



Winged Bull: The Extraordinary Life of Henry Layard, the Adventurer Who Discovered the Lost City of Nineveh

Jeff Pearce

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Jeff Pearce recounts the life and exploits of versatile English explorer, politician, and diplomat Henry Layard in *Winged Bull*.

Always restless, Layard set out for Sri Lanka in 1839 at the age of twenty-two. He never arrived. Captivated by the cultures and ruins of the fading Ottoman Empire, he spent much of the next decade there instead, navigating political upheavals and long-lost archaeological wonders with only his charisma and impetuosity to protect him. Today, Layard stands out from his contemporaries for his unusual sensitivity and prescient insights.

Layard was born to an unconventional but middle-class family. Not content with the prospect of being a lawyer, as his uncle intended, he struck out on his own and gained fame for rediscovering the biblical city of Nineveh. But his eclectic career did not end there. He was elected to the House of Commons, bore witness to the disastrous Charge of the Light Brigade in Crimea, and served as Britain's diplomat to Spain and Istanbul during international crises.

Pearce gives Layard due credit for his accomplishments while acknowledging his mistakes and faults. Though in some ways a product of his time and culture, Layard's attitudes are often refreshing in their open-minded curiosity and modern liberality. He had a passion for supporting underdogs, regardless of their race or religion, and he argued for India's rights and independence from the voracious East India Company.

Despite the dangers presented by ruthless bandits and his own jealous, frugal countrymen, Layard managed to catalogue spectacular finds, write bestselling books about his travels, and make loyal friends around the world. His observations continue to be relevant, as the regions he visited are beset by challenges that threaten to rob them of the cultural heritage that Layard so admired.

Winged Bull is an exciting biography of celebrated nineteenth-century adventurer Henry Layard.

EILEEN GONZALEZ (July / August 2021)

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