

the Detailed Report on the results of my second Central-Asian expedition was to include also a systematic survey and full descriptive list of all the art relics brought away from the Caves of the Thousand Buddhas. With this object in view I had taken care, at the same time when enlisting M. Petrucci's collaboration, to use as many plates of *Serindia* as the claims of abundant 'finds' from other sites would allow, for the reproduction of characteristic specimens among the different classes of paintings, drawings, and wood-cuts recovered in the walled-up chapel.<sup>5</sup> But it was clear from the first that the limitations imposed by the number and size of the *Serindia* plates, and even more perhaps by the cost of colour reproduction, would not allow adequate justice being done to the artistic, as distinguished from the iconographic and archaeological, value of the paintings. It was equally easy to foresee that, however numerous the small-scale reproductions in the plates of *Serindia* might be, and however thorough the description and analysis of the new materials in its text, the very character, bulk, and correspondingly high price of that detailed report would prevent it from making those paintings sufficiently accessible to students interested mainly in their art.

For these and cognate reasons I had been anxious from the outset to arrange for a separate publication like the present. But the attempts made in this direction before my return to duty in India at the close of 1911 failed from want of needful means, and subsequently distance and absorbing exertions in the field, as implied by my third Central-Asian expedition (1913-16), precluded their effective renewal. That auspices proved more favourable on my return from that journey was due mainly to the generous interest which a far-sighted statesman, the Right Honourable Mr. AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN, then H.M. Secretary of State for India, was pleased to show in the plan. His appreciation of the importance of these pictorial treasures and of the need of securing an adequate record of them before their impending division between the British Museum and Delhi was largely instrumental in inducing the authorities of the India Office, with the ready co-operation of the Trustees of the British Museum, to sanction the present publication at a cost not exceeding £1,900. Regard for the special difficulties then prevailing owing to the war is an additional reason for Mr. Chamberlain's timely help being remembered by me with profound gratitude.

The execution of the plates, both by three-colour and half-tone process, was entrusted to Messrs. HENRY STONE & SON, of Banbury, whose establishment, under the expert direction of Mr. J. A. MILNE, C.B.E., had already proved its special fitness for such work by producing the colour plates for my *Desert Cathay* and *Serindia*.<sup>6</sup> I feel all the more grateful for the great skill and care bestowed by them upon the truthful rendering of the paintings, and for the success achieved, because I learned to know the considerable technical difficulties which had to be faced, particularly in the case of the colour plates. After my return to India in the autumn of 1917 Mr. BINYON kindly charged himself in my place with all the arrangements which were needed in connexion with the reproduction work.

It was under the constant and ever-watchful supervision of Mr. LAURENCE BINYON that the exacting labours needed for the safe treatment and future preservation of the Ch'ien-fo-tung paintings, and extending over a period of close on seven years, had been effected in the Prints and Drawings Department of the British Museum. To his unfailing knowledge and care all students of these remains of Buddhist art owe gratitude for the ease with which they can now be examined. But to those whom the present publication is intended to reach he has rendered a service equally great by contributing to it his *Introductory Essay*. The expert guidance it affords as regards the evolution of Buddhist pictorial art in the Far East and with regard to a variety of kindred questions helps appreciably to reduce the loss which *The Thousand Buddhas* has suffered through M. Petrucci's untimely death, and for that help I feel deeply beholden.

That lamented event left me with a heavier obligation than I had anticipated in regard

<sup>5</sup> See Plates LVI-CIV in *Serindia*, vol. iv.

<sup>6</sup> Seven of those in the latter work have, with the kind

permission of the Delegates of the Clarendon Press, been used also here.