

MISCELANEA

† SIR JOHN LINTON MYRES (1869-1954).

With the death of Sir John Myres, Wykeham Professor of Ancient History at Oxford from 1910 to 1939, we have lost one of the last direct links with the great nineteenth-century pioneers of modern classical scholarship.

After graduating at Oxford, where he was one of Gilbert Murray's first pupils, he was introduced to the Aegean by those two seasoned and unorthodox travellers, W. R. Paton and A. J. Evans, and it was while with them that he realised the importance of the newly-discovered traces of the Minoan-Mycenaean, or, as it was then known, the Aegean Civilisation, for the study of the origins of historic Greece. In 1896 and 1898, he published in *Science Progress*, under the title of «Prehistoric Man in the Eastern Mediterranean», a series of papers which were originally put together at the request of Evans, who was then preparing his own famous report of 1896 to the British Association for the Advancement of Science on «The Eastern Question in Anthropology». In the light of later discoveries, these essays read prophetically. They were a statement of the faith on which were based Evans' life's work in Crete and Sir John's intensive studies of the early Iron Age in the Aegean, which culminated in the publication in 1930 of *Who Were the Greeks?* This will probably rank as his greatest work, though his *History of Rome*, *Dawn of History*, *Political Ideas of the Greeks*, and *Herodotus*, all written in his characteristic terse and allusive style, undoubtedly survive for their literary as well as their scholarly merit.

Although, as all these works show, he excelled in the broad interpretation of past civilisations, Sir John did not disdain the more humble tasks of collecting and arranging evidence. Indeed, he believed that this was the first essential of all archaeological work, and his own catalogues of the Cyprus Museum (prepared jointly with Ohnefalsch-Richter) and of the Cesnola Collection in New York, established a firm relative chronology for all subsequent work on East Mediterranean archaeology. In his last years, too, despite the handicap of failing sight, he addressed himself to the routine duty of editing Evans' unpublished notes on the *Scripta Minoa*, and delighted to think that his reward was that this work was helping to speed on the decipherment of the Linear B script by his younger colleagues.

Apart from his direct contributions to Aegean archaeology, Sir John had a great influence on the general development of classical studies throughout his lifetime, due to the vast range of his interests. It may, in fact, eventually appear that his greatest contribution to scholarship lay in the collaboration he achieved between *literae humaniores* and the young «humane sciences» of prehistoric archaeology, geography and anthropology, ancillary subjects which he used brilliantly in the opening chapters of the *Cambridge Ancient History* (1923). So

many of his ideals for broadening the basis of classical studies have now been incorporated into standard curricula that there is a danger of forgetting how profound was the change he helped to bring about. In a sense, he carried on the work of Gladstone, by whose ideas on academic reform he was greatly influenced.

As an organiser in the field of learning there seemed no limit to his energies, and the Palestine Exploration Fund, the British School at Athens, the Royal Geographical Society, the Royal Anthropological Institute and many other societies all felt his inspiring touch. Above all, he devoted much energy to arranging international co-operation between scholars, a cause in which he had a constant faith. It is impossible to make an exact assessment of his achievements in this sphere. Certainly it cannot be measured only by the formal success of the International Congresses for Pre- and Protohistorical and for Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences, which he re-established; for when he was still active he travelled far and frequently to teach and lecture, and even in his later years he kept up a vast informal correspondence, and Lady Myres and he delighted to extend hospitality to their many callers from every part of the world.

As is apparent in his Frazer Lecture of 1943 on «Mediterranean Culture», he knew the islands and shores of the Aegean intimately, especially through his daring and irregular duties, during the First World War, as an officer in the Royal Navy. On this experience was based his vivid understanding of the cultures of the ancient Aegean world, on which his permanent reputation as a scholar will rest. But he will also be remembered in many countries with feelings of warm personal affection; for his home was a place of great happiness and every fellow-scholar, whether he wrote or came in person, found there the unfailing kindness and trust that are the prerogatives of a friend.—*W. C. Brice, Oxford.*