ship-board. The coast along here is low, but quite abrupt at the water-line and is not visible, from at sea, for more than ten miles. The *Ras* properly consists of a narrow strip of land several miles long, and from a

observers, and a near approximation to exactness would be, Latitude 27 deg. 40 min. N., and Longitude 111 deg. 35 min. E., from Washington.

Mount Sinai bears N. by W., and is about fifty miles distant; it is not discernable from the highest part of the Cape, on account of intervening hills; nor can it be seen off the Cape at sea, for a like reason. Its venerable peak can be seen in clear weather, however, from a point on the coast about eighteen miles to the northeastward from *Ras Mohammed*.

Mount *Horeb*, where Moses sojourned when God called him to his great work, stands five to ten miles a little north and west from Sinai, and the two mountains are separated from

when spoken of separately, the southerly one is distinguished as *Sherm-el-Shekh*, where our party are at present encamped, and the northerly one, *Sherm-el-Moyah*. From most of these villages along the coast, sheep, fire-wood, milk, butter and brackish water, can be obtained in limited quantities. The inhabitants who eke out a precarious existence in this portion of the Arabian seaboard, are, in the main, roving Bedouins. Sometimes a few fishermen of the *Huteimi* tribe are permitted to cultivate a few date-trees in the valleys, but they are ruled with a rod of iron by the Bedouins, to whom they pay a draining tribute. Whatever celebrity *Ras Mohammed* may possess among the Arabs, doubtless,



RAS MOHAMMED—RED SEA.

half to a mile or more in width. A little to the eastward of the cape, there is a small island called *Tiran*, a nearly unbroken plain; a little east of this, another island is encountered, called *Senafer*, the latter being rather less in size than the former. *Tiran* is separated from the main land by a narrow channel of no great depth. *Ras Mohammed*, itself, is bare of interest and quite uninviting; and the tourist finds it not an easy task to give a popular and readable description of this projection without embodying in his letter familiar notes of adjacent points of more or less repute. The geographical position of this cape has often been noted, both by English and American

each other by the little valley of *El Ledja*. The convent of *El Erbayn* is situated in this valley and makes a valued resting place for travellers, who have descended from the mountainous regions round about.

The rugged point which properly constitutes *Ras Mohammed*, consists almost wholly of naked granite rocks; indeed, the whole of the Sinai Peninsula, taken together, has been called the "sea of desolation," so sterile and broken is the face of the country.

There are two little harbors eight or ten miles north of the cape, separated from each other by a narrow strip of rocky upheaval, and together called by the Arabs *Sherm*, or *Shermum*; but

such notoriety is principally owing to the fact that the cape is a loved and cherished namesake of their honored prophet. Everything in Arabia that appertains to Mohammed is held sacred by a true believer. With all their listlessness, ignorance and cruelty, the populace are religious fanatics. A Bedouin among the Arabs, is what a Pharisee used to be among the Jews.

The Red Sea terminates at the north in two gulfs, Araba and Suez; the latter having been crossed by the children of Israel, in their grand exodus from Egypt under the leadership of Moses. The precise point where this wonderful transit took place, of course, is not known with anything like certainty,