“Athens” (eclectic edition)

Thou muse who once from fair Parnassus height

Fanned agèd Homer with thy plumy wings

Who told of Greece and Trojas ancient might

And fierce Achilles anger. Thou that sings

Of the warfield where the broad banner flings

Its folds oer many a corse of heroes slain

Now sing once more of ancient Græcias kings

Who fought against a haughty tyrants chain

Take up thy lyre, awake its slumb’ring voice again

II

Oer the wide fields of sea encircled Greece

Oh ancient ATHENS thou who once didst reign

In gory war or olive bearing peace

Ruler of Thebes and rugged Sparta’s bane

I sing thee now in a less noble strain

Than formerly when white haired HOMER gave

His living lay at bright Apollo’s fane

That sung the dirges of thy young and brave,

Who found at Trojas wide and sandy plain a grave

III

Oh ruined Athens where thy glory now

Ist hovering oer thy ruins stern and grey

Thou who didst tear from Xerxes haughty brow

The wreath that he so late had grasped of bay

Spite of his golden crested stern array1

Where is thy glory that so dearly won

And bought by blood upon that glorious day

Where is thy might thy power thy grandeur gone

Let their proud spirits tell who died at MARATHON

IV

And art thou gone for ever Oer the deep

Echoes the voice of armies now no more

Now only on the breezes sullen sweep

The ocean which erst while those armies bore

Pours forth its angry everlasting roar

As to the rocks the sounding waters glide

Not now their billows blush with heroes gore

Now only beats in briny foam the tide

And snowy crests upon its wild waves ride

V2

Oh ye wild winds that oer their watery grave

In hoarse, and hollow soundings onward<s> sweep

Howl not so loudly oer their bosoms brave

Break not their slumber, that entrancing sleep

That waits the dead when pillowed on the deep

They rest, lulled softly by the oceans sigh

The eagle circling round the seabeat steep

May make the billows answer to its cry

But wake not those below their foam who lie.

