

CHAPTER LXVIII

LARGE PAINTINGS AND OTHER ART RELICS

WE find the general characteristics just indicated equally represented in that class of paintings, mostly of large size, which were meant for the decoration of walls, and which represent groups of divine beings in more or less elaborate composition. Among the many specimens of this class I may call attention first to the fine picture successfully reproduced in the coloured frontispiece of Vol. I.; for it is unmistakably an original work of exceptional artistic merit. It shows Vaisravana, the king of the Northern Region, moving on a cloud across the ocean, followed by a train of heavenly attendants and demons. From his left rises a small cloud supporting a miniature Stupa. His right hand carries the halberd, while bundles of flames shoot up behind his shoulders, expressive of rapid movement. His richly brocaded dress and elaborate golden armour are represented with exquisite care, to which reproduction on a scale necessarily so small cannot do full justice.

It is the same with the figures and adornment of his numerous host, among which variation of type and expression is introduced with remarkable skill. The individualizing touch bestowed on each demon's head seems to bring these fantastic figures nearer to human interest, as in a famous relievo of Graeco-Buddhist art representing the demon army of Mara. On the extreme left an aged demon-warrior is seen getting ready to shoot his arrow at a Garuda, half-man half-bird, who escapes to the heights of heaven. The big rolling waves of the ocean are rendered with a freedom and irresistible dash which