

Please deliver enclosed at once.

Its all right.

Athens

April 17. 1877

My dear Olive

To you most appropriately I write from this city, where you were of old held in high honour, planted as you may remember in the acropolis by the hand of Athené herself. Indeed the olive is the only tree that flourishes in any abundance in the barren soil of Attica. There are a few white poplars, a few cypresses, orange-trees, & some others in the King's garden, but of olives there is a grand old grove stretching for miles right away up to Colonus, the home of Sophocles. We are going to wander about in their venerable shade this morning.

Well I have now stood on the acropolis, and have seen the Parthenon. of course it is all magnificent and splendid. The Parthenon has been coloured by age & weather a rich golden brown, darkening at places into black, with patches of white where the surface has been chipped & the white marble shows beneath. The beauty & grandeur of the building are quite wonderful. I was really

speechless with awe when I first stood
within its walls, on the very pavement that
has been trodden by so many mighty spirits.
It was an unexpected delight to me to find
that nearly the whole of the frieze at the
western end is still in its place, and very
well preserved - a very beautiful piece of
the procession of horsemen. There are also
two fragments of figures in the pediment
and several metopes, so that you can
without much difficulty imagine to yourself
what the effect must have been when
the whole was perfect. I first ~~was~~ stood
^{beneath} the Parthenon in the blaze in the blaze of
the noontide sun, its rich brown splendidly
contrasted with the clear blue of the sky.
I have since seen it several times with the
sunset glow upon it. Last night it looked
peculiarly grand. The sunset was very
stormy - a most unusual thing for Athens
and the departing Phoebus glared with ^{the} an
aspen red glow of anger from beneath the
dark masses of heavy cloud that weighed
him down till he was hidden behind the
Peloponnesian hills. This glow was
reflected on the Parthenon - from the top
of whose pediment looking westward I was
witness of the scene - on Hymettus behind,
on the sky above where the red glow was
wonderfully contrasted with a blue ground.
Heavy black clouds hung over the sea which
was slate colour with just a gleam of grey
sheen running into the land at Phalerum.

The sky above was almost clear - pale blue - with just one band of red cloud beneath which we suddenly saw the silver crescent of Artemis - the new moon. All this threat of storm passed away at night, when the sky was as usual here quite black, & studded with stars. The moon set early, but we hope before we leave on Saturday to see the Parthenon by her light. The Erechtheum which stands on the acropolis N. of the Parthenon is much smaller than I expected, but a perfect little gem - irregular in shape, of the Ionic order, with one porch supported by the famous Caryatids, richly ornamented throughout with the most graceful decorations. It must have been too lovely, when it shone as it did in old times, resplendent with gold, & red, & blue. For when you have once lived in this climate you see how necessary colour is to architecture, & how unendurable white marble would be in such a glare. You have a practical example of this truth in modern Athens where they are building and have built scores of grand houses with white marble pillars & facings, without following the wise example of their ancestors & modifying the glitter by judicious application of colour. One can't look at these buildings except through smoked glasses without being

nearly blinded. Athens is growing very fast, and would be a pleasant enough town, were it not for the heats & the dust, which are bad enough now, but in summer must be perfectly awful.

We have seen all the Schliemann treasures, far more than anyone else has seen but Newton & Curtius. People here bow down before the general to a wonderful extent and make every effort to show him all he wants to see. I wonder what Prof. Jebb would say if he were here. It was very amusing to see the change in Newton's attitude towards Mahaffy. In London he spoke contemptuously of him. Here when I called upon him he was most anxious to see him, and I was present at a long & interesting talk between the two. No great light has yet been thrown on the age of these ^{Schliemann} treasures, though all now agree that they must be very ^{old} old. Mahaffy thinks from their strong resemblance to various old Irish things they must belong to an early state of Bryan civilization, before the Celts had fled from the main stock. The whole question is most complicated & will take years to solve.

I am very distressed that I have as yet received no letter of any kind since I left home. Unless I hear on Wednesday or Thursday my last chance is gone for we leave on Saturday and come straight back by Naples & Rome etc - arriving probably very soon after this letter. Kindly deliver the enclosed - only a few flowers. Love to all.
your affectionate brother
C. Macmillan