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978-1-108-07010-2 - Schliemann's Excavations: An Archaeological and Historical Study

Carl Schuchhardt Translated by Eugénie Sellers

Excerpt

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CHAPTER I

LIFE OF DR. SCHLIEMANN

THE recent death of Dr. Schliemann on December 26 of last year lends at the present time a special melancholy interest to the story of his life. His method of archæological research, however, was so characteristic of the man that any account of his discoveries must always have been prefaced by a brief sketch. Not only was he an enthusiastic admirer of antiquity; he was also a thoroughly practical man of untiring perseverance. Success in business was for him a necessary preliminary to the archæological work which had attracted him from the first. He acquired a fortune, thanks to an energy which neither difficulties nor depressing surroundings could daunt. When at last he could devote himself to the luxury of study, his business habits proved invaluable. The promptitude with which every important discovery was followed up by a book on the subject, did much towards keeping Dr. Schliemann's name before the world, so that by the general public he was regarded as archæology personified.

He has himself given us the leading facts of his biography in *Ilios*, his greatest work.

Heinrich Schliemann, a clergyman's son, was born on January 6, 1822, at New Buckow, in Mecklenburg-Schwerin. In the following year the family removed to the village of Ankershagen, and there, where they remained for eight years, the child's imagination received its first vivid impressions. "Our garden house," says Dr. Schliemann, "was said to be haunted by the ghost of my father's predecessor, and just behind our garden was a pond, called 'das Silberschälchen,' out of which a maiden was believed to rise

each midnight, holding a silver bowl. There was also in the village a small hill, surrounded by a ditch, probably a prehistoric burial-place (or so-called 'Hun's Grave'), in which, as the legend ran, a robber-knight in times of old had buried his favourite child in a golden cradle." The chief feature, however, was an old castle, which had once been inhabited by the old knight Henning von Holstein, popularly called Henning Bradenkirl. By the "Wartensberg," close at hand, said tradition, the wicked knight had once lain in wait for the Duke of Mecklenburg. His attempt having failed, the Duke besieged him in his castle, and there they still showed the massive tower, close to which he had buried all his treasures, when escape became hopeless. On the castle-wall stood a relief of Henning Bradenkirl, and in the churchyard was his grave, from which for centuries his left leg, in a black silk stocking, had grown out again and again. All these tales, solemnly vouched for by sexton and grave-digger, were loyally believed by the sensitive child.

Dr. Schliemann proceeds to relate that he often heard his father vividly narrate the story of the destruction of Pompeii and Herculaneum, and the course of the Trojan War. He received at Christmas 1829 a child's history of the world, in which the picture of Troy in flames with its huge walls, and the Skaian Gate with Æneas in flight, bearing his father Anchises on his shoulders, and leading the boy Ascanius by the hand, made a deep impression upon him, and awoke a passionate desire to visit those regions and see what still remained of their ancient splendour. Finding but little response to his enthusiasm among his playmates, he was attracted all the more towards a sympathetic little friend of his own age, Minna Meincke, who, he says, promised to marry him one day and help him to discover Troy.

When the boy was nine years old, his mother died. As the family numbered seven children, their education became a difficult matter. Heinrich was sent to his uncle, the clergyman at Kalkhorst, and there for a year he was well taught by a divinity student. At Christmas 1832 he could gratify his father by sending him a Latin essay on the chief events of the Trojan War. He was soon afterwards sent to the gymnasium at New Strelitz and put in the third form; but family misfortunes compelled him to give up all hopes of a learned career. Three months later he had to leave the classical school for a commercial one. When