VI

Little the young and mighty Xerxes thought

When first he counted all his myriads oer

And scarcely told their sum, a time how short

Should see him flying from the Grecian shore

And him the same who once nor long before

Had driven Scamander back unto his head

And dried his channel now one galley bore

His pride together with his power twas fled

And where his pristine glory? With the dead

VII

And such the force that Persias king could boast

Ay thousands millions myriads indeed

He might be proud who looked on such a host

And marked them for his own his eager steed

Pawing the ground impatient he might lead

That sea of plumes to battle They were doomed

On deep Salamis ocean fields to bleed

And in its yawning gulph to be entombed

While the relentless wave above them boomed

VIII

They came the plumes upon their helmets dancing

Their young and eager monarch at their head

Their golden armour in the sunbeams glancing

A sea of bright translucent splendour shed

And earth all trembling shook beneath their tread

As when some gloomy vast and boundless deep

Heaps wave on wave with all its murmurs dread

Billow on billow with successive sweep

So pressed the warriors on a plumy foaming sheet

IX

They past, but on their track behind them prest

Riding upon the swift wings of the gale

The demon desolation Horrid guest

Attending wars red footsteps. Famine pale

Did follow. Shrouded in his cloudy veil

Death like some lurking monster glaring down

All in his fiery chariot seemed to sail

And night back trembling started at the frown

That marked his bony brow, seared by his lightning crown

X

And is it thus that pomp and pageantry

Must leave behind them such a gloomy train

And must it be that purple luxury

And royal grandeur shall be all in vain

Is this that kingly pomp But neer again

Shall Xerxes lead those legions He shall mourn

The time for ever past with grief and shame

All oer the lonely deep from Graecia borne

And like an exile king unpitied and forlorn

XI

But leave my muse this melancholy lay

Full soon shalt thou resume the mournful knell

Alas too quickly comes the blood stained day

That weeps for heroes dead But take thy shell

And all in softer mellower numbers tell

Till flinty rocks shall list the flowing strain

What forces Xerxes led what heroes fell

Those chieftains birth and eke from whence they came

Their fathers ancient deeds their lineage and their name

XII

And first thou young Hydaspes3 What although

Thy parents came not of a kingly line

For oh a long futurity shall show

That natures proud nobility was thine

And not ancestral honours drowned in time

A mighty mind as innocent as pure

That through the mists of lowliness would shine

Humble not abject, rich although obscure

He had a virtuous mind the riches of the poor4

XIII

He had a brother.5 They were kindred souls

For they were twins in age and mind the same

And where the wave of bright Hydaspes rolls

The Indian stream that gave to him his name

They learned the tigers savageness to tame

Or the dread hooded serpents folds to press

When hissed her head on high with eyes of flame

And as before them fled the lioness

Fearless and scatheless walked the wilderness

XIV

And they had trod the stormy mountains ridge

To all the tribes of man a mighty bar

Or on the cliffs upraised and giddy edge

Looked down triumphant on the scene afar

Where the proud battlements of many a scar

Confusedly rising round them clove the sky

Where nature seemed to wage a mountain war

Long time they often lingered upon high

Where the snow wreaths hung round eternally

XV

And hordes they led as swift as is the breeze

That flies across the oceans foam so light

Or as the mountain elk that challenges

The Scythian arrow to outstrip his flight

But firm and slow retreating from the fight

Strong as their native lion bathed in gore

Pawing the earth exulting in his might

And the wide forest echoing to his roar

Like sound of winter waves that bellow on the shore

XVI

And he the born upon the battle field

Young Moriartes6 who upon a heap

Of gory corses on a warriors shield

Resting while war was raging round did sleep

High pillowed on the crest of that famed steep

That looks on Marathon with infant eye

Saw the rude tide of battle onwards sweep

As on the rugged mountain he did lie

And born in Greece in Greece was doomed to die

XVII

(O Marathon thou field of victory

If ever Greece should cease to be a slave

Let her look back to ancient deeds and sigh

For loss of glory which her fathers gave

Bought with their noble lives or will her brave

Burst from the fetters of the narrow bed

Breaking the sods which clasp their gory grave

And tell old Greece that they for her have bled

And deep reproaching her forgetful of the dead7

XVIII

Oh if this sad and simple lay of mine

Could give thee down unto posterity

Thou should’st have ridden on the wings of time

And only with creations self should die

Let not thy parent oer thine ashes sigh

For thou shalt live through many distant days

Though neath the ocean now thy corse may lie

Again thy name shall shine in future lays

And harps of nobler string record a warriors praise

XIX8

His was a <mighty> gloomy and sequestered mind

Men say that on the night when he was born

There was a strange sad sighing in the wind

And many an ominous and awful form

Rode the dark clouds that bore the bursting storm

As the red lightning those wide heavens spanned

And sounds of wailing as of those that mourn

Ever for the dead and many a spectre hand

Seemed lifting high the [(?)] battle brand

20

His was a soul of solitude His ear

Liked not the hum of thousands He would pace

(At midnight when the azure heavens were clear

The paths of some wild desert wilderness

As if his soul would haste to seek its place

Winging its <way through> vast and its aerial way

To that bright home of light and loveliness9

Breaking the bands of its confining clay

That shackled it on earth and haste to spring away

2110

There was a sad and settled gloominess

That brooded oer his features, and if eer

He smiled twas not <the> a smile of happiness

He never could forget the secret care

That weighed upon his bosom rooted there

Too deep for consolation <One young boy [these(?) . . . wild(?)]> One young <child> boy

Had followed him from far and he would share

His [fits(?)] of grief<s> with purest sympathy.11

He loved him much, <but loved none else save> but none save him loved her

[unnumbered stanza]12

The sunset shone upon the isles of Greece

And ocean where the heavens misty blue

Was mingling with the deep which lay, in peace

Far to the west its world of waters threw

To those <[peace(?)]> fair isles, that seemed as if they grew

Each in itself one [or an] Oasis. the waste

Stretching around, beyond them, and light<ly> blew

The evening zephyr on the deep and <[(?)]> cast

White foam upon the wave as murmuring it past.

1In MS V, an asterisk after “stern” refers to a footnote, “\*fair.”

2From MS IA; not in MS V (see headnote). Hereafter, stanza numbering follows MSS IA, VII, VIII.

3The name might be derived from Rollin’s Ancient History (4 vols. [New York: A. L. Burt, n.d.] 2: 136–37, 156–57), which mentions a Hystaspes, who took refuge in the country from the murderous plotting of his father and brothers and from the jealousy and cruelty of Xerxes’ wife.

4See Wordsworth’s description of the Pedlar’s childhood, born in “a virtuous household, though exceeding poor,” in The Excursion (I:108-96).

5With stzs. 13-16, compare Wordsworth’s “The Brothers.”

