



Fig. 23. Camp Sebestei

*chan* with cakes; and we wound up the meal with cheese and biscuits. Then we sat back to coffee and the doctor's cognac.

We spoke of our dear ones at home, wondering, as the hours went by, what kind of Christmas they were having, knowing well that they would be wondering with the same eagerness how we were faring.

The gramophone sounded more festive than usual, and when the last record was put on (HARRY LAUDER'S »Keep Right On to the End of the Road») it was already one o'clock.

And so passed our Christmas in the desert.

Late on the evening of the 26th we heard the clanking of caravan-bells from the north-east. A crowd of Mongols with their animals pitched camp at the spring. They were from Uliasutai, bound for Anhsi, whence they intended to fetch flour. Their hundred camels were now without loads. If we could only hire them to take us with our baggage to Hami! But as they asked nine hundred dollars nothing came of this, and we contented ourselves with buying forty cattles of flour from them with our last three dollars. The following morning the caravan disappeared to the south, and once more we felt like marooned sailors, watching the ship that might have saved them disappear over the horizon.

The year 1928 was ushered in over the Desert of Gobi to the accompaniment of new storms. One day, however, the 3rd, was calm and clear. To the W. N. W. we could see, dazzlingly sharp and beautiful, the easternmost peaks of the Qarliqtagh, looking like steep pyramids. These peaks are about 4300 meters in height and situated about 200 kilometers distant from Sebestei. We gazed for long at these wonderful giants, the most easterly offsets of the T'ien-shan, through our big portable telescope on its tripod, all agreeing that we had seen nothing more beautiful in Mongolia.

The cook informed us that oatmeal, sugar, salt, pepper, coffee and green peas had come to an end, that the following day he would be baking the last lot of bread, and that we had only some handfuls of rice left in the larder.