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Schliemann's Excavation of Troy and American Politics, or Why the Smithsonian Institution Lost Schliemann's Great Troy Collection to Berlin

Both the *Dictionary of American Biography* and the biographical dictionary *Notable American Women 1607-1950* speak highly of Kate Field (1838-1896) as a successful journalist who for three decades was a personality in the public eye. Her enduring friendship with such distinguished people as the Brownings, the Trollopes, and George Eliot are cited but neither here nor in *Heinrich Schliemann: Briefwechsel* (Berlin 1958) do we find evidence of this notable American woman's friendship with her internationally respected countryman, the German-American Henry Schliemann, the Excavator of Troy. By courtesy of the Trustees of the Boston Public Library and with the assistance of the National Archives and Records Service this article intends to document the Field-Schliemann friendship. I discovered the documentary evidence of this friendship a decade ago while working on Sealsfield's American political interests but have refrained from preparing this material for publication until now.

I select as opening letter to document this friendship the one by Schliemann to Miss Field (in the Boston Public Library), written in Paris on March 28, 1878. The friendship had begun earlier, but this letter was occasioned by two causes which Miss Field was promoting at the time: her *History of Bell's Telephone* and a memorial theatre at Stratford-on-Avon. For her favorable notice as publicist to the telephone she received valuable stock and Schliemann's commendation in the following letter, and for her Shakespeare Memorial a donation. Since she, at this time, was also lending her talents to the promotion of the Paris Exposition of 1878, Schliemann in the true spirit of the German proverb "Eine Hand wäscht die andere" saw in Kate Field the logical person to help him realize his ambition to be nominated an American delegate to the Paris Exhibition and beyond that to become the U.S. Consul at Athens. His letter now speaks for itself.

Paris, 28th of March 1878
53 Boulevard Haussmann

My dear Miss Field,

I had the great pleasure to receive your charming letter of yesterday and heartily thank you for having remembered me.

The Telephone, edited by you, is a masterpiece. You are a power, you are an element, whatever you take into your mighty hands will succeed brilliantly, and I warmly congratulate the Telephone Company on the lucky idea to make you a partner in their grand enterprize. When I was in London in November and December I heard that telephones were sold for 50 pounds; but I have no doubt that your company can afford to give them at a moderate rate, in which case they might also go in Greece, but I must tell you that people are there just now in very reduced circumstances on account of the disastrous state of the politics, in fact so much so that I am able to build my palazzo there at less than one half of what it would have cost a year ago. My brother in law Mr. Kastromenos, who is a merchant in Athens, would I think be able to serve your company as agent, but I have really no idea whether there is such a thing as a patent law in Greece. I thought I had told you that Mrs. Schliemann being in a family way, I had been obliged to leave her in Paris. She having telegraphed to me some weeks since to come. I started at once, and now have the great pleasure to announce to you the birth of a son, to whom we gave the name Agamemnon, sincerely wishing that we may live to see him continue our explorations in the realm of his glorious namesake. My presence in Athens is very necessary, but still I am forced to remain here probably until the 15th May, because I have retained for the 15th April a permanent apartment in my house 5 Boulevard St. Michel and shall have to repair and furnish it before I leave.

I can of course not refuse you anything, and hasten to send you enclosed 20 pounds as my subscription to the Shakespeare Memorial, which you have taken under your generous protection; I wished I could subscribe a hundred times more but I trust that in the magnanimity which characterized you you will accept even this small amount from your admirer and friend. I intend going ere long for two days to London and hope there to have the pleasure to shake hands with you.

I am very ambitious to be nominated by the American government as delegate at the Ethnographic section in the Universal Exhibition in Paris. Of course without any remuneration, quite the other way, I might myself contribute something or other to make the American part more conspicuous. I merely want the nomination as delegate, that is all. As I have always done honor to my name as U.S. citizen, and as every one in America knows me, I venture to hope that it might not be difficult to you to get me a mere proforma to nomination. Or could you perhaps manage to get me nominated U.S. consul for Athens or the Piraeus? I mean of course as *unpaid* consul. I merely aspire to the dignity of an employ by the U.S. government, and would of course amply reward the Smithsonian Hall in Washington by gifts of antiquities for the honor the govt. might bestow upon me by their nomination. You might perhaps explain to them that they would hardly ever find a man better *enabled* to represent our great country with dignity than your humble servant. I need not say that the nomination as U.S. consul at Athens could of course not impede me in the continuation of my explorations at Troy and Mycenae. I would have in Athens a most trustworthy consular agent, and all my discoveries would with double and treble force redound to the glory of the U.S.