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he passed out of it in the spring of 1836, at the age of fourteen, he was apprenticed to a small grocer in the village of Fürstenberg. Here his duties consisted in selling across the counter herrings, butter, potato-brandy, milk, salt, coffee, sugar, oil, tallow-candles, etc., grinding potatoes for the distillery, sweeping the shop, and similar congenial occupations. From early morning till late at night he had to stand in the shop, and could not find a moment in which to cultivate his mind. Dr. Schliemann remembers a characteristic little event that occurred at this time. One evening there came to the shop a miller's man, who had been born in better circumstances and educated at a gymnasium, but had come down in the world and taken to drink. Yet with all this he had not forgotten his Homer. "That evening," says Dr. Schliemann, "he recited to us about a hundred lines of the poet, observing the rhythmic cadence of the verses. Although I did not understand a syllable, the melodious sound of the words made a deep impression upon me, and I wept bitter tears over my unhappy fate. Three times over did I get him to repeat to me those divine verses, rewarding his trouble with three glasses of whiskey, which I bought with the few pence that made up my whole wealth. From that moment I never ceased to pray God that by His grace I might yet have the happiness of learning Greek."

For five years and a half Dr. Schliemann dragged on his existence in this situation, till one day he overstrained himself by lifting a cask, spat blood, and had to give up his work. He walked to Hamburg, and tried to find fresh employment with different grocers there, but in each place his weak chest proved him after a short time unfit for the work. In despair, he bound himself as a cabin boy, sold his only coat to buy a blanket for the voyage, and set sail for Venezuela, on board the brig *Dorothea*, on November 28, 1841. Fortune, however, was kinder to him than it seemed. The ship was wrecked on the Dutch coast. Its crew, after drifting about for nine hours in a little boat, got safely ashore, and while the others lost everything in the wreck, Dr. Schliemann's chest, with his few belongings, was picked up. He now felt it his vocation to remain in Holland, and there indeed he was to lay the foundation-stone of all his future success.

His first year was still far from brilliant. He had gone to Amsterdam and become office-boy in Mr. F. E. Quien's warehouse. In this capacity he had to run all the errands in the town, collect

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bills, and carry letters to and from the post. But he took advantage of the perfect mental leisure afforded by this employment, to carry on his education. "I never went on my errands, even in the rain," he says, "without having my book in my hand and learning something by heart. I never waited at the post-office without reading, or repeating a passage in my mind." Thus he learnt English in one half-year and French in the next, and managed to save for intellectual needs the half of his small salary of 800 francs. His method of learning these languages exemplifies his plan of always reaching his goal by the shortest possible way. He did not trouble about grammatical rules or about making translations, but read a great deal aloud, and wrote little exercises which were corrected by the teacher and then learnt by heart. This tended to strengthen his memory, which was quite exceptional. He was in such good training after that year that for each of the languages which he learnt next—Dutch, Spanish, Italian, and Portuguese—he required only six weeks.

Gradually he wearied of the mechanical work of his humble position, and began to neglect it, so that a change seemed desirable both to himself and his employers. On March 1, 1844, he was engaged as corresponding clerk and book-keeper to Messrs. B. H. Schröder and Co. of Amsterdam. He thus entered a firm that could introduce him to the great world of commerce. Here, too, his zeal was fully appreciated and encouraged. Dr. Schliemann always spoke gratefully of his former master as the author of all his later success, and expressed deep respect for the admirable old man who withdrew from business only a few years ago, to enjoy a well-earned rest in Hanover.

Dr. Schliemann now began to study Russian under peculiar conditions. As no teacher of this language was to be found in the town, he learnt by heart the Russian translation of *Télémaque*. So as to have some one to whom he could repeat what he had learnt, he hired a poor Jew, who had every evening to listen to the Russian recitation, of which he did not understand one word. The Jew endured it for four francs a week, but Dr. Schliemann's fellow-lodgers, who also had to hear every word through the thin Dutch partitions, did not feel themselves equally bound to endurance, so the enthusiastic youth had to change his lodgings twice during this educational period. His employers judged his new acquirement more favourably, and sent him at the beginning

