

Pyrros near Olympia
April 4. 1877.

My dear Father

Here I am really on Greek soil.

Epirus which I first saw is after all not true Greece, and Corfu charming & pretty as it is, and though Greek is written up ^{over the door} &c, is very much Anglicized. The people who don't talk English or French or Italian, talk a kind of queer compound of all three with modern Greek. Yesterday we had a delightful drive inland through a very rich plain full of vegetation both wild & cultivated. Men women & children were working in the fields in most picturesque costumes. The women wear white or coloured handkerchiefs twisted round the head and neck being left straight behind if you can understand me. The men wear fezzes or white straw hats with either sheep skin cloaks or coloured jackets, & below either white or coloured petticoats & long white leggings, or broad coloured breeches. We got lovely views of the sea - blue in constantly varying shades - the town with its two peaked citadel & cypresses clustered about the white houses - & the Albanian hills behind on the opposite coast - looking as if they were painted on the sky or sometimes when their lower parts are lost in haze, as if hung down from above. This is a very curious effect. Especially in the case of the Snow range, and as I am told peculiar to Greece & the Greek islands, & due to the extraordinary clearness & radiance of the air.

about 3 miles from land & we rowed very slowly into Catacolo Bay, where at about 5.30 we at last set foot in Greece. You will see on the map that this bay into which the Alpheus is very large. It was quite lovely as we pulled in to shore - everything calm & still - reminding one of a lovely summer's evening on the west coast of Scotland - pale blue sea - golden sand, hills green in front & the snowy ranges behind - looking not a bit higher than Ben Nevis for instance or even Ben Lomond, though they are 7000 feet. The country looked very homely and peaceful. Catacolo is a busy little landing place & no more. There were some picturesque sailing boats close to shore & groups of sailors &c. We got a carriage here and drove about 8 miles round the bay to this place - at first through a marshy plain - covered with flax in blossom, bracken & so forth. Later on the ground was more cultivated & we passed vines, fig trees, two or three luxuriant gardens with oranges & lemons - rows of cypresses &c. By the time we reached Pyrgos it was dark. It is a fairly big town or rather village & was very noisy as we entered - crowds of people in all costumes parading the dirty streets. I will say nothing of the accommodation here - far better than anything we shall get the next 10 days. We start at 8 tomorrow - a cavalcade of six horses for Olympia. After that our movements are somewhat uncertain - We shall see if possible. Bassae, Andritzena, valley of Ladon, Tripolitza, Tegea, Mantinea, the Styx, Lake Pheneus, & lastly Argos. Mycena & Corinth. I will write when I can again. There seems every chance of settled fine weather. Love to all. I am very tired so can't write any more
your affectionate son
George A Macmillan