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SCHLIEMANN AND TROY

Woody Allen, that distinguished philosopher, began a speech in his book SIDE EFFECTS, as follows:

"More than any other time in history, Mankind faces a crossroads. One path leads to despair and utter hopelessness. The other to total extinction. Let us pray we have the wisdom to choose correctly."

This year has seen the publication of a biography of a remarkable man, Heinrich Schliemann, the man who found Troy. David A. Traill, author of this fine work, says "For more than 100 years Heinrich Schliemann, the excavator of Troy and Mycenae, discoverer of the Treasure of Priam and of Agamemnon's Mask, has been regarded as the emblematic archeologist of all time. But at the time of his most important discoveries and for the last couple of decades, Schliemann has been suspected of salting his sites with purchased or faked antiquities, of Mythomania, of cheating and deceit. Of this review of the life of Schliemann in the NEW YORK TIMES, Richard Bernstein poses the questions: "Was he a pathological liar, a charlatan who confabulated his most celebrated finds? Or was he indeed the pioneering archeologist whose work changed forever our understanding of ancient history?"

Mr. Traill answers "yes" to both questions . . . . A professor of classics at the University of California at Davis (he) takes pains to show how frequently Schliemann told untruths, how he invented himself in order, it seems, to satisfy a powerful need to achieve heroic status. In his meticulously researched volume, the biographer shows him to have been egotistical, devious and mendacious to a remarkable degree.

Also this year Harvard University Press has published a book copyrighted by the Trustees of the British Museum, written by J. Leslie Fitton, entitled THE

DISCOVERY OF THE GREEK BRONZE AGE, and Barnes & Noble, the booksellers, have in 1996 printed yet another book entitled THE WAR AT TROY. This latter volume has been copywrited by The University of Oklahoma Press. This third book is a translation of a chronicle written by Quintus of Smyrna in the 3rd Century A.D. and it provides a connected account of the events of the Trojan War which took place after the death of Hector and the departure of the Greeks. Quintus tells what happened to Achilles and to Troy, and many other things besides, such as the fatal enterprizes of the Queen of the Amazons and the King of Ethiopia, the funeral games held in Achilles' honor, the victory of Odysseus in his contest with Ajax for Achilles' splendid armor, the death of Paris, the strategy of the wooden horse, and the capture and sack of the city of Troy.

Several years ago the great Irish scholar and novelist Robert Graves observed that "Mythology is the study of whatever religious or heroic legends are so foreign to a student's experience that he cannot believe them to be true. Hence the English adjective 'Mythical' meaning 'incredible' and hence the omission from standard European mythologies of all biblical narratives, even when closely paralleled by myths from Persia, Babylonia, Egypt and Greece, and of all hagiological legends."

It is Graves' view that myth has two main functions, the first to answer the sort of awkward questions such as children ask, such as: "Who made the world? How will it end? Who was the first man? Where do souls go after death?". . . .

The second function of myths is to justify an existing social system and account for traditional rites and customs.

Why have I found these volumes fascinating? Some description of how I grew up may help to explain my response.

Born as I was in the closing days of the first World War, I was taught to read before such inventions as the radio, the talking movie, television, each of which seems to have had a deleterious impact on literacy.

I cannot recall when I could not read. Both my mother and father were born and grew up in our small town of Elkton. In those times family custom was to call upon grandparents regularly -- for Sunday dinners, for Thanksgiving, for Christmas, for birthdays and on like occasions, and we children were expected to speak when spoken to, not to interrupt our elders, and to submit to such interrogations as our host or hostess thought appropriate to demonstrate or even cultivate intimacy with their progeny. After such exchanges we children were expected to withdraw and entertain ourselves while our elders considered the state of the world, and even discussed poetry, books, magazines and politics.

Both sets of my grandparents lived in large old houses where their parents had lived. Books and magazines were in generous supply, accumulations of generations. My father and his brothers had been devoted to a writer by the name of G. A. Henty, who wrote books for boys in the last quarter of the 19th century. By profession Mr. Henty was the editor of the MANCHESTER GUARDIAN, an English publication of considerable repute. He wrote nearly a hundred historical novels, entertaining stories about various happenings such as the French Revolution. His book entitled THE REIGN OF TERROR was the story of a young English tutor in a French household of a minor noble and of that young man's attempts to save his charges in the turmoil surrounding the French Revolution. The history of these stories was generally accurate and other novels of his included such volumes as WITH CLIVE IN INDA, THE LION OF THE NORTH about Gustavus Adolphus, WITH THE IRISH BRIGADE about a young Irish soldier of fortune. These books covered an enormous range and my father and his brothers had received perhaps two dozen of them as Christmas gifts, on their birthdays and on similar gift-inducing occasions. These books had been read and survived the passage of a couple of generations.

