

PARALLELS, OR A COMPARISON BETWEEN THE  
GREEK AND ROMAN HISTORIES.\*

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Most people are apt to take the histories of former times for mere forgeries and fables, because of many passages in those relations that seem to be very extravagant. But yet, according to my observation, we have had as strange occurrences of a later date in the Roman times as any we have received from antiquity ; for proof whereof, I have here matched several stories of the ancients with modern instances, and cited my authorities.

1. Datis, an eminent Persian commander, drew out three hundred thousand men to Marathon, a plain of Attica, where he encamped and declared war against the inhabitants. The Athenians made no reckoning at all of so barbarous a rabble, but sent out nine thousand men against him, under the command of Cynaegirus, Polyzelus, Callimachus, and Miltiades. Upon the joining of battle, Polyzelus was struck blind at the sight of a wonderful ap-

\* It seems impossible to believe this treatise to be the work of Plutarch, and equally impossible to believe it to be the work of any full-grown man of sound mind. In this case, and in that of the next treatise, no satisfaction is gained by merely supposing the work spurious. One of these Parallel Histories is usually a well-known story, and the other is an absurd imitation of it. An instance may be seen in section 12, where the common story of Manlius Torquatus and his son is matched by an absurd one of Epaminondas and his son ; on which Wyttenbach remarks : "Romanum constat : Graecum non modo ementitum, sed stulte ementitum." We might almost suspect that many of them are some school-boy's compositions, half historical, and half imitations of well-known stories fortified by imaginary authorities. Is it possible that this school-boy can have been Plutarch himself? (G.)

partition; Callimachus's body was struck through with a great many lances, continuing in an upright posture even when he was dead; Cynaegirus had both his hands cut off upon laying hold of a Persian ship that was endeavoring to get away.

King Asdrubal, having possessed himself of Sicily, proclaimed war against the Romans. Metellus, who was appointed by the Senate to command in chief, overcame him. L. Glauco, a patrician, laid hold of the vessel that Asdrubal was in, and lost both his hands upon it. — *Aristides Milesius gives this account in his First Book of the Affairs of Sicily, and Dionysius Siculus had it from him.*

2. Xerxes came with an army of five millions of men to Artemisium, and declared war against the country. The Athenians, in a very great surprise, sent Agesilaus, the brother of Themistocles, to discover the motions of the enemy, notwithstanding a dream of his father Neocles, that his son had lost both his hands. This Agesilaus put himself into a Persian habit, and entered the barbarians' camp; where, taking Mardonius (an officer of the king's guards) for Xerxes himself, he killed him. Whereupon he was immediately seized, bound, and carried to Xerxes, who was just then about to sacrifice an ox to the Sun. The fire was kindled upon the altar, and Agesilaus put his right hand into it, without so much as shrinking at the pain. He was ordered upon this to be untied; and told the king that the Athenians were all of the same resolution, and that, if he pleased, he should see him burn his left hand too. This gave Xerxes an apprehension of him, so that he caused him to be still kept in custody. — *This I find in Agatharchides the Samian, in the Second Book of his Persian History.*

Porsena, a king of Tuscany, encamped himself beyond the Tiber, and made war upon the Romans, cutting off the supplies, till they were brought to great want of provi-

sions. The Senate were at their wits' end what to do, till Mucius, a nobleman, got leave of the consuls to take four hundred of his own quality to advise with upon the matter. Mucius, upon this, put himself into the habit of a private man, and crossed the river; where finding one of the king's officers giving orders for the distribution of necessaries to the soldiers, and taking him for the king himself, he slew him. He was taken immediately and carried to the king, where he put his right hand into a fire that was in the room, and with a smile in the middle of his torments, — Barbarian, says he, I can set myself at liberty without asking you leave; and be it known to you, that I have left four hundred men in the camp as daring as myself, that have sworn your death. This struck Porsena with such a terror, that he made peace with the Romans upon it. — *Aristides Milesius is my author for this, in the Third Book of his History.*

3. There happened a dispute betwixt the Argives and Lacedaemonians about a claim to the possession of Thyreatis. The Amphictyons gave their opinion for a trial of it by battle, so many and so many of a side, and the possession to go to the victor. The Lacedaemonians made choice of Othryades for their captain, and the Argives of Thersander. The battle was fought, and the only two survivors that appeared were Agenor and Chromius, both Argives, who carried their city the news of the victory. In this interim, Othryades, who was not as yet quite dead, made a shift to raise himself by the help of broken lances, gathered the shields of the dead together, and erected a trophy with this inscription upon it in his own blood. “To Jupiter the Guardian of Trophies.” The controversy still depended, till the Amphictyons, upon an ocular examination of the matter, gave it for the Lacedaemonians. — *This is according to Chrysermus, in his Third Book of the Peloponnesian History.*

In a war that the Romans had with the Samnites, they made Posthumius Albinus their general. He was surprised in the difficult pass called the Caudine Forks, where he was hemmed in and lost three legions, he himself likewise falling upon the place grievously wounded. In the dead of the night, finding himself near his end, he gathered together the targets of his dead enemies, and raised a trophy with them, which he inscribed with his hand dipped in blood, "Erected by the Romans to Jupiter, Guardian of the Trophies, for a victory over the Samnites." But Fabius Gurgus, that was despatched away with troops under his command, so soon as he came to the place and saw the trophy, took up an auspicious omen upon it, fought the enemy, and overcame them, took their king prisoner, and sent him to Rome. — *This is in the Third Book of Aristides Milesius's Italian History.*

