

THE DESCRIPTION OF THE WORLD= THE DESERT CROSSING

beasts. At end of a week they must take food for a month for themselves and for v
 their beasts, because they take so long to pass across that great desert. And there they load VB P
 strong asses and camels with merchandise and with victuals and so take their way through the
 desert; and if they are used up before they can cross it, when they free the asses or camels from R P
 their loads of victuals they kill them and eat them, or let them go in the desert, because they R P
 could not provide them with food up to the end. They are more willing however to keep the camels,
 and they take camels for the most part, because they eat little and carry great loads. And then R P
 one starts from this town and they enter into the desert.¹ And I tell you that it is
 so long, according to what they of the district say, that one would hardly go riding VA VA FB
 from the one end to the other end in a year, and where it is less broad he works hard FB
 to cross it in a month. But lengthwise it cannot be passed because of the great length of it, VB
 for it would be impossible to carry enough food. Across, as has been said, one travels for a
 month of marches never finding any dwelling. It is all barren mountains and plains of sand VB P
 and valleys, [23c] and nothing to eat is found there. But I tell you that when one
 is gone a day and a night he finds sweet water to drink in the winter, but no water FB VA
 which a sufficiently large company could take, but as much as is needed for quite fifty FB
 or a hundred men, but yet not with their beasts,² but not for more. And so it is necessary VA FB VB
 to cross with a small company, not more than fifty persons at one time. And through all the
 desert you must always go a day and a night finding nothing before you find water VA
 to drink in this way. Moreover I tell you that in three places or in four one finds VA FB
 bitter and salt and evil water, and all the others are good to drink but by no means FB VA FB
 plentiful, which are about twenty-eight waters. And there are no beasts of any sort FB VB
 nor birds, because they would find nothing to eat there. But yet I tell you that in FB L
 the crossing of this desert one finds there such a wonder as I shall relate to you. They R
 tell for a manifest thing that in the said desert there dwell many spirits which make for the
 wayfarers great and wonderful illusions to make them perish. For while any company of Z
 merchants or others is crossing the desert, it is true that when one rides by night³ through
 this desert and a thing happens that anyone stays behind the others and goes off the VA FB
 road and is separated from his companions to sleep or for other cause, and if the P
 company goes on till for mountains or hills it cannot be seen, and then he wishes to go to
 join his companions, then often it happens that they hear spirits malignant in the air VA LT

¹ entrent len en desert FB: entrent ou desert

² len troue eue deueres mes nin aigue que peust auoir asez grant iens mes cinquante ou cent homes con lor bestes The tentative version of deueres by "in the winter" is supported by L: yemis tempore inuenit aquam dulcem; but alternatively read, with B., "water to drink in the winter-time" (L).

³ R: à tempo di giorno