In expectation of your kind answer, I remain My dear Miss Field your warm admirer

Hy Schliemann

The paper cut you send is not right it is not only my house but also the neighboring house, purchased by me, which I have pulled down to get a palazzo with a large garden; the site being close to the Royal palace, in the very finest part of the town, the flag with the stars and stripes would have a wonderful effect on the house. I may add that the consulship at Athens and the Piraeus has been abolished 2 or 3 years ago, and that the chargé d' affaires, General John Meredith Reed, attends to the consular duties which he gets done by his clerk.

Schliemann was a man of ambition and purpose, and he was convinced of the exceptional gifts that he could put at the disposal of the United States as its Consul in Athens, so he also informed himself about the American situation in Greece directly in the United States and consequently wrote Kate Field this follow-up letter from Paris.

Paris 26th June 1878
5 Boulevard St. Michel

My dear Miss Field,

I beg leave to call your kind attention to a telegram from N.Y. reporting that the Chargé d' Affaires, General Read [sic], has been recalled, as our government does not want to have any longer a representative at Athens. But you recalled that the Consularship had previously (three years ago) been abolished and that the consular duties had been conferred on the Chargé d' Affaires. Consequently government now most positively wants a Consul general there, in which capacity I offer my humble services. In case I have to write to anybody in the U.S. on the subject please give me all the details of what I have to write and to whom. I have taken my holidays at Boulogne s/m, a charming place for splendid riding horses, beautiful sea baths and that wonderful Napoleonic garden, which appears to me the most lovely spot for studying in the world.

Your admirer
Schliemann

The original of the above Schliemann letter is in the Boston Public Library, but the original of the following letter by Kate Field which was a direct result of Schliemann's letter is in the National Archives in Washington. It was written from London and sent to the American Legation in Paris, which on December 26, 1878, forwarded it to Washington for the favorable consideration of the President and the State Department. On January 13, 1879, the Private Secretary Rogers in the Executive Mansion at Washington was "directed by the President to refer to the Department of State the accompanying letters commending the application in behalf of Dr. Schliemann to your special Consideration."

London, December 20, 1878

American Exchange

Dear Gen. Noyes:

As there seems to be a good chance for the establishing of a Consulate at Athens, Greece, let me interest you in Dr. Henry Schliemann the great ar-

cheologist who has already dug up Troy and Mycenae and will only lay down the shovel and pick-axe with his life. In 1849 Dr. Schliemann became an American citizen and is so proud of the fact that it is printed in the title-page of his books. Before turning excavator, he made a large fortune in business, retiring on \$500,000.00 which amounts were doubled by shrewd investments. Dr. Schliemann speaks English, French, German, Italian, Russian and Modern and ancient Greek. He resides in Athens where he is building a magnificent palace in which to entertain the traveling world. His wife is an interesting Greek lady and the King of Greece holds both in esteem.

As Schliemann has asked me to help him in this matter of the Consulate, for which he would work *gratuitously*, and as I think him fit for the place, I venture to ask your intervention, I having no relation with anyone at Washington, though I've served my country faithfully from childhood. Do what you can for Schliemann if you think best, remembering that he can be of great assistance to American art museums now in process of formation. Gov. McCormick thinks favorably of this appointment. I have no axe to grind.

Yours very truly
Kate Field

In spite of the extraordinary qualifications of the candidate and the recommendations of Kate Field and the Paris Legation, action in Washington was cool and slow, but Schliemann meanwhile was back at work excavating Troy and on June 19, 1879, from his palace in Athens wrote this enthusiastic report to his friend Kate Field. The original of this letter is in Boston Public Library.

Athens 19th June 1879

My dear Miss Field

Hoping that these lines may find you in excellent health, I beg leave to inform you that I have just returned from Troy, where my work is now terminated forever, for not only have I excavated the ancient Ilion in its entire extent and brought to light its circuit walls, but I have also removed at least forty thousand cubic meters of *debris* from its suburb. I have this time had two excellent friends—the celebrated professor Rudolph Virchow from Berlin and Emile Burnouf from Paris—as collaborators and thus great problems are now solved, which I could never have hoped to solve if I had remained alone. So e.g. we have now ascertained that the plain of Troy has not—as it had heretofore been thought—been produced by the alluvia of its rivers, but by the deposits of a sweetwater lake, which appears to have existed there before the Hellespont or the Icamander and Simois existed. Thus the old theory that there was at the time of the Trojan war a deep gulf in the plain of Troy and consequently not room enough for the great deeds of the Iliad, this theory which was energetically defended by Hestiaea of Alexandria Troas [a scholarly woman who wrote about whether the Trojan War was a fact or fable], by Demetrius of Scepsis and Strabo, as well as in modern times by all those who identify the heights of Benarbaski with the site of Troy divine [sic]—this theory is now blown up and can never be revived again. Ilium is now exhausted; I found this time only two treasures of gold ornaments and much less too of pottery than formerly. I have also explored this time six of the Trojan tumuli called heroic tombs; and among them the two largest called Udjek-Tepe and Besica-Tepe, in both of which I struck the virgin soil at a depth of about $43\frac{1}{3}$ feet. Besides the shafts I dug