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of 1846 as their agent to St. Petersburg. Dr. Schliemann now came quickly to the front. Within the first year his success was so great that he could think of carrying out the earliest of his childish plans, and marrying Minna Meincke. To his sorrow he found that his first love had married another only a few weeks before. He was idealist enough to feel such an event as "the heaviest blow that could fall upon him," but he was also vigorous enough to throw himself all the more eagerly into his daily duties. In 1847 he founded a mercantile house of his own at St. Petersburg, and still remained agent for Messrs. B. H. Schröder and Co. of Amsterdam, whom he represented for eleven years altogether. He devoted himself almost entirely to the indigo trade, and it was not till later that he temporarily added the tea business to it. He accidentally became an American citizen during a journey to California in 1850. California was made a State on July 4 of that year, and every one who happened to be there at the time became, without further formality, a citizen of the United States.

Dr. Schliemann founded a branch establishment at Moscow in 1852. During the next few years the very difficulties of the Crimean War, which he met in characteristic fashion, were turned by his unflinching ingenuity to the best account, and brought him large profits. Besides this, he met now and then with exceptional good fortune. Thus on October 4, 1850, when goods to the amount of 150,000 thalers, representing his sole capital at that time, were lying stored for him with Messrs. Meyer and Co. at Memel, their great warehouse was destroyed by a fire which laid the whole town in ashes. Dr. Schliemann's goods alone escaped destruction, for, as the warehouse was full, they had been stored to the north of the town in a wooden shed, from which the prevailing north wind kept off the flames. These goods were now sold by Dr. Schliemann to great advantage. He invested the profits repeatedly; "did a large business in indigo, dye-woods, and military stores (saltpetre, brimstone, and lead); and as capitalists were afraid to do much business during the Crimean War, he was able to make considerable profits, and to more than double his capital in the course of one year."

So matters went on till 1858, when Dr. Schliemann believed he had made a sufficient fortune and could now devote himself entirely to his favourite study of archæology. He had been

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studying Greek for two years, since the end of the Crimean War. He had not dared to do this before, for fear he should fall under the spell of Homer and neglect his business, which he could not yet afford to give up. He now made an extensive tour through Sweden, Denmark, Germany, Italy, and Egypt. He had just reached Athens and was on the point of starting for Ithaca, when a lawsuit recalled him to St. Petersburg and detained him there for several years. He therefore temporarily resumed business in that town, and extended it, dealing not only in indigo, but also in cotton and tea. He imported £500,000 worth of goods from May to October 1860. The lawsuit was decided in his favour in December 1863, when he finally wound up his business, to which he never returned.

In the spring of 1864 Dr. Schliemann travelled to Carthage and India, and remained for several months in China and Japan. His first book, *La Chine et le Japon*, was written during the fifty days' voyage from Japan to America. It was published next year in Paris, where Dr. Schliemann now settled, devoting himself chiefly to the study of archæology. He visited for the first time the classical spots which were later to become the sources of his world-wide fame in the summer of 1868. He published an account of these travels in German and French in 1869, under the title of *Ithaca, the Peloponnesus, and Troy*. In this book he first announced the two leading theories which guided him in his later excavations, and which led to his remarkable success. In the first place, the description of the traveller Pausanias (ii. 16, 4), the classical Baedeker, led him to conclude that the graves of the Atreidæ at Mycenæ had lain inside, and not outside, the citadel wall; secondly, he placed Troy on the site of the new historic Ilion, on the hill now called Hissarlik, near the coast. The most distinguished scholars and travellers of the day, if they granted its real existence at all, held it to have stood far inland on the summit of the Balidagh, near Bunárbashi. This book and a treatise written in Greek gained at once for Schliemann his doctor's degree at Rostock. Then he went travelling again, and spent almost the whole of 1869 in the United States.