6The name “Moriartes,” which does not appear in Rollin or Herodotus, might be Ruskin’s derivation from Byron’s Childe Harold, in which the “twin names” of the battlefields of Morat and of Marathon are ascribed “stainless victories, / Won by the unambitious heart and hand / Of a proud, brotherly, and civic band” (can. 3, stz. 64). Ruskin probably borrowed also from the Greek poet in Don Juan, who alludes to Xerxes on a “rocky brow” reviewing his doomed navy; and the Greek poet himself desires to be placed “on Sunium’s marbled steep, / Where nothing, save the waves and I, / May hear our mutual murmurs sweep” (can. 3, stz. 86.4, 16).

7Compare Byron’s elegiac address to Athens at the start of canto 2 of Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage.

8From stz. 19 to the end, the text is taken from MS VIII.

9Loveliness--the draft, which is very rough, perhaps should be read loneliness.

10Above stz. 21 is a small outline of a single, lone tower, and then a small drawing of a double set of towers connected by a wall--the double towers more finely sketched with brickwork and shadow. Although the connection may be coincidental, see a passage in Childe Harold following that pointed out in n. 6 above, in which “by a lone wall a lonelier column rears” (can. 3, stz. 65).

11Possibly an adaptation of Harold’s parting with his young page in the “Good Night” of Childe Harold (can. 1, stz. 13.3-5).

12Ruskin wrote “Athens” above the stanza, identifying it definitely as part of the poem, but this stanza, the last to appear in MS VIII, is the only one he failed to number. Since Ruskin frequently did not number the first stanzas of poems, the unnumbered stanza may have been intended as the opening of a second canto--an extension of “Athens” that was clearly projected in MS VII. Alternatively, the stanza might have been meant to replace another, existing stanza.

Stz. 1, l. 1, MSS V, VIII muse] Muse MS IA; muse, MS VII

Stz. 1, l. 2, MS V agèd] aged MSS IA, VII, VIII; MSS IA, V, VIII wings] wings, MS VII

Stz. 1, l. 3, MSS V, VIII Greece] Greece, MSS IA, VII; MSS IA, V, VIII might] might, MS VII

Stz. 1, l. 4, MS V And fierce Achilles anger. Thou that sings] <And fierce Achilles anger! Thou that> sings with the following revision inserted above that canceled phrase but before “sings”: O thou whose lyre all wild resounding sings MS VIII; And fierce Achilles anger! Thou that sings MS IA; And fierce Achilles anger; Thou that sings MS VII

Stz. 1, l. 5, MS V warfield] war field MSS IA, VIII; war field, MS VII; MSS IA, V, VIII heroes slain] heros slain, MS VII

Stz. 1, l. 6, MSS IA, V, VII Its] <O> Its MS VIII; MSS V, VII, VIII oer] o’er MS IA

Stz. 1, l. 7, MSS IA, V Now sing] <Sing> Now sing MS VIII; MS V Græcias kings] Graecia’s kings MS IA; Graecias king MS VIII; Graecias kings, MS VII

Stz. 1, l. 8, MSS IA, V chain] chain. MS VIII; MS VII chain:

Stz. 1, l. 9, MSS IA, V, VIII lyre, awake] lyre: Awake MS VII; MSS V, VIII again] again. MSS IA, VII

Preceding stz. 2, l. 1 as in MSS IA, V, the following canceled text is in MS VIII:

2

<Oer the [(?)] be

O ancient brothers thou who once didst reign

Oer the wide fields of sea encircled Greece

Ruler of Thebes and rugged Life>

Stz. 2, l. 2, MSS V, VII ATHENS] Athens MS VIII; Athens, MS IA; MSS IA, V, VII reign] reign. MS VIII

Stz. 2, l. 3, MS V, VII In gory war or] <A> In gory war or MS VIII; In gory war, or MS IA

Stz. 2, l. 4, MS V Thebes and rugged Sparta’s bane] Thebes and Rugged Spartas Bane MS VIII; Thebes, and rugged Sparta’s bane MS IA; Thebes and rugged Spartas bane MS VII

Stz. 2, between ll. 5 and 6 as in MSS IA, V, the following canceled text is in MS VIII:

<Than formerly (when all the skys were starred)

In midnight majesty) when thy <[(?)]> [strong(?)] fame

Poured from a lyre more nobly was heard

<[When . . . (?)]> sung the bard>

Stz. 2, l. 6, MSS IA, V white haired HOMER] whitehaired Homer MS VIII; white haired Homer MSS IA, VII

Stz. 2, l. 7, MSS IA, V Apollo’s] Apollos MS VII, VIII

Stz. 2, l. 8, MSS IA, V, VII That] <Who> That MS VIII; MSS IA, V brave,] <grave> brave MS VIII; brave MS VII

