

**HISTORICAL  
PARALLELS, IN THREE  
VOLUMES, VOL. I**

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Historical parallels, in three volumes, Vol. I by Arthur Thomas Malkin

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**ARTHUR THOMAS MALKIN**

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HISTORICAL  
P A R A L L E L S.

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IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. I.

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# HISTORICAL PARALLELS.

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## INTRODUCTION.

WORKS of history may be divided into two great classes : those which select a single action or a detached period for their subject ; and those which follow a nation through the whole or a large portion of its existence ; and which, embracing a number of such subjects, compensate for giving less minute and accurate information upon each, by explaining their relation, and the influence which they have exerted upon each other. To the former belong Thucydides, Xenophon, and Cæsar ; to the latter Diodorus and Livy ; or, in English literature, we may take Clarendon and Hume respectively as the representatives of these divisions. It is obvious that the method of treating themes so different in character, must also be essentially different ; that for an historian of the latter class to aim at the particularity which we expect in the former, would involve something of the same absurdity as if a landscape painter were to give to an extended horizon the distinctness and detail which are proper to his foregrounds or to a closely bounded scene. If our curiosity is not satisfied by a comprehensive view, the remedy is to be found by multiplying pictures of its most striking parts, not by introducing into one canvas a multitude of objects which must fatigue and confuse the mind, and obscure those leading features which ought to stand out in prominent relief. Any one who wished to become acquainted with the nature and characteristics of a country, which he could not survey personally,

would neither confine his inspection to bird's-eye and panoramic views, nor content himself with a series of detached paintings, though representing separately whatever was most worthy of observation: in the one case his ideas, though perhaps correct, would necessarily be slight and superficial; in the other, his knowledge of the parts would never enable him to form an accurate judgment of the whole.

Valuable, therefore, as is the assistance of those authors who have devoted their talents and learning to epitomizing and rendering accessible the story of past ages, it is far from desirable that we should content ourselves with a blind trust in them, without checking their assertions, and filling up their sketches by a more detailed knowledge than it is possible for them to communicate. To apply these observations to the present work, the History of Greece contained in the Library of Useful Knowledge necessarily gives a very short account of many things which deserve to be known in detail, both on account of their historical notoriety and for the intrinsic value which they possess as striking examples of human power, passion, and suffering. Much of the excessive commendation which has been bestowed upon ancient virtue and patriotism ought probably to be attributed to the eager interest naturally excited by the revival of learning and the peculiar circumstances under which it took place. The discovery of the works of the most celebrated writers of antiquity, whose names at least had not been forgotten, must at any time have produced much curiosity and excitement: and peculiarly so when modern literature did not yet possess many names to divide the palm of genius with them. Besides this the political circumstances of the Italian states, in which the new discoveries were at first most successfully and generally prosecuted, would give an additional interest and a peculiar bias to the study of ancient literature; for their inhabitants would naturally be disposed, as Italians, to exult in the glories of ancient Italy, and as republicans to look for patterns both of polity and of conduct among the famous republics of Greece and Rome.

A contrary cause, in a later age, and in countries subject to arbitrary power, would probably conduce to the continuance of the same feeling, when the prevalent subjection of public opinion made it safer to enforce sentiments of freedom and patriotism under the mask of an overstrained admiration for actions, frequently of very questionable character, done in times long past, than openly to profess the love of republican simplicity and liberty, which was willingly left to be inferred. The usual course of education long tended, and in an inferior degree perhaps still tends, to cherish the same indiscriminate enthusiasm. The first histories put into the hands of children are usually those of Greece and Rome, taken not from the sober and comparatively unprejudiced relations of the earliest authorities, but from Plutarch, and other compilers of a later age, who, living themselves under despotic power, and compelled to veil their philosophical aspirations after a better state of polity and morals under extravagant praises of a by-gone period of imaginary virtue and disinterestedness, were for the most part ready to warp truth into correspondence with their own views. In such works actions are held up to admiration because they are brilliant, without much inquiry whether they were justifiable; wanton and unjust aggressions, and other crimes of still deeper dye, are glossed over upon some false plea of patriotism; or their moral quality is never alluded to, and the young reader is too much captivated by the splendour of bravery and talent, to remember that the ends to which these gifts are directed should never be forgotten in estimating their claim to applause.\* But whatever be our opinion

\* A striking instance of this occurs in Justin. Speaking of Harmodius and Aristogiton (see chap. v.), he says, "One of the murderers, being put to the torture to extract the names of his accomplices, enumerated all the nearest friends of Hippias. These were all put to death, and being asked whether any others were privy to his designs, he answered, that now none remained whom he wished to perish, except the tyrant himself. The city, admonished by his virtue, expelled Hippias."—Lib. ii. 9. The *virtue* of this act con-