



Fig. 24. My camel-borne sedan-chair

slid and stumbled in the drifts, and my strange vehicle creaked and grated against the 'shafts'. Slowly and heavily our dark procession made its way over the crunching snow, that presently seemed to cover the ground completely. Before us lay one of LARSON's dead camels, almost snowed over. BERGMAN's riding-camel fell at the beginning of the day's march; and MARSCHALL's faithful beast succumbed quite near our camping-place for the night, that we reached after covering fifty-one li. The altitude was about 1400 meters. There was no water at this camp, but we melted snow. Fuel was scanty, and the camels had to content themselves with sparse artemisia.

It was lucky for us that on the 11th of January we had only a short day's march, no more, in fact, than eight kilometers, for there was a hard wind and it was bitingly cold. The drifts glittered as if painted in white oils, and loose snow whirled over the ground. The sun, that had been out in the morning, paled and hid itself among the clouds. Were we in for a snowstorm, we wondered? And speculated as to whether we should reach »Hotel LARSON» for the night or be snowed in in the wilderness. We could see but a short distance in front of us. The wind whined and shrieked round my swaying 'cab', and the tarpaulin smacked and slapped against the wooden framework of the chair. On a little ridge, where we were more exposed than hitherto, the camels seemed to waver, and the wind swept drift-snow over the ground like flapping shrouds. To leeward of the tussocks the drifts lay like white dolphin-backs. Sometimes MENTU disappeared in front of me, while HUMMEL and MARSCHALL were glimpsed in the whirling snow. They were both afoot, for it was too cold for riding.

#### »HOTEL LARSON»

Behind a hill we came suddenly upon a lovely sight: »Hotel LARSON», an inn in the middle of the desert! My splendid caravan-leader advanced to meet us in his huge red Mongol sheepskin coat. »Welcome! and 'Happy New Year!'» he shouted cheerfully. He had built a little hut of packing-cases, with a storm-porch to keep drift-snow from the entrance. The interior had a floor-space of  $2.3 \times 2.1$  meters;