4. Upon the Persians falling into Greece with a body of five millions of men, the Spartans sent out Leonidas with a party of three hundred soldiers to secure the Pass of Thermopylae. As they were at dinner, the barbarians fell in upon them; upon which, Leonidas bade them eat as if they were to sup in another world. Leonidas charged at the head of his men into the body of the barbarians; and after many wounds received, got up to Xerxes himself, and took his crown from his head. He lost his life in the attempt, and Xerxes causing him to be cut up when he was dead, found his heart all hairy. — *Aristides, in the First Book of his Persian History.*

In the Punic war the Romans sent out three hundred men under the command of Fabius Maximus, where they were all lost; and he himself, after he had received a mortal wound, assaulting Hannibal, took his diadem from his head, and died in the action. *According to Aristides Milesius.*

5. There was a terrible earthquake, with a wonderful eruption of water, at Celaenae, a city of Phrygia, that swallowed up a great many houses, people and all. Midas upon this consults the oracle, which gave him for answer, that if he would cast into that gulf the most precious thing that he had in the world, the earth should close again. Whereupon he threw in a mass of gold and silver; but never the better. This put it in the head of Anchurus, the son of Midas, to consider, that the most precious thing in Nature is the life and soul of a man; so that he went presently and embraced his father and his wife Timothea, mounted his horse, and leaped into the abyss. The earth closed upon it, and Midas raised a golden altar in the place, laid his hand upon it, and dedicated it TO JUPITER IDAEUS. This altar becomes stone at that time of the year when it was usual to have these eruptions; and after that season was over, it is turned to gold again. — *My author is Callisthenes, in his Second Book of Transformations.*

The River Tiber, in its course over the Forum, opened a huge cavity in the ground, so that a great many houses were buried in it. This was looked upon as a judgment upon the place, from Jupiter Tarsius; who, as the oracle told them, was not to be appeased without throwing into it what they held most valuable. So they threw a quantity of gold and silver into it. But Curtius, one of the bravest young men they had, gave a better guess at the mind of the oracle; and reflecting upon it, that the life of a man was much more excellent than treasure, took his horse and plunged himself into the gulf, and so redeemed his country. — *Aristides, in the Fortieth Book of his Italian History.*

6. As several great captains were making merry with Polynices, an eagle passing by made a stoop, and carried

up into the air the lance of Amphiaraus, who was one of the company; and then falling down, it stuck in the ground, and was turned into a laurel. The next day, when the armies were in action, the earth opened and swallowed up Amphiaraus with his chariot, in that very place where at present the city Harma stands, so called from that chariot. — *This is in Trisimachus's Third Book of the Foundations of Cities.*

When the Romans made war upon Pyrrhus, the king of the Epirots, the oracle promised Aemilius Paulus the victory in case he should erect an altar in that place where he should see an eminent man with his chariot swallowed up into the ground. Some three days after, Valerius Conatus, a man skilled in divining, was commanded in a dream to take the pontifical habit upon him. He did so, and led his men into the battle, where, after a prodigious slaughter of the enemy, the earth opened and swallowed him up. Aemilius built an altar here, obtained a great victory, and sent a hundred and sixty castle-bearing elephants to Rome. This altar delivers oracles about that season of the year in which Pyrrhus was overcome. — *Critolaus has this in his Third Book of the History of the Epirots.*

7. Pyraechmes, king of the Euboeans, made war upon the Boeotians. Hercules, when he was yet a youth, overcame this king, had him drawn to pieces with horses, and threw away the carcass unburied. The place where this was done is called Pyraechmes's horses. It lies upon the River Heraclius, and there is heard a neighing whensoever any horse drinks of that river. — *This is in the Third Book of Rivers.*

Tullus Hostilius, a king of the Romans, waged war against the Albans, whose king's name was Metius Fufetius; and he many times kept off from fighting. He had the ill luck to be once worsted, upon which the Albans

gave themselves up to drinking and making good cheer, till Tullus fell in upon them when they were in their cups, and tore their king to pieces betwixt two horses. — *Alexarchus, in the Fourth Book of his Italian History.*

8. Philip had a design to sack Olynthus and Methone, and in trying to pass the River Sandanus, was shot in the eye with an arrow by one Aster, an Olynthian, with these words: It is Aster that sends Philip this mortal shaft. Philip upon this swam back again to his own people, and with the loss of an eye saved his life. — *Callisthenes, in his Third Book of the Macedonics.*

Porsena made war upon the Romans, and pitched his camp on the further side of the Tiber, where he intercepted all relief, till they were pinched with famine. Horatius Cocles, being chosen general, took possession of the wooden bridge, where he opposed himself to the enemy that were pressing to come over; but finding himself overpowered with numbers, he commanded his people to cut down the bridge behind him, by which means he hindered them from coming over. But in the mean time receiving a wound in his eye, he threw himself into the river, and swam over to his own party. — *So Theotimus in the Second Book of his Italian History.*

9. Eratosthenes in Erigone tells a story of Icarius, that entertained Bacchus under his roof; and it runs thus. Saturn, having taken up his lodging with an husbandman who had a very beautiful daughter named Entoria, took her to his bed, and had several sons by her, Janus, Hymnus, Faustus, and Felix. He taught his host Icarius the use of wine and the way of dressing his vines, with a charge that he should likewise instruct his neighbors in the mystery. His acquaintance, hereupon finding that this strange drink had cast them into a deeper sleep than ordi-

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