My older brother, Ben, and I were of the Horatio Alger, Tom Swift, Rover Boy generation. The literary and intellectual level of these series was consid-

erably lower. They contained little of historical interest, though Tom Swift, a youthful inventor, did perfect legendary electrical flying machines -- and the Rover Boys were much involved in athletic pursuits. We read them all.

My mother also read and her parents' home had most of Louisa May Alcott's works, LITTLE WOMEN, LITTLE MEN, JO'S BOYS, as well as nearly all the LITTLE COLONEL series of Annie Fellows Johnston. We read them too. We read even the old old NATIONAL GEOGRAPHICS which my great grandmother had saved and kept in order in her home where four of my paternal grandfather's sisters lived and thrived. You can imagine how those early graphic photographs in the GEOGRAPHICS titillated us and how they were surreptitiously shared with our siblings.

Then there were the sets of CHARLES DICKENS, SIR WALTER SCOTT, THACKERY, MARK TWAIN, POE and even O'HENRY, as well as most of THOMAS NELSON PAGE'S under such titles as TWO LITTLE CONFEDERATES, THE CLANMAN and RED ROCK, the book that served as the inspiration for the movie THE BIRTH OF A NATION.

Needless to say, we were supplied also with Hurlbert's version of Bible Stories, with HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSON, GRIMMS FAIRY TALES, and we read them all -- we read even our sisters' THE BOBBSY TWINS and the NANCY DREW series and the deplorable story of ELSIE DINSMORE.

But my great discovery in my maternal grandparents' home when I was about eight or nine years of age, was BULFINCH'S AGE OF FABLE OR BEAUTIES OF MYTHOLOGY, a volume of some 500 pages dedicated to Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, and edited and revised by the Rev. J. Loughran Scott, a Doctor of Divinity from New England. Published in 1898, it was complete with nearly 200 illustrations. It had been used by mother's brother, John Street, as a text at Vanderbilt Training School, which flourished in Elkton for several decades before Vanderbilt University was emancipated from the Methodist Church. For me this work was a magnificent discovery. Its frontispiece was a handsome photograph of the Apollo Belevedere complete with his Victorian fig-leaf.

In the author's preface, we were advised by Dr. Scott that "Having chosen mythology as connected with literature for our province, we have endeavored to omit nothing which the reader of elegant literature is likely to find occasion for. Such stories and parts of stories as are offensive to pure taste and good morals are not given. But such stories are not often referred to, and if they occasionally should be, the English reader need feel no mortification in confessing his ignorance of them . . . . Our book is . . . . for the reader of English literature . . . . who wishes to comprehend the allusion so frequently made by public speakers, lecturers, essayists and poets, and those which occur in polite conversations."

Steeped in genealogy as the southerners of our generation were, and having a profound sympathy for the LOST CAUSE, the book's detailed account of the Trojan War and the relations and relationships of the many characters involved, I became and remain enthralled with the story of which these several books published this year, and some of the earlier identified publications, have fleshed out in considerable detail.

Latin naturally was required of us, of course, and I dutifully read Caesar's GALLIC WARS, deplored the oratorical language of Cicero, but when I encountered Virgil's AENEID, I had suddenly come upon old friends.

Virgil, of course, was telling familiar stories. The Latin class had but four students. Our teacher was W. G. Puryear, a highly intelligent, spirited and delightful scholar, the brother-in-law of Dr. Eddie Mimms, at that time head of the English Department at Vanderbilt. Mr. Puryear was also an ardent baseball player -- and if it happened, as it did occasionally, that we came to class ill-prepared, a preliminary question about baseball could divert him very usefully.

A brief indentification of the thread of the story of the Trojan War as Homer recited it and as Virgil rendered many hundreds of years later, may be helpful to understand why this biography of Schliemann possesses an interest for a good number of people, both archeologists and historians.

According to legend, the city of Troy stood in an area known as the Troad in Asia Minor, on the south side of the Hellespont, perhaps 150 miles from the area which came later to be known as Greece. It was south and west of the Dardenelles, the water passageway which led from the Aegean Sea past Istanbul to the Black Sea. Its location gave it great significance in the development of trade between Asia Minor and the cultures of the Mediteranean Basin.