Next year he began the great work of his life, the excavation of Troy. The first sod was turned on Hissarlik in April 1870. It was only a preliminary cutting, to decide how deep was the

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accumulation of *débris* on the hill. When the first ancient wall came to light, at a depth of sixteen feet, it was clear that extensive operations would be necessary before the ancient city could be laid bare. Permission had first to be obtained from the Turkish Government, but, owing to the disturbed state of foreign affairs at that time, it was long delayed. The permission only arrived in September 1871. On the 27th of the month Dr. Schliemann set off for the Dardanelles, with his young wife Sophia, a Greek, whom he had married two years before in Athens. As usual, all sorts of preliminary difficulties with the local authorities had to be got over; the excavations could not be begun till October 11; and even then they bore at first but little fruit, for the arrangements were found to be insufficient to meet the requirements, which grew from week to week. Eighty workmen had to be employed in order to make any progress with the huge trench which was opened on the north side of the hill. Pickaxes and wooden spades were the only available implements; and there were but eight wheelbarrows to cart away the rubbish, all the rest being carried in baskets to the edge of the slope. Added to this, Dr. Schliemann and his wife had to put up with miserable quarters in the neighbouring village of Tschiblak, where the houses are little better than cowsheds. Consequently, when the work ceased for the winter on November 24, there was nothing to show for it except a Hellenistic building in the upper layer of ruins—to judge from several inscriptions found on the spot, it had probably been the Bouleuterion, or senate-house of New Ilion;—and still lower, at a depth of 33 feet, several walls of houses made of rough brick, and numerous stone implements.

After the experience gained from these first difficulties, Dr. Schliemann sent for a great number of English wheelbarrows, pickaxes, and spades, and resumed the work much more thoroughly in March 1872. To begin with, he had secured the co-operation of an engineer; he also engaged three overseers to direct the different groups of workmen, who always numbered between 100 and 150; and finally he made arrangements for a suitable dwelling, getting a wooden house of three rooms, with a store-house and kitchen adjoining, built on the spot. The excavations were carried on by digging out a platform 233 feet wide, from north to south, in the hill. As it appeared, however, that this cutting did not nearly reach the original level, a large

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trench was dug within it. All the walls in the upper strata which crossed this cutting were ruthlessly cleared away, so that the lowest and last stratum, which must be the real Troy, might be brought to light. The excavations were carried on well into the hot summer, and only stopped on August 14. In spite of this, they had led to no satisfactory result. Owing to the enormous depth that had to be reached, the work had to be confined almost entirely to the broad trench. In it, indeed, many separate walls were laid bare, but the connection between them, if any existed, remained doubtful. Among the single finds, the finest was the metope from a Greek temple, representing the rising Helios, sculptured in high relief.

In the following year Dr. Schliemann with too much zeal returned to Hissarlik on February 1, and had therefore to endure six weeks of bitter cold. The wind, which at that season blows up from the Hellespont, is no less severe than in our northern climate. Through the chinks in the thin wooden shed the north wind blew so hard that, in spite of a constant fire, the water in the room was frozen. The cold was just bearable during the day, while they were busy with the excavations, "but of an evening," says Dr. Schliemann, "we had nothing to keep us warm except our enthusiasm for the great work of discovering Troy."

This year, however, brought the first real success. The town walls appeared more and more distinctly. To the south-west, too, a great gate was uncovered, and quite close to it, over the foundation of the town wall, was found the famous "great treasure," consisting of countless golden ornaments and many silver and copper vessels, weapons, etc. It was about mid-day when Dr. Schliemann observed the first signs of the treasure, and during the workmen's dinner-hour he lifted and concealed the whole mass, with the assistance of his wife, whose shawl served as a basket. He thus managed to keep together the whole find, of which, by agreement, the half should have been given over to the Turkish Government.

