



XERXES

JACOB ABBOTT

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BY
JACOB ABBOTT

Xerxes By Jacob Abbott.

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himself the lion's share of the Eubœan contribution. The effect of this money in altering the opinions of the naval officers was marvelous. A new council was called, the former decision was annulled, and the Greeks determined to give their enemies battle where they were.

Precautions of the Persians.

The Persians had not been unmindful of the danger that the Greeks might retreat by retiring through the Euripus, and so escape them. In order to prevent this, they secretly sent off a fleet of two hundred of their strongest and fleetest galleys, with orders to sail round Eubœa and enter the Euripus from the south, so as to cut off the retreat of the Greeks in that quarter. They thought that by this plan the Greek fleet would be surrounded, and could have no possible mode of escape. They remained, therefore, with the principal fleet, at the outer entrance of the northern strait for some days, before attacking the Greeks, in order to give time for the detachment to pass round the island.

Designs of the Persians discovered.

The Persians sent off the two hundred galleys with great secrecy, not desiring that the Greeks should discover their design of thus intercepting their retreat. They did discover it, however, for this was the occasion on which the great diver, Scyllias, made his escape from one fleet to the other by swimming under water ten miles, and he brought the Greeks the tidings.⁴

The Greeks decide to give battle. Euripus and Artemisium.

The Greeks dispatched a small squadron of ships with orders to proceed southward into the Euripus, to meet this detachment which the Persians sent round; and, in the mean time, they determined themselves to attack the main Persian fleet without any delay. Notwithstanding their absurd dissensions and jealousies, and the extent to which the leaders were influenced by intrigues and bribes, the Greeks always evinced an undaunted and indomitable spirit when the day of battle came. It was, moreover, in this case, exceedingly important to defend the position which they had taken. By referring to the map once more, it will be seen that the Euripus was the great highway to Athens by sea, as the pass of Thermopylæ was by land. Thermopylæ was west of Artemisium, where the fleet was now stationed, and not many miles from it. The Greek army had made its great stand at Thermopylæ, and Xerxes was fast coming down the country with all his forces to endeavor to force a passage there. The Persian fleet, in entering Artemisium, was making the same attempt by sea in respect to the narrow passage of Euripus; and for either of the two forces, the fleet or the army, to fail of making good the defense of its position, without

⁴ There is reason to suppose that Scyllias made his escape by night in a boat, managing the circumstances, however, in such a way as to cause the story to be circulated that he swam.