The traditions of Greek mythology -- source of major themes in Greek art, literature and thought -- provided information about actions which had occurred in the past at specific places, sites often linked to individuals and those sites. These traditions were also concerned with the Gods, the supernatural and the irrational. However, as historical consciousness in the modern sense arose to join, and indeed to challenge, some strands of traditional mythological thinking, one saw the Greek historians starting to question myths and attempting to rationalize the old stories.

The relationship between myth and early history is continuously fascinating. This is particularly true when it comes to Homer: two of the greatest poems in world literature, the ILLIAD and the ODYESSEY, take their themes from Greek mythology -- among these are the stories surrounding the Trojan War -- and it is not surprising these should be of abiding interest in the question of whether these stories contain historical truth and if the personalities described as participating really existed.

A major legend is about Paris, the second son of Priam and Hecuba, the rulers of Troy. From Homer's poetry we are told that before the birth of Paris, Hecuba dreamed that she had brought forth a fire-brand, the flame of which spread over the whole city of Troy. Accordingly, as soon as the child was born, he was exposed on Mount Ida by orders of King Priam. This was the accepted form of infanticide in that era, but the infant was saved by a shepherd who gave him the name of Paris. As Paris grew, he distinguished himself as a valiantdefender of flocks

and shepherds, and achieved considerable fame as one who raised fighting bulls, a famous sport of that time. In addition, he was noted for his outstanding beauty, intelligence and strength.

Paris discovered his real origin and was accepted and received by Priam as one of his fifty sons. Paris married a nymph by the name of Oenone, the daughter of a river God Cebren, but he later deserted that wife and family to marry Helen of Troy.

The tale runs that when Peleus, king of the Mymidons in Thessaly, married the neried Thetis, all the Gods were invited to the marriage with the exception of Eris (also called Discordia or Strife.) Enraged at her exclusion, that Goddess threw a golden apple among the guests. The apple bore the inscription "to the fairest." Thereupon Juno (or Hera), Aphrodite (or Venus) and Athena (Minerva), each a major and significant Goddess, claimed the apple was intended for her.

Zeus (or Jupiter), the most powerful of the Gods, refused to decide for whom the apple was intended and ordered Hermes (or Mercury) to take the three Goddesses to Mount Ida, and to intrust the resolution of the dispute to the shepherd Paris, who had established an outstanding reputation for independence and fairness.

Paris was herding his cattle on Mount Gargarus, the highest peak of Ida, when Hermes, accompanied by Hera, Athena and Aphrodite, delivered to him the Golden Apple and Zeus' message: "Paris, since you are as handsome as you are wise in the affairs of the heart, Zeus commands you to judge which of these Goddesses is the fairest."

As Robert Graves tells the story of this momentous contest: Paris accepted the apple doubtfully. "How can a simple cattleman like myself become an arbiter of divine beauty?" he cried. "Shall I divide the apple between all three?"

"No, no, you cannot disobey almighty Zeus," Hermes replied hurriedly. "Nor am I authorized to give you advice. Use your native intelligence."

"So be it," sighed Paris, "but first I beg losers not to be vexed with me, I am only a human being, liable to make the stupidest mistakes!"

The Goddesses all agreed to abide by his decision.

"Will it be enough to judge them as they are?" Paris asked Hermes, "or should they be naked?"

"The rules of the contest are for you to decide," Hermes answered with a discreet smile.

"In that case will they please disrobe?"

Hermes told the Goddesses to do so and politely turned his back.

Aphrodite was soon ready, but Athena insisted she should remove the famous magic girdle which gave her an unfair advantage by making everyone fall in love with the wearer. "Very well," said Aphrodite spitefully, "I will on condition that you remove your helmet -- you look hideous without it."

"Now, if you please, I will judge you one at a time," announced Paris, "to avoid distractive arguments. Come here, Divine Hera! Will you other two Goddesses be good enough to leave us for a while?"

"Examine me conscientiously," said Hera, turning slowly and displaying her magnificent figure, "and remember if you judge me the fairest, I will make you lord of all Asia and the richest man alive."

"I am not to be bribed, my Lady . . . very well, thank you. Now I have seen all that I need to see. Come Divine Athena!"

"Here I am," said Athena, striding purposefully forward. "Listen, Paris, if you have enough common sense to award me the prize, I will make you victorious in all your battles, as well as the handsomest and wisest man in the world."

