

## CHAPTER XLII

### THE FRESCOES OF MIRAN

It is more than the mere thought of difficulties successfully overcome, or of art pleasure afforded to others, which makes me look back upon the result of my toil at the Miran temple with special gratification. Subsequent examination of the fresco remains thus recovered has made me realize fully how little my notes and photographs, even if taken under less hampering conditions, would have sufficed for an adequate record of all points of artistic interest presented by these remarkable paintings. Only by bringing the originals before the eyes of such expert students of Graeco-Buddhist and Central-Asian art as my friends, Mr. F. H. Andrews and M. A. Foucher, was it possible to prove the impression I had gained on the spot that these frescoes marked an *étape* of exceptional interest in the history of classical pictorial art as transplanted to innermost Asia under Buddhist auspices.

Owing to the total loss on Indian soil of remains of pictorial work corresponding in date and origin to the Graeco-Buddhist sculpture of Gandhara, our knowledge of the earlier stages of that art development is exceedingly scanty. This explains the special importance of the new light thrown upon them by the frescoes of the Miran temples, particularly since the date of these can be so closely determined. But it would need a far more elaborate disquisition than can find a place in a narrative like the present, to indicate all the evidence which the frescoes furnish as to the classical and other Western elements embodied in Central-Asian Buddhist painting, So I must content myself here with reproducing a few