into Udjek-Tepe (which has 433 feet in diameter) a tunnel to join the shaft, I found there a large square tower built on the top of a walled circle of polygons. I dug galleries into the tower and the circle but all I found there were fragments of iron implements and pottery the latest of which is of the Roman time, and I therefore conclude that this is the tumulus which (in year 215 A.D.) the emperor Caracalla erected in honor of his intimate friend Fustus, whom—as Herodianus relates—he poisoned to get his Patroclus in order to be able to imitate the funeral, which Achilles made to his friend and which Homer so beautifully described in the 23rd Iliad. In the tumulus of Besica-Tepe I dug from the bottom of the shaft four long galleries, but all I found there were very ancient potsherds identic with those of the upper strata of the first Trojan city and probably of the very same age; probably about 1500 B.C.

My palazzo is now nearly ready and it awaits the great honor of your visit; all the floors are of mosaic, the terrace is crowned with 24 statues. The glorious banner with the stars and stripes would make a wonderful appearance between the statues of Jove and Apollo. But how does the matter stand? Is there any chance that the U.S. government may nominate me? They probably do not see how advantageous that would be to the U.S. museums. Besides I would engage a most able chancellor whose business is calculated to propitiate the U.S. trade. But above all they ought to understand that I possess the richest and most wonderful collection in the world, which is *not* for sale and which I do not think to take with me into the grave. This collection is of so much more value as it has been dug out from divine Troy, from the city of immortal glory.

We leave today for Paris where I shall be happy to hear from you.

With kindest regards My dear Miss Field

Yours very truly
Hy Schliemann

If you think it well that I should apply to the minister at Washington then, pray, send me the form of the letter. Please address me 5 Boulevard Saint Michel Paris.

In Europe and America Kate Field meanwhile continued her activity in behalf of Schliemann's appointment. On July 30, 1879, Judge John K. Porter of New York City warmly recommended Schliemann as a man eminently fitted for the office in Athens. He then stated that his recent explorations

. . . have reflected credit on our country to a much greater extent, and in a much better direction than the successes of American athletes and riflemen. You have doubtless seen the introduction to his work in Gladstone; and I should much like to see an equally marked recognition by the American Government, of the estimation by which he is held by Scholars and Men of Science at home and abroad.

This letter also speaks of his marble palace at Athens as the temporary house of "all our countrymen who visit Greece. The king, who is often his household guest, treats his friends from the United States with special consideration; and Americans have, through him, advantages there which are not open to the people of other countries." This letter of recommendation is then endorsed by another eminent judge, James C. Smith.

Another letter in the National Archives by the former U.S. Minister to Greece, John M. Francis, on August 1, 1879, addressed to the Secretary of

State William Evarts, states that the writer has received a letter from Schliemann dated at Athens June 19th, "wherein he states that, as an American citizen he would feel himself highly complimented by such appointment and would endeavour if thus honored to discharge the duties pertaining to the office faithfully and to the satisfaction of his Government." Accordingly he made application for the appointment in behalf of Dr. Schliemann, believing him to be eminently fit and that the appointment would honor our country in the impressions it would create abroad. In conclusion Francis said:

Knowing Dr. Schliemann very well—he was a near neighbor of ours during the period of our residence at Athens—I can testify to his worthiness and integrity as a man and an American citizen. And socially he is cordial, magnetic, and exceedingly hospitable. As the office will involve little or no expense to the Government, I trust it may be conferred upon him.

On the same date as this letter he sent a note marked "Personal" to the Secretary of State saying that he would "cheerfully" sign any bond for Schliemann's appointment that might be required and at the same time communicated another recommendation for the appointment of Henry Schliemann by Hilton Scribner. In his glowing support of Schliemann's appointment he referred to the fact that Schliemann had come to us with the State of California: ". . . coming to us with our golden State of the West he has reaped for us all more than a golden harvest in the East."

The reply of the Secretary of State to the communications of the former U.S. Minister to Greece has not been found, but its contents is indicated in John M. Francis' letter in the National Archives dated August 21, 1879, in which he acknowledges the Secretary's letter of August 15th saying:

I thank you for the attention you have given to the matter of application in behalf of Dr. Henry Schliemann for the Athens consulate. You say "I see no reason why Dr. Schliemann might not be appointed to the consulate were there any such place." But as I understand it the place may be created by the President if the act involves no expenditure for salary. The latter Dr. Schliemann does not want; the office may be a fee office. At the present time a young Greek holds the office of consular agent at Athens. You have only to make this a full consulate the same as was done with the consular agency at Patras, Greece, in 1873, and then Dr. Schliemann could be appointed to the position.