"I am a humble herdsman, not a soldier," said Paris. "You can see for yourself that peace reigns throughout Lydia and Phrygra, and that King Priam's sovereignty is uncontested. But I promise to consider fairly your claim to the apple. Now you are at liberty to put on your clothes and helmet again. Is Aphrodite

ready?"

Aphrodite sidled up to him and Paris blushed because she came so close that they were almost touching.

"Look carefully, please, pass nothing over . . . by the way, as soon as I saw you, I said to myself 'Upon my word, there goes the handsomest young man in Phrygra! Why does he waste himself here in the wilderness herding stupid cattle.' Well, why do you, Paris? Why not move into a city and lead a civilized life? What have you to lose by marrying someone like Helen of Sparta, who is as beautiful as I am, and no less passionate? I am convinced that once you two have met, she will abandon her home, her family, everything to become your mistress. Surely you have heard of Helen?"

"Never until now, my Lady. I should be most grateful if you would describe her."

"She is of fair and delicate complexion, having been hatched from a swan's egg. She can claim Zeus for a father, loves hunting and wrestling, caused one war when she was still a child -- and, when she came of age, all the princes of Greece were her suitors. At present she is married to Menelaus, King of Sparta, who is the brother of the high King Agamemnon; but that makes no odds -- you can have her if you like."

"How is that possible if she is already married?"

"Heavens! How innocent you are! Have you never heard that it is my divine duty to arrange affairs of this sort? I suggest now that you tour Greece with my son, Eros, as your guide. Once you reach Sparta, he and I will see that Helen falls head over heels in love with you."

"Would you swear to that?" Paris asked excitedly.

Aphrodite uttered a solemn oath, and Paris, without a second thought, awarded her the Golden Apple.

By this judgment he incurred the smothered hatred of both Hera and Athena, who went off arm-in-arm to plot the destruction of Troy; while Aphrodite, with a naughty smile, stood wondering how best to keep her promise.

Under the protection of Aphrodite, Paris now sailed to Greece and was hospitably received in the palace of King Menelaus at Sparta. Here he succeeded in carrying off Helen, the wife of Menelaus, who was the most beautiful woman in the world. Hence arose the Trojan War when King Menelaus and his brother, King Agamemnon, enlisted the aid of various other kings of Greek city states, including the ancient Nestor of Pylos and Ulysses of Ithica. These united kings of the Greek city states proceeded to lay seige to Troy and this war continued for ten years.

Herodotus, conceeded to be the father of history, was born in 484 B.C. He was greatly interested in the Trojan War due to his perception of it as an early and major episode in the East-West struggle that had culminated in the Persian Wars of his own century. He had no source of information other than Homer and the mythological tradition and he recognized both the difficulty of extracting factual information from poetry and the limitations imposed by his lack of written sources. He says rather wistfully of the Egyptians, "They have always kept a careful written record of the passage of time," and for this reason when he visited Egypt he tried to check some facts about the Trojan War. "I asked the priests," he says in the second book of his HISTORY, "whether the story of what happened at Troy had any truth in it, and they gave me in reply some information which they claimed to have from Menelaus himself . . ." He goes on to quote their long anectotal reply.

Thucydides, a revered Greek historian several generations later, accepted the Trojan War as a fact without question and a date of 1183 B.C. for the fall of Troy was given by a respected authority. According to tradition, Troy was burned and totally destroyed.

These old Greek tales had entertained and delighted me, being far more humanly interesting than the bible tales of Daniel walking on the live coals or into the lion's den, or even David's victory over Goliath. I was curious to know how much of the legend was accurate reporting. My familiarity with these legends had made Milton and Shakespeare far more accessible to me and serious current classic historians such as Edith Hamilton have come to accept that the Trojan War had occurred and was the first example of the confrontation of the Western cultures with those in Asia.

Heinrich Schliemann, the subject of the new biography to which I earlier referred, was born in 1822 in the German Grand Duchy of Mecklenburg-Schwerin, and he wrote in his major autobiographical statement that he had yearned to excavate Troy since being captivated by the Homeric stories of the Trojan War which he read when he was eight. That statement, Traill, his biographer, convincingly demonstrates was one of the numerous significant false statements that Schliemann made about himself and is a fair illustration of his lack of respect for the truth.

Traill, a professor of Classics at the University of California at Davis, takes pains to show frequently that Schliemann told untruths, how he invented himself in order, it seems, to satisfy a powerful need to achieve heroic status. He was the kind of man who paid people to write reviews of his books and who quarreled bitterly with just about everybody.

