

Paris Recidivist

The sea-tax brought us down: my State,
After all, was operating a protection
Racket, as you Chicagoans might call it.
It was a dirty game, but there you are,
It was the only game in town.
Located as we were over the mouth of
The Hellespont, we controlled all traffic
Going East. For awhile, everybody paid,
And we got on quite well. Troy was small,
Even by the standards of the age: she had
Nothing to sell—oh, nothing worth
Considering—but she had the Trade-Route,
Had it by its watery throat, and everybody knew
And didn't seem to mind. Of course,
There's always something building,
But our hold was strong. No tax,
No trading with the East. It all seemed
Fair enough and, somehow, to the others,
A natural thing.

Then I blew it,
Gave the Greeks exactly what they needed:
An excuse. Helen, poor Helen, she gloried
In one thought:—that it was she,
And not the sea, for whom we fought.

—*E.M. Schorb*