Stz. 2, l. 9, MSS V, VII and] & MSS IA, VIII; MS V, VII, VIII grave] grave. MS IA

Stz. 3, l. 1, MS V Athens where] Athens Where MS VIII; Athens! where MS IA; Athens! Where MS VII

Stz. 3, l. 2, MS V, VII Ist hovering oer] I’st hovering oer MS IA, VIII; MSS IA, V, VIII grey] grey; MS VII

Stz. 3, l. 3, MSS IA, V who didst] who <hast torn> didst MS VIII; MSS IA, V, VIII brow] brow, MS VII

Stz. 3, l. 4, MSS IA, V The wreath that he so late had grasped of bay] The wreath <that recently was> <he> so late that he had grasped of bay MS VIII; The wreath, that he so late had grasped of bay, MS VII

Stz. 3, l. 5, MSS IA, V, VII crested stern] crested, stern MS VIII; MSS IA, V, VII array] array! MSS VIII

Stz. 3, l. 6, MSS IA, V Where is thy glory that so dearly won] Where <no> is thy glory that so <dearly> fair won MS VIII; Where is thy glory, that so dearly won, MS VII

Stz. 3, l. 7, MSS IA, V, VII, VIII day] day? MS VII

Stz. 3, l. 8, MS V might thy power thy grandeur gone] might <and where thy power> thy powr thy grandeur gone MS VIII; might, thy pow’r thy grandeur gone MS IA; might, thy power, thy grandeur gone? MS VII

Stz. 3, l. 9, MSS IA, V, VII Let their proud] Ha or Let their proud with proud written above brave MS VIII; MS V MARATHON] Marathon MSS IA, VII, VIII

Stz. 4, l. 1, MSS V, VII, VIII Oer] oer MS IA

Stz. 4, l. 2, MSS V, VII voice of armies] shout <voice> of <armies navies> armies and above this line written a [(?)] thunder MS VIII; shout of armies MS IA

Stz. 4, l. 4, MSS IA, V, VII armies] armies <navies> MS VIII

Stz. 4, l. 6, MSS IA, V, VII rocks] rocks <shore beach> MS VIII

Stz. 4, l. 7, MSS IA, V heroes gore] heroes <roar> gore MS VIII; hero’s gore MS VII

Stz. 4, l. 9, MS V, VIII ride] ride. MSS IA, VII. In MS VIII, this line is written above a canceled line <Now [(?)] the blood of those at Salamis that died>

Stz. 5, l. 2, MS IA, VII Oh] O MS VIII

Stz. 5, l. 1, MS IA hoarse,] hoarse MSS VII, VIII

Stz. 5, l. 2, MS IA onward<s>] onwards MS VIII; onward MS VII

Stz. 5, l. 4, MS IA, VII slumber,] slumber<s> MS VIII

Stz. 5, l. 6, MS IA rest,] rest VII, VIII. In VIII, this line was written above a canceled line <By war and trouble undisturbed they lie>

Stz. 5, l. 8, MS IA, VII the billows] the <ocean> billows MS VIII

Stz. 5, l. 9, MS IA not those below their foam who lie.] not <them they sleep eternally> those below their foam who lie. MS VIII; not them. They sleep eternally MS VII. See headnote.

Stz. 6 (5 in MS V), MS V: preceding this stz. in MS VIII is a canceled stz. 6, as follows. The two following stzs. in MS VIII are accordingly renumbered from “7” and “8” to “6” and “7.” The canceled stz. is written in ink and crossed out in pencil. In l. 2 “first” is inserted in pencil, possibly by another hand. Note that this is not the same stz. as the one in VIII that was dropped from MS V.

O Persia they fell in fight with thee

When first thy proud thy angry monarch came

And Xerxes led his gallies oer the sea

To make the Grecian glory but a name

Then was not Greece forgetful of her fame

And first thou haughty one began thy woes

When thy unnumbered armament in vain

Her heroes to their countrys battle fight arose [fight written above battle]

And bent before <all> old Greca her humbled foes

Stz. 6 (5 in MS V), l. 1, MSS IA, V, VII Little] <Not> Little MS VIII; MSS V, VII, VIII young and] young, & MS IA

Stz. 6 (5 in MS V), l. 3, MSS V, VII sum,] sum MSS IA, VIII

Stz. 6 (5 in MS V), l. 5, MSS V, VIII once] once, MS IA

Stz. 6 (5 in MS V), l. 7, MSS V, VIII channel] channel, MS IA

Stz. 6 (5 in MS V), l. 8, MS V twas] was MSS IA, VIII

Stz. 6 (5 in MS V), l. 9, MS V glory? With the dead] glory with the dead MS VIII; glory? with the dead. MS IA