After this third campaign, Dr. Schliemann described the results of his excavations in the work *Trojan Antiquities*. It was published in German with an atlas of 218 maps in 1874, and a French translation by M. Rangabé appeared at the same time. The book did much to shake the deep-rooted Troy-Bunárbashi theory. The abundance of pottery and orna-

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ments with their peculiar forms indicated that a very old and not unimportant settlement must have stood upon Hissarlik. The town walls also, although only partially laid bare, might even then have awakened confidence. But they did not receive justice, largely because of the defective illustrations, and were classed with the insignificant walls within the town. No doubt the masonry of small quarry-stones and clay was that which people had up to now only associated with periods of decline, and would not accept as the strongly fortified and lofty fortress ascribed to Poseidon. Moreover, Dr. Schliemann was rash in naming his gold relics "Priam's Treasure"; the largest building discovered "Priam's Palace"; and the entrance, "the Scaean Gate." These three names were enough to make most people refer every assertion in the book to the realm of fancy, and but few scholars paid any serious attention to what they considered to be wild theories. Writers in newspapers and comic prints saw their opportunity, and archæology has since had to regret the ill repute into which the "science of the spade" thus fell. The final conclusion of sober thinkers was that even if a primeval settlement did exist on Hissarlik, its ruins did not correspond to the great period depicted by Homer. Hissarlik could scarcely have been the capital of the land; and therefore, until further excavations should take place, Bunárbashi, defended by such acute and varied arguments, must still be accepted as Troy.

The next four years were very busy ones for Dr. Schliemann, and well illustrate his restless love of enterprise. If baffled in any one plan, he always had two new ones to fall back on. In February 1874, while he was busy with a trial excavation at Mycenæ, the Turkish Government, believing itself to have been unfairly treated at the division of the last Trojan spoils, began a lawsuit against him at Athens. He had to return there, and was detained for a year with the proceedings, which ended in his having to pay 10,000 francs compensation. Instead of 10,000 francs, Schliemann sent 50,000 to the Ministry at Constantinople, as a contribution towards the funds of the Imperial museum. He hoped by this to win over the offended authorities, and to be allowed soon to resume his Trojan excavations. From that time onwards, however, he had a difficult position in Turkey. He went himself to Constantinople in 1875, but although he was fairly well received, and influential friends

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interceded for him, the negotiations for a new firman were very much delayed. When at last he obtained it, in April 1876, and set off for Troy, impatient to resume labours from which much was now expected, he only met with new disappointments. The governor of the Troad, Ibrahim Pacha, detained him for two months at the town of Dardanelles, under the pretext that the firman still required confirmation. When he at last allowed him to begin, he sent with him to Hissarlik a commissioner, who did all in his power to annoy him. Under such circumstances, Dr. Schliemann gave up the excavations and wrote from Athens a violent article to the *Times*, to show how the attitude of the Pacha conflicted with the interests of the civilised world. In consequence of this, Ibrahim was removed in October to another province. Meanwhile, however, Dr. Schliemann had again begun to work at Mycenæ in July, and was so successful in the very first months, that he thought no more of Troy for the present. If the Trojan treasures had seemed a remarkable reward of his labours, no wonder that his delight knew no bounds when, from the kings' graves in the fortress of Mycenæ, he dug up such masses of gold as even he, the millionaire, had perhaps never before seen upon one spot. Nearly all the ornaments worn by the dead, diadems, masks, breastplates, bracelets, earrings, were worked in solid gold, and some of the goblets and tankards weighed as much as 4 lbs. By an article of the Greek constitution, everything found in the country must remain there and become the property of the Government, so these treasures were taken to Athens. They are exhibited in the great hall of the Polytechnicon, and form one of the most interesting and imposing collections in the world.

The excavations at Mycenæ went on to the end of 1876. In 1877 Dr. Schliemann published the results in his book *Mycenæ*. An English edition appeared simultaneously in London and New York, and in 1878 a French one was issued in Paris. The preface was written by Mr. Gladstone, whose keen interest in Homeric studies is well known. Then new negotiations began about a firman for Troy. So as to waste no time, Dr. Schliemann started on a journey to Ithaca. He had already paid a flying visit to this island in 1868. No ruins of any importance had ever been observed here, and even the site of the ancient capital was unknown. But the experience gained at Troy as to the