

postal station near those of K'ie-t'ai, Che-ch'an and Wo-tuan. Wo-tuan is Khotan. Che-ch'an, the name of which reappears in other paragraphs, is Charchan. As to K'ie-t'ai, a postal station between those of Lob and Charchan, it seems probable that it is the Kätäk of the *Tarikh-i-Rashidi*." (PELLIOT.)

See in the *Journ. Asiatique*, Jan.-Feb., 1916, pp. 117-119, Pelliot's remarks on *Lob, Navapa*, etc.

XXXIX., pp. 196-7.

THE GREAT DESERT.

After reproducing the description of the Great Desert in Sir Henry Yule's version, Stein adds, *Ruins of Desert Cathay*, I., p. 518:

"It did not need my journey to convince me that what Marco here tells us about the risks of the desert was but a faithful reflex of old folklore beliefs he must have heard on the spot. Sir Henry Yule has shown long ago that the dread of being led astray by evil spirits haunted the imagination of all early travellers who crossed the desert wastes between China and the oases westwards. Fa-hsien's above-quoted passage clearly alludes to this belief, and so does Hiuan Tsang, as we have seen, where he points in graphic words the impressions left by his journey through the sandy desert between Niya and Charchan.

"Thus, too, the description we receive through the Chinese historiographer, Ma Tuan-lin, of the shortest route from China towards Kara-shahr, undoubtedly corresponding to the present track to Lop-nor, reads almost like a version from Marco's book, though its compiler, a contemporary of the Venetian traveller, must have extracted it from some earlier source. '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 these sounds might be have strayed from their course and been entirely lost; for they were voices of spirits and goblins.' . . .

"As Yule rightly observes, 'these Goblins are not peculiar to the Gobi.' Yet I felt more than ever assured that Marco's stories about them were of genuine local growth, when I had travelled over the whole route and seen how closely its topographical features agree with the matter-of-fact details which the