Stz. 7 (6 in MS V), l. 1, MSS V, VIII Persias king] Persia’s King MS IA

Stz. 7 (6 in MS V), l. 2, MSS V, VIII Ay] Ah MS IA

Stz. 7 (6 in MS V), l. 4, MS V eager] snow white MSS IA, VIII

Stz. 7 (6 in MS V), l. 5, MS V impatient] as eager MSS IA, VIII

Stz. 7 (6 in MS V), l. 7, MS V fields] field MSS IA, VIII

Stz. 7 (6 in MS V), l. 8, MS V gulph] gulf MSS IA, VIII

Stz. 7 (6 in MS V), l. 9, MS V wave] waves MSS IA, VIII

Stz. 9 (8 in MS V), l. 1, MS V past,] past MS VIII

Stz. 9 (8 in MS V), l. 4, MS V Attending] Attend<ed>ing MS VIII

Stz. 9 (8 in MS V), l. 8, MS V at the] at <his> the MS VIII

Stz. 9 (8 in MS V), l. 9, MS V brow, seared] brow <prest> seared MS VIII

Stz. 10 (9 in MS V), l. 6, MS V He] he MS VIII

Stz. 12 (11 in MS V), l. 3, MS V For] <And> For MS VIII

Stz. 12 (11 in MS V), l. 4, MS V natures proud] natures <[simp(?)]> proud MS VIII

Stz. 12 (11 in MS V), l. 7, MS V That] <Humble no> That MS VIII; MS V would] <w>could MS VIII

Stz. 12 (11 in MS V), l. 8, MS V abject,] abject MS VIII

Stz. 13 (12 in MS V), l. 1, MS V brother. They] brother they MS VIII

Stz. 13 (12 in MS V), l. 3, MS V And] For MS VIII

Stz. 13 (12 in MS V), l. 4, MS V Indian] indian MS VIII

Stz. 13 (12 in MS V), l. 7, MS V her] his MS VIII

Stz. 13 (12 in MS V), l. 8, MS V And] They MS VIII; MS V lioness] lionness MS VIII

Stz. 13 (12 in MS V), l. 9, MS V wilderness] wilderness. MS VIII

Stz. 14 (13 in MS V), l. 6, MS V clove the sky] <clove the sky> <black and bare> clove the sky these written one above the other, Ruskin eventually settling on his first idea

Stz. 15 (14 in MS V), l. 2, MS V flies across] [wantons(?)] oer MS VIII

Stz. 15 (14 in MS V), l. 5, MS V retreating] returning MS VIII

Stz. 15 (14 in MS V), l. 6, MS V in] <to> in MS VIII

Stz. 15 (14 in MS V), l. 9, MS V, is drafted in MS VIII above a canceled repetition of l. 8.

Stz. 16 (15 in MS V), l. 1, MS V born] <born> lorn MS VIII. In MS V, above the b in born is written a faint l as in lorn, possibly in Ruskin’s hand.

Stz. 16 (15 in MS V), l. 4, MS V, is also in MS VIII, but in MS VIII the line is written to replace <He [ . . . resting (?)] which rude war was raging round he did sleep>

Stz. 16 (15 in MS V), l. 5, MS V famed] dread MS VIII

Stz. 16 (15 in MS V), l. 6, MS V on Marathon with] on MARATHON With MS VIII

Stz. 16 (15 in MS V), l. 9, MS V in Greece in Greece was] in war/Greece, in war/Greece was with Greece written above war in each case, MS VIII

Stz. 17 (16 in MS V), l. 1, MS V (O] Oh MS VIII

Stz. 17 (16 in MS V), l. 6, MS V the] their MS VIII

Stz. 17 (16 in MS V), l. 8, MS V old] to MS VIII

Stz. 18 (17 in MS V), l. 1, MS V. Preceding this first line of the stz. in MS VIII are three canceled lines, which anticipate draft of stz. 19: <He was the prince of far famed Sythia> [with <Scythia the proud> written above the line] / EXEUNT OMNES / <Men say that on the night when he was>

Stz. 18 (17 in MS V), l. 2, MS V unto posterity] unto <futurity> posterity MS VIII

Stz. 18 (17 in MS V), l. 3, MS V should’st] should MS VIII

Stz. 18 (17 in MS V), l. 5, MS V Let] A Let MS VIII

Stz. 18 (17 in MS V), l. 9, MS V record a] record <thy> a MS VIII