Schliemann came to archeology more or less by accident. Enormously successful, he made a great fortune in business at such distantly separated places as St. Petersburg in Russia, and San Francisco, where he bought gold dust from miners for a New York bank and apparently managed to bilk both the miners and his bank employer. He was a passionate linguist, learning to speak and write in some eighteen ancient and modern languages in his lifetime. At first he learned those languages which would be useful in his business. His mastery of Russian was one of

the foundations of his success in St. Petersburg. His first wife was Russian and all his life he had continuous difficulties with women, as had his minister father before him. Schliemann's first wife he divorced in the United States by swearing false testimony to convince an American court that he was a resident of Indianapolis. Later he became an American citizen by securing perjured testimony.

The man was incredibly industrious, imaginative, hard-working, aggressive, belligerant, confrontational. He was supremely articulate and a polemetist of rare powers, gifts he displayed with great vigor. Interestingly he was quite concerned about his family and children and even saw that his deserted first wife never wanted for anything except him.

He was an intimate of Gladstone, the British Prime Minister, who was himself a serious Greek Scholar, and he was published widely by highly reputable institutions such as the TIMES OF LONDON which at that time was probably the most respected newspaper in the world. He financed excavations with his own funds and sometimes had as many as 150 men digging at the site of Hessarlik in Turkey. He searched at many sites.

Eventually, he uncovered the ancient metropolis that scholars today believe was Homer's Troy and, as a result, achieved the kind of global celebrity that is reserved these days for presidents and movie stars. Nevertheless, there is powerful evidence that at Troy, and later at Mycenae, the ancient acropolis in the Peloponnesus, he improved the finds he did make by various deceitful means. In both these major excavations Schliemann's most sensational discoveries came in the last two weeks "when gold and silver suddenly appeared in great abundance." It is also odd, says his biographer, that Mycenaean sites excavated in Greece, there were also "extraordinary discrepancies in style and quality within a single type of item and often within a single grave."

Mr. Traill notes this mix indicates that Schliemann is likely to have "bundled" artifacts from many different sites and proceeded to claim they came from a single place.

Devious to the center of his being, he was forced by various governments to have inspectors at each site at which he dug, but he continually offered rewards to the laborers who brought him interesting items, some of which it appears the numerous inspectors never learned of.

Traill observes that one needs to be skeptical at all times when evaluating his work, but especially when it comes to the most dramatic finds. These are above all Priam's Treasure, a cache of gold jewelry and many other objects supposedly unearthed by Schliemann at Hessarlik, and the gold mask of Agamemnon found, according to Schliemann, in a tomb at Mycenae on the Greek mainland. The one witness to Schliemann's excavation of Priam's Treasure, for example, did not remember seeing the more important items that Schliemann later claimed were a part of it.

Schliemann maintained homes all over the world; but his second, and much younger, wife was a native of Greece and he built a fine house in Athens as their principal residence and they moved into it in 1880, when Schliemann was 58 years old. As the biographer Traill recounts, the house is still located on Panepistimiou Street between the university and the former royal palace, now the Parliament Building. Designed in the German neo-classical style by Ernst Ziller (the leading architect of the time,) the facade is interrupted by a two-storey loggia, where dark Pompeian red contrasts with the white marble elsewhere. On the course of marble between the loggias is inscribed in large gilt lettering "Ilion Melatheron" (Palace of Troy.) From the terrace on the flat roof Schliemann could point out to his visitors the Parthenon and the Sea of Solamis, where the Greeks defeated the Persians in 480 B.C. The surrounding balustrade was decorated at intervals with statues of Greek Gods and Goddesses. This was in the full bloom of the Victorian Era and

it appears that some highly-placed government officials were offended by the nudity of the statues and formally requested that Schliemann either remove or cover them. The next day Athenians were amused to see the statues draped in gaudy garments. The embarrassed officials backed down and begged Schliemann to restore them to their pristine nudity.

"Nevertheless," as the biographer says, "(D)espite his penchant for fakery, he made two inestimable contributions to the store of knowledge: He demonstrated at Hessarlik that the Troy of Homer did indeed exist, and he proved at Mycenae that Greek civilization was about 1,000 years earlier than anyone had imagined."

And what a pleasure for me to have confirmed as basically factual a story which has delighted and fascinated me for nearly seventy years.

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