

only to increase in strength in the afternoon. NORIN tried to do some field-work with his surveyor's table, but it shook so in the high wind that he was obliged to give up and return to camp.

BERGMAN continued to keep us in fresh meat. Nearly every day he shot one or several antelope bucks. The flesh of these animals makes delicate eating if hung for a week, and if one has plenty of fat to fry it in.

I was now up and dressed all day, staying in NORIN's and BERGMAN's tent while my yurt was tidied up.

Day followed day, and each evening we swept the western horizon in vain.

## CHRISTMAS IN THE DESERT

And so came Christmas Eve. Already in the morning we were surprised with the first Christmas present. Our bitch Snappy whelped — one little black bundle after the other, seven in all. A really thoughtful mother to time the event so prettily, and while we were stopping in the one place for a length of time!

For the last two days HUMMEL had been busy with special preparations for a worthy celebration of Christmas Eve, and to-day he devoted himself entirely to this task. He baked, roasted and cooked in the kitchen-tent; he rearranged the 'furniture' and quite transformed the interior of my yurt. By nightfall I could scarcely recognize it for the same dwelling. It had been turned into a snug and cosy drawing-room with settees ranged around the walls; there was a Christmas-table with table-cloth, beautifully laid with plates, glass and a home-made branched candle-stick which served instead of a Christmas-tree and gave a festive glitter to the room. The 'settees' had been devised simply by folding sleeping-bags once over and covering them with rugs. The walls were decorated with mats and light-blue *khadaks*. The part of the yurt nearest the door was separated off by two Swedish flags hanging down from the roof.

One might have fancied oneself transported to the after-saloon of a little ship, on account of the half-round shape of the room. But on the other hand everything was decked out in such festive guise that one had a strong impression of its being above all the intended celebration of Christmas that had set its stamp upon the transformation. The menu the doctor had drawn up for the occasion was also a very special treat.

The festivities began with Swedish *smörgåsbord*, as complete as our limited supply of provisions would allow. But we lacked neither Swedish crisp-bread, that we had not tasted since leaving Peking, nor the traditional Christmas ham. And BERGMAN furraged in one of his trunks to produce a bottle of Swedish aqua-vitae. The next course was *Consommé à la Gobi*, followed by *Selle d'antilope* with green peas and pickled cucumber. Dessert consisted of *Glace aux glaciers de Tien-*