

starting early on the following morning we should be able to reach the top of the pass before night. In these narrow valleys the days were now very short, and the mornings were so very cold that it was impossible to get the men to start early. The slowness of our progress was vexatious, as I was most anxious to finish the exploration of this part of the country before the passes, at all times difficult, should be encumbered with the deep snow which falls in the later part of winter. The only consolation for delay was found in the numerous opportunities with which it provided me, for taking observations and obtaining checks on the work of the topographer, whose task was exceedingly difficult. When, in the morning, Yul Bash and his men were rebuked for the lateness of their start, they replied that it was of little consequence as we should spend the night at a place called Chadder Tash (stone hut), where we should find grass, fuel, and water. The distance to this hut was short, but the way was through jungle which delayed the animals, or over the frozen Pil River, which had to be crossed repeatedly; and at two places the caravan had to halt while the men plied pick and spade (indispensable to the explorer in Sarikol) in clearing a track. On the slippery ice we had to scatter gravel or clay, but here the ponies, habituated to the conditions, showed a marvellous power of keeping their feet, and did not even appear timid or nervous. Up to December 11th, only one pony had fallen on the ice. After six hours of toil we reached Chadder Tash, where we found two miserable huts, but no grass. This desolate spot, visited at other seasons by shepherds and goatherds, who obtained shelter in the draughty hovels, was at this time of the year destitute of fodder, except a little very closely-cropped boortza.* This was useful for fuel, but the hungry animals, freed from their loads, could find no

* *Eurotia ceratoides*.—C. A. M.