

INSPIRATION FOR “ECLIPSED BY SHADOW”

by Author John Royce

Two subjects have inspired my writing: History and Horses. My interest in history was sparked in high school library during third period, where I had been banished for spectacular ineptitude in typing class. During this ‘detention’ I began a quest for information about the newest addition to our family, a horse.

To my surprise the school library had a barnful of horse information—not intentionally, not specifically, but simply because horses had been such a ubiquitous presence in the previous era. I recall the volume of unfocused equestrian data as I waded through picturesque lithographed tomes and cavalry manuals, seeking the simple facts of how to build a horse-proof fence.

The high school closed while I was in college, and I wondered naively where and how this treasure of knowledge would be preserved. Of course it wasn’t. It was “weeded.” My college library was much more modern and commercially improved, yet it was as if horses and horsemanship—indeed the ancient world itself—had been edited out, erased. It struck me how silent the ancient world has become in the speed and glare of modern commerce.

Later I came to live near Cambridge’s Harvard Square, then still a hallowed reservoir of ancient knowledge. Before the Muses fled. The area held an unkempt collection of used bookstores spilling over with the lore of human experience, a century’s worth of student texts and professors’ collections jumbled together. It was amazing to duck into a disheveled basement stacked high with boxes of books—shelves, racks, tables of them—crates overflowing with bound tales of the human condition and glimpses of cultures past.

These repositories of human effort have since been emptied and replaced by nothing in particular (a chain store, usually). The few protests made as the bookstores were forced to close were met with free-market lectures or shrugs from the greater community, and so this treasure of human knowledge was not looted but simply lost. Vikings could not have pillaged with more success.



My interest in history and tradition has since grown into a passion. The answers are in the pages of history if we can be persuaded to look, I truly believe. Humanity needs the wisdom of its youth. History is important because human nature doesn’t change.

The inspiration to write “The Legend of the Great Horse,” for which *Eclipsed by Shadow* is the first book, it arrived as I searched for a way to communicate about our common heritage. I recalled that amongst the pages of those vanished old bookstores’ unheeded treasures was the colorful, diverse and ample presence our ancient partner...