

corresponds well to the position of Lop according to Marco Polo, a few degrees of the compass near. But the stream which passes at this spot could never be important enough for the wants of a considerable centre of habitation and the ruins of Ouash Shahri are more of a hamlet than of a town. Moreover, Lop was certainly the meeting point of the roads of Kashgar, Urumtsi, Shachau, L'Hasa, and Khotan, and it is to this fact that this town, situated in a very poor country, owed its relative importance. Now, it is impossible that these roads crossed at Ouash Shahri. I believe that Lop was built on the site of Charkalyk itself. The Venetian traveller gives five days' journey between Charchan and Lop, whilst Charkalyk is really seven days from Charchan; but the objection does not appear sufficient to me: Marco Polo may well have made a mistake of two days." (III. pp. 149-150.)

The Chinese Governor of Urumtsi found some years ago to the north-west of the Lob-nor, on the banks of the Tarim, and within five days of Charkalyk, a town bearing the same name, though not on the same site as the Lop of Marco Polo.—H. C.]

NOTE 2.—“The waste and desert places of the Earth are, so to speak, the characters which sin has visibly impressed on the outward creation; its signs and symbols there. . . . Out of a true feeling of this, men have ever conceived of the Wilderness as the haunt of evil spirits. In the old Persian religion Ahriman and his evil Spirits inhabit the steppes and wastes of Turan, to the north of the happy Iran, which stands under the dominion of Ormuzd; exactly as with the Egyptians, the evil Typhon is the Lord of the Libyan sand-wastes, and Osiris of the fertile Egypt.” (*Archbp. Trench, Studies in the Gospels*, p. 7.) Terror, and the seeming absence of a beneficent Providence, are suggestions of the Desert which must have led men to associate it with evil spirits, rather than the figure with which this passage begins; no spontaneous conception surely, however appropriate as a moral image.

“According to the belief of the nations of Central Asia,” says I. J. Schmidt, “the earth and its interior, as well as the encompassing atmosphere, are filled with Spiritual Beings, which exercise an influence, partly beneficent, partly malignant, on the whole of organic and inorganic nature. . . . Especially are Deserts and other wild or uninhabited tracts, or regions in which the influences of nature are displayed on a gigantic and terrible scale, regarded as the chief abode or rendezvous of evil Spirits. . . . And hence the steppes of Turan, and in particular the great sandy Desert of Gobi have been looked on as the dwelling-place of malignant beings, from days of hoar antiquity.”

The Chinese historian Ma Twan-lin informs us that there were two roads from China into the Uighúr country (towards Karashahr). The longest but easiest road was by Kamul. The other was much shorter, and apparently corresponded, as far as Lop, to that described in this chapter. “By this you have to cross a plain of sand, extending for more than 100 leagues. You see nothing in any direction but the sky and the sands, without the slightest trace of a road; and travellers find nothing to guide them but the bones of men and beasts and the droppings of camels. During the passage of this wilderness you hear sounds, sometimes of singing, sometimes of wailing; and it has often happened that travellers going aside to see what those sounds might be have strayed from their course and been entirely lost; for they were voices of spirits and goblins. 'Tis for these reasons that travellers and merchants often prefer the much longer route by Kamul.” (*Visdelou*, p. 139.)

“In the Desert” (this same desert), says Fa-hian, “there are a great many evil demons; there are also sirocco winds, which kill all who encounter them. There are no birds or beasts to be seen; but so far as the eye can reach, the route is marked out by the bleached bones of men who have perished in the attempt to cross.”

[“The Lew-sha was the subject of various most exaggerated stories. We find more trustworthy accounts of it in the *Chow shu*; thus it is mentioned in that history, that there sometimes arises in this desert a ‘burning wind,’ pernicious to men and cattle; in such cases the old camels of the caravan, having a presentiment of its approach, flock shrieking to one place, lie down on the ground and hide their heads