

patron saint with his caravan of sacred relics pass by. I sometimes wondered behind which of the Stupa mounds he might have sought shelter during a brief rest. In a region where all is dead and waste, spiritual emanations from those who have passed by long centuries ago, seem to cling much longer to the few conspicuous landmarks than in parts where life is still bustling.

But the old traveller always nearest to my thoughts on this desert journey was Marco Polo, and in my peaceful camp by the edge of the dreary salt plain it was a treat to read again in Ser Marco's immortal book what he has to tell us of the great 'Desert of Lop.' Even to handle the volume was a refreshing assurance; for was it not Sir Henry Yule's edition, replete with all his wide learning and literary charm, and did I not owe this copy to his daughter's kind remembrance of my life-long devotion to the memory of that great elucidator of early travel? Chiang-ssü-yeh had joined me in the meantime for my Chinese lesson, which was a fixed item of daily routine whenever time permitted. As I could neither miss it nor tear myself away from the Venetian's fascinating narrative, I set myself to translate his account of the desert into my best Chinese, a solution which I knew would satisfy dear Chiang's keen interest in the old traveller.

Thus it runs in Sir Henry Yule's version: "The length of this desert is so great that 'tis said it would take a year and more to ride from one end of it to the other. And here, where its breadth is least, it takes a month to cross it. 'Tis all composed of hills and valleys of sand, and not a thing to eat is to be found on it. But after riding for a day and a night you find fresh water, enough mayhap for some fifty or hundred persons with their beasts, but not for more. And all across the desert you will find water in like manner, that is to say, in some twenty-eight places altogether you will find good water, but in no great quantity; and in four places also you find brackish water.

"Beasts there are none; for there is nought for them to eat. But there is a marvellous thing related of this desert, which is that when travellers are on the move by night, and one of them chances to lag behind or to fall asleep or the