I feel that we ought to have at least a full consular representative at Athens, and this may be attained I think most satisfactorily in the way I have pointed out.

I have known Dr. Schliemann and his family for many years, and I can conceive only of jealousy or some other improper motive instigating remonstrance to his appointment to a position wherein he would honor his adopted country.

I shall feel myself under renewed personal obligation if you will at your convenience look further to this matter, and if deemed suitable make the appointment recommended.

The reply of the Secretary to this letter could not be found, but his reaction is reported in Schliemann's letter of July 25, 1880, to Kate Field as found in the Boston Public Library saying:

Leipzig 25 July 1880
in Germany

My dear Miss Field,

Pray, let me know where you will be in the beginning of November, for I wish to send you a copy of my new great work *Ilios*, which is to appear on 10 November by Harper in N.Y., J. Murray London, and Brockhaus in Leipzig. I have been working on it very hard for more than two years and venture to hope that the book will meet your gracious approval.

I do not know indeed how to express to you my gratitude for having again as Mr. Francis tells me, tried to get for me the U.S. Consulate. But 6 months ago Mr. Francis sent me the answer he had received from Evarts, the Secretary of State, to his application on my behalf, and as that dignitary spoke therein of me in a rude way with the utmost indifference. I think it, as a gentleman, below my honour to accept it if it were now offered to me. But nevertheless I am immensely obliged to you.

I have overworked myself, but I hope to get some rest in the excavation of Orchomenos in Boeotia, in Greece, for which I got the permission and which I hope to commence on 1 November. With my kindest regards I remain my dear Miss Field,

yours very truly,
Schliemann

As far as Schliemann was concerned this seems to have ended his interest in an appointment as American Consul at Athens, at least during the Evarts tenure of the office of Secretary of State. On March 10, 1881, John M. Francis, signing himself as "late U.S. Minister to Greece" in a letter to the new Secretary of State James G. Blaine renewed his recommendation of Schliemann made in July or August, 1879, and on April 4, 1881, in a five page letter Francis again calls attention to the strong previous recommendations for the appointment of Dr. Schliemann as American Consul at Athens. The following quotation from this letter explains why Schliemann was not appointed American Consul under Secretary Evarts:

At the present time the United States has only a consular agent at Athens, a Greek citizen who was appointed on the nomination of our Consul at Patras, the latter being an English subject. This consular agent who speaks the English language indifferently was originally appointed, not with the view of being in any sense an American representative, but at the suggestion of our United States Minister at the time who desired his services as a Private Secretary.

In spite of his failure to obtain the appointment desired with the help of Kate Field, Schliemann's friendship for her continued. They met again in Paris during the summer of 1880, and in a letter of August 2, 1880, written to her from Constantinople, he foresees the possibility of having to break off his planned further excavations because of political unrest and a return to Paris. "I shall be very much flattered if you will put up at my lodgings, but I must beg you to allow me to occupy part of it; you shall have the best sleeping room, the saloon and the dining room, but I must have my bureau room and one sleeping room."

Schliemann's ambition to be appointed the United States Consul at Athens was thwarted by the personal interests of a former U.S. Minister to

Greece who used the Athens location to take care of a Greek citizen whom he desired as a private secretary, but the United States paid very dearly for this mistake because it meant that Schliemann's unique Troy collection was not given to the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, as Schliemann had planned, but to the museum in Berlin, Germany. This loss to the United States is documented in Schliemann's letter of January 15, 1881, to Kate Field, the original of which is preserved in the Boston Public Library, reading as follows:

Athens, 15 January 1881

My dear Miss Field:

Mr. Harper will have sent you, in my name, a copy of my *Ilios*; nothing could be more gratifying to my ambition than to hear that you find it satisfactory.

Pray, do not think ill of me that I donated my Trojan collection to the German nation; I could not do otherwise since the U.S. government refused to appoint me as their consul; had they done so the collection would have long ago been in the Smithsonian. Troy being entirely excavated that collection is *unique* and of immeasurable value. It has been received in Germany with immense enthusiasm, and for all ages to come it will attract to Berlin thousands of people from all parts of the world. Now of course I would *not* accept the consulate if it were offered.

If you come to Athens you will find a very warm reception at my house. Mrs. Schliemann joins me in kindest regards and hereby wishes for a happy new year. I remain,

My dear Miss Field yours very truly
Hy. Schliemann

Clark University
Worcester, Massachusetts