

considerations.⁸ So, however regretfully, I had to leave the frescoes *in situ* and trust for their protection to whatever measure of assurance the filling-in again of the interior of the temple could give. As long as possible I kept the wall-paintings open to the sunlight they had not seen for so many centuries, while supplementary tasks in connexion with the survey of the other scattered ruins of the ancient settlement kept me busy. The final duty of all, the careful re-burial of the cella, was accomplished by February 11. It was a sad business to watch those graceful figures, which had seemed so full of life to my eyes in the desolation of the wintry desert, as they slowly disappeared under the sand and clay débris. It would have been far sadder still if I could have foreseen the bitter human tragedy which these remains were destined to witness fifteen months later, and of which my brave 'handy-man' Naik Rām Singh was destined to be the victim.⁹ Another sequel may find a record in the note below.¹⁰

It only remains for me to describe the few other scattered ruins belonging to the earlier settlement of the Mīrān Site. My account of them may be brief. Most of them proved to be decayed Stūpa mounds of the usual type without enclosing rotundas, dug into long before by treasure-seekers, and none of the ruins offered scope for excavations. The largest of them in ground-plan was M. IV, a badly-broken oblong mass of solid masonry situated about forty yards to the west of M. III (see Plate 29; Fig. 111, extreme right). Its longest face, to the south, measured about 46 feet, and near the south-west corner the brickwork, bared by wind-erosion of all débris, still rose to about 12 feet from the original ground, which showed only a few feet of erosion. From the north face a tunnel had been cut through the masonry to near the centre of a solidly built square base of about 32 feet, as it proved to be on careful measurement. To this nucleus, which in all probability had once served as the base for a Vihāra or possibly a Stūpa, there had been added on the east side some later structure, perhaps once bearing small chapels or a flight of stairs. Behind its scanty remains, the plaster mouldings of the original base could still be distinguished here and there. A well dug in the centre of this base down to the natural ground brought nothing to light except a few small bone fragments, probably human. The sun-dried bricks were of unusual strength, and measured sixteen inches square with a thickness of five inches.

Ruined mound
M. IV.

About seventy yards to the north of M. III rose a mound of solid masonry, M. VI (Figs. 111, 131). It still stood to a height of approximately twenty feet, but its faces had decayed too much to permit of any exact determination of the original shape and dimensions. The north face, which seemed to have suffered least, measured about forty-six feet and suggested that the ruin, which undoubtedly was that of a Stūpa, had once had a square base. Its bricks measured on the average 16 × 10 × 5 inches. A tunnel cut by 'treasure-seekers' ran from the south face right to the

Stūpa ruins
M. VI, VII.

⁸ Cf. *Desert Cathay*, i. p. 495.

⁹ See below, chap. xxxiii. sec. i.

¹⁰ When I returned to Mīrān in January, 1914, as related elsewhere (*Geogr. Journal*, xlviii, 1916, p. 119), I found the south portion of the circular passage of M. v laid bare, and most of the frescoes of the southern arc broken out and the rest completely destroyed by exposure. According to the Lopliks' statement, this was the result of the operations carried out some three years earlier by a Japanese traveller who had made a few days' stay at the site and carried off such parts of the painted surface as he succeeded in detaching. It is to be wished that, whatever these were, they may have reached their destination in safety and may become ere long accessible to students.

Unfortunately there is only too much reason to fear that these

spoils must have suffered badly through haste and perfunctory methods of work. Of such there was sufficient evidence in the fact that the cutting of the brick wall behind, which we had found to be an essential preliminary to safe removal of these frescoes, had nowhere been attempted. The dado of the northern arc had luckily been left undisturbed under the protecting cover which Ibrāhīm Bēg's care had provided. Its removal was safely effected under my personal direction by Naik Rām Singh's capable successor, Naik Shamsuddīn of the 1st Sappers and Miners, and another Indian assistant. That the work, in spite of appliances carefully prepared beforehand and of our continuous labour at high pressure, cost fully twelve days was conclusive proof that on my first visit I correctly appreciated the technical difficulties involved.