

Life of an archaeologist extraordinary

Peter Warren

The Find of a Lifetime: Sir Arthur Evans and the Discovery of Knossos. By Sylvia L. Horwitz. Pp.278. ISBN 0-670-13575-5. (Viking: 1981.) \$14.95. To be published in the UK in October by Weidenfeld & Nicolson, price £9.95.

FEW subjects could be more compelling for a biographer than Sir Arthur Evans. The reasons for this are not simply external: his passionate devotion, based on deep historical study and extensive topographical research, to the freedom of the Slav peoples; his re-foundation, almost creation, of the Ashmolean Museum; his virtually personal discovery of the Minoan, Bronze Age civilization of Crete, with its complex yet graceful society; and his wealth, so generously given over to recreating the Minoans for all the world. All these stand as beacons for any biographer. But what gives the subject a yet stronger appeal is the astonishing range and quality of Evans's mind, that of a true Renaissance man, as learned and appreciative in numismatics, botany, Balkan topography and history, folklore, Belgic and Roman settlement in Britain, as in Minoan archaeology.

Yet one turns to a new biography with some trepidation, since this work was done in a most perceptive and scholarly way by Joan Evans in *Time and Chance* (Longman, Green, 1943), published within two years of Evans's death at the age of ninety. As Sir Arthur's half-sister, Joan Evans had access to — indeed was an intimate part of — family history, which made her book a masterpiece. Since that time, too, the archaeologist W.A. McDonald has included a lengthy chapter on our subject in his excellent survey, *Progress into the Past*. How, then, does Sylvia Horwitz fare? The answer is that hers is very good and sympathetic account. While its lighter tone and air of a rapid read mean it in no sense replaces *Time and Chance*, its qualities are clear. It is accurate, a few smallish errors apart; it is lively and enjoyable, clear though brief on archaeological and Balkan political issues; it does not disguise Evans's autocratic and imperious attitudes, nor his generosity. The most perceptive sections are those examining the effects upon Evans of the death of his mother when he was six, of the sister closest to him and of his wife Margaret, daughter of the Liberal and historian Edward Freeman, after only 15 years of marriage. The author's suggestions are convincing, that these losses made Evans deeply withdrawn and much more reticent about personal feelings than was usual even for a high Victorian, while at the same time, in pursuing his scholarly and political interests, and with children, he was extrovert, generous and always vigorously engaged.

The book makes good use of the 40 years

since Evans's death and the publication of *Time and Chance* by describing how his theories and interpretations have fared after two more generations of archaeologists and Cretan discoveries. With the exception of his views on Mycenae, the huge edifice of thought he erected, on religion, art, architecture and Cretan prehistory, remains the firm basis of contemporary Minoan understanding. While reaction to his Minoan colonization of the Greek mainland was natural, given the rich vein of Mycenaean discoveries explored by A.J.B. Wace and a distinguished line of Greek archaeologists, the extent of Cretan artistic and economic influence throughout the south Aegean and southern Peloponnese now appears to be much greater than critics of Evans's views could then allow. His dating of the destruction of Knossos as a palace, at around 1400 BC, and all that that means for Aegean prehistory, came under detailed attack from Professor L.R. Palmer some years ago; but a large majority of archaeologists has confirmed the essential correctness of Evans's and his assistant Mackenzie's views. Thermoluminescence dating may one day provide a close date for the burning of the Linear B tablets, at the heart of that controversy, in the fire which consumed the palace.

Unlike recent studies on Schliemann, Sylvia Horwitz's account is thoroughly

Sir Arthur Evans — a true Renaissance man.

sympathetic. She admires the vast nervous energy, the astonishing yet repeated flair for understanding an object or its function from exiguous evidence, often confirmed years later by new discoveries. She found no need for a severe critique of this eminent Victorian. Her account can be warmly recommended, for itself and as a preliminary to *Time and Chance*. We should recall only that as much is to be found of political reporting from remote Bosnian fastnesses or richly flowered Ragusan gardens as of the splendours of the House of Minos. □

Peter Warren is Professor of Ancient History and Classical Archaeology at the University of Bristol, and currently Director of Excavations at Knossos.

Ordered amino acids brought to book

Linda Fothergill

Handbook of Protein Sequence Analysis: A Compilation of Amino Acid Sequences of Proteins with an Introduction to the Methodology. 2nd Edn. By L.R. Croft. Pp.628. ISBN 0-471-27703-7. (Wiley: 1981.) £38, \$104.50.

THIS second edition of Croft's compilation of amino acid sequences of proteins is strikingly different from its predecessor, both in format and content. Disappointingly, it is no longer loose-leaf, thereby losing the useful flexibility of the first edition. It is obviously no longer possible to slip in annual supplements — a most attractive feature in a field such as protein (and nucleic acid) sequence determination that expands at such a dauntingly rapid rate. Sadly, also the useful transparent overlay to show residue numbers is no longer supplied, although the extraordinary practice of designating N-terminal acetyl groups as residue one has been perpetuated in the second edition.

A new feature of this second edition is that approximately one-third is devoted to protein sequence determination

methodology. Much of this section is admirably full of practical detail — something unfortunately often lacking in primary publications. There are some gaps however (HPLC separation of peptides is not mentioned for example), and a more extensive, separate publication would seem more satisfactory. Moreover, I suspect that a great many of those consulting a handbook of sequences are not particularly interested in the methodology.

A comparison of this handbook with Dayhoff's *Atlas of Protein Sequence and Structure* (Supplement 3 to Vol.5, 1978) shows that Croft's book is more up-to-date, but that it includes fewer homologous sequences from related species, no fragments and less extensive notes on the proteins.

Croft's book will be indispensable in providing the most up-to-date handbook of protein sequences currently available; but please, for the next edition, return to the loose-leaf format with annual supplements! □

Linda Fothergill is a Research Officer in the Department of Biochemistry, University of Aberdeen.