

clean-shaven and richly adorned with jewellery (Fig. 57). An unmistakable expression of softness conveyed by the features and dreamy-looking eyes, quite as much as by the peculiar peaked head-dress, vividly recalled the well-known type which in the Graeco-Buddhist sculpture is used for the representation of Prince Gautama before he became the Buddha.

The utter desolation around greatly heightened the effect of this bright cycle of figures. They looked to me as if meant to symbolize the varied pleasures of life. How strangely contrasted with the discomforts and cares of the protracted labours we were carrying on in dreary wastes holding nothing but traces of a dead past! With that cycle of youthful figures before me I might well have felt tempted to believe myself rather among the ruins of some villa in Syria or some other Eastern province of the Roman Empire than among those of a Buddhist sanctuary on the very confines of China.

Yet a look at the painted frieze, about eighteen feet long, which survived on the south-eastern wall segment, sufficed to dispel any doubt. There on a field of true Pompeian red was to be seen a procession representing the Jataka legend of Prince Vessantara, well known among the stories of the Buddha's previous births. Starting from the left of the entrance is shown the pious prince riding out of the palace gate, banished by his royal father for undue prodigality in charitable gifts. Before him a classical quadriga carries his equally pious wife and his two sons. Then the scene shifts to the forest where the prince, now seen on foot, presents his miraculous wish-granting white elephant (Fig. 57) to four Brahman mendicants who meet him asking for alms.