

Schliemann and The Meaning of Troy

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The Dream of Troy, Arnold Brackman's most recent book, is a biography of Heinrich Schliemann. The biography shows a man possessed by a dream which determines the course of his life. But the book is also a defense of a man so resented by his peers that they made him an historical monster. Mr. Brackman is out to set the record straight. The book has another purpose; it also presents the theory that people shape history. History is made by two kinds of people: the person of thought and the person of action. Examples would be Marx as a person of thought and Hitler as a person of action. Schliemann is in the former category, but he is also a man in search of a dream.

As a small child Schliemann's adventurous fancy was fascinated by a picture of Troy in flames. The heroes and their exploits in the then fabled city of Troy captured his imagination and Heinrich remained a captive the rest of his life. As he grew older, Troy remained an ideal but it took on new dimensions.

In Schliemann's maturity, Troy became the justification for his involvement in the business world. He realized early in life that a poor man could not discover Troy. Only a wealthy man would have enough leisure time and enough money to finance the costly unearthing of Troy. Since the unearthing of Troy was Schliemann's goal in life, he decided he must first become a wealthy man. Thus during his mercantile years, Schliemann used Troy as the reason for succeeding in business. The sometimes tainted tactics he used could be justified because they served a great idealistic end. They enabled Schliemann to obtain more money and become financially independent. When he reached this independence he could devote all his time to the search for Troy. It's the old story: means to an end are unimportant, it is the end that matters. Thus Schliemann saw himself one rung above the average businessman of his day. He was working for an ideal; others were only working for money.

Troy also raised Schliemann's position on the social ladder. After the dis-

covery of Troy, the city and all connected with it became the vogue of the day. As a result Schliemann, its discoverer, became more popular. He was able to meet people such as the King of Brazil and Gladstone, the Prime Minister of England. If he were the run-of-the-mill wealthy merchant he never would have met these people. Therefore, Troy served as a passport into the higher strata of society.

Another purpose of The Dream of Troy is to make Troy contemporary. Troy was not merely the scene of a great war or one man's ideal: it was a civilization which was completely destroyed--nuclearized, to be exact. No writing of any kind survived the holocaust of Troy. There is nothing left of the city that can conclusively prove it existed. It is Mr. Brackman's belief that Troy is more than just our past; it may be our destiny. The contemporary could easily be nuclearized and become a myth to future generations. If history can teach, an understanding of Troy could be contemporary man's key to survival.

This book also serves two other purposes. One, it clears the record of a much maligned historical character and secondly, it gives us a portrait of a man of action that exceptional character who through his force of will and personality changes the course of history.

Before Schliemann archeology was a mental exercise. Theories were proven by logic and quotes from ancient writings. It was a rare occasion when someone proved their theories by physically unearthing evidence. When Schliemann discovered Troy, he revolutionized archeology. It was no longer a drawing room exercise. To prove a theory one had to get his hands dirty. Predictably the old guard reacted with excessive rebuke toward the revolutionary. They called Schliemann everything from a gold-digger to an idiot. However, the old guard fought a losing battle. Eventually Schliemann, through his own and his wife's perseverance, changed the course of archeology; it was no longer just a mental exercise; it was physical as well.

In conclusion, one can divide Schliemann into two men. One, the man who used Troy as a psychological salve; it gave purpose to his life and made his less than ethical actions a little easier to bear. The other man was the revolutionary who changed the world of archeology from one of thought to one of action.