

# THE GOBI DESERT

MILDRED CABLE

*with*

FRANCESCA FRENCH

“Very full of dreams that desert, . . .”



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Past the Barrier of  
the Great Wall into the  
vast and always  
mysterious waste of Gobi.

Here are the hidden  
records of the past,  
the art treasures, palaces  
and ruined cities, highways,  
homes and people of  
the place called desert.



"AFTER living for more than twenty years in the province of Shansi in North China, I took the old trade-route and, with my companions Eva and Francesca French, trekked north-west past the Barrier of the Great Wall and into the country which lies beyond. For many years we travelled over the Desert of Gobi and among its oases as itinerant missionaries, and we came to know the country and its people intimately.

We found the desert to be unlike anything that we had pictured. It had its terrors, but it also had its compensating pleasures ; it subjected us to many and prolonged hardships, but it also showed us some unique treasures. The oasis dwellers were poor but responsive ; the caravan men were rugged but full of native wit ; the outstanding personalities of the oases were men of character and distinction ; the towns were highly individualistic and each small water-stage had some unique feature. Even the monotonous outlines of the desert, when better known, wore a subtly changing aspect, and landscapes which were similar in broad outline became highly distinctive as their detail was scrutinised. Even the stony flooring of the Gobi varied so much from stage to stage that pebbles picked up on the wide expanse could be located to the actual spot where they were collected.

Once the spirit of the desert had caught us it lured us on and we became learners in its severe school. The solitudes provoked reflection, the wide space gave us a right sense of proportion and the silences forbade triviality."