

wall segment began, there survived the head of a garland-carrying girl with a face of rare beauty under the white Phrygian cap. The right hand with shapely fingers was clasping the patera of wine against the breast. This fine head, narrowly preserved from destruction, impressed me at the time like a fit embodiment of that classical joy of life which seemed to animate the whole composition.

Amidst the ruin of this ancient place of worship the painter's art had survived triumphant. But could he ever have foreseen how much the effect of his gay figures, representing as it were the varied pleasures of life, would be heightened by the utter desolation around, when after their burial of long centuries they again saw the light? The contrast between the warm bright life which these paintings reflected and the bare Dasht of gravel was inexpressibly weird. Nor could I help thinking how different from this atmosphere of happy enjoyment was the existence we had been leading for months past. For my eyes, which had so long beheld nothing but dreary wastes with traces of a dead past or the wretched settlements of the living, the sight of these paintings was more than an archaeological treat. I greeted it like a cheering assurance that there really was still a region where fair sights and enjoyments could be found undisturbed by icy gales and the cares and discomforts of desert labours. The distance which separated me from it seemed to shrink as I examined again and again the fascinating figures of this dado, so Western in conception and treatment.

Hence it was scarcely surprising that during the next days I often felt tempted to believe myself rather among the ruins of some villa in Syria or some other Eastern province of the Roman empire than those of a Buddhist sanctuary on the very confines of China. And yet the winter climate of this desert was just then doing its best to keep me painfully alive to our true situation. The bitter winds blew almost constantly and stiffened at times to real gales. Their force was quite as cutting amongst the ruined walls as it had been amidst the wind-eroded