

MARIUS, as I have said, had been elected consul with the enthusiastic support of the common people. When the Assembly voted the province of Numidia to him, the hostility which he had already shown towards the nobles redoubled in violence, since he thought now that he could defy them. Sometimes he denounced individuals, sometimes the whole body of the nobility, saying that his consulship was a prize which he had won by beating them, and making other remarks calculated to glorify himself and wound them. At the same time he gave first priority to preparations for the war. He demanded that the legions should be made up to strength, called for auxiliary troops from subject peoples and kings and from Rome's Italian allies, summoned the bravest soldiers from the Latin towns – men who had either served under him or been recommended to him – and by personal appeals induced time-expired veterans to join his expeditionary force. The Senate, in spite of its hostility, dared not refuse anything he asked. As to the addition to the strength of the legions, they were only too pleased to authorize it, because the people were supposed to dislike military service, so that Marius would either have to go without the men he needed or forfeit his popularity with the multitude. But they were disappointed: most of the men were eager to go overseas with Marius, imagining that they would make a fortune out of the spoils, return home victorious, and so forth. A speech which Marius made greatly increased their enthusiasm. For when he had obtained from the Senate all the decrees he demanded and the time had come to enrol the soldiers, he called a public meeting with the object both of encouraging recruitment and of making one more attack on the nobles. His address was to the following effect:

'I know, fellow citizens, how election to a post of authority seems to change most men's characters. As candidates, they are full of energy, humbly entreat your support, and behave with moderation. Once elected, they become arrogant and slothful. To my mind this is altogether wrong. Inasmuch as the whole state is more important than a consulship or praetorship, more pains should be taken over its administration than in canvassing for these offices. I am well aware of the heavy responsibility which this great honour lays upon me. To prepare for war without exhausting the public treasury, to press into military service men whom you are anxious not to offend, to direct everything at home and abroad, and to do all this in the midst of jealousy, obstruction, and intrigue, is a harder task than people imagine. Furthermore my political opponents, if they make a mistake, can rely for protection on their ancient lineage, the resources of their relatives and marriage connexions, and their numerous dependants. My hopes rest only on myself, and I must sustain them by courage and uprightness; for I have nothing else to trust in. I know, too, that everyone's eyes are upon me – that fair-minded and patriotic men wish me well because my efforts are serviceable to our country, while the nobles seek occasion to pounce on me. Wherefore I must strive all the harder to frustrate their plans and prevent your being deceived. From my childhood to this day I have so lived that every kind of toil and danger has been familiar to me; and what I did for nothing, before you conferred these honours on me, I shall not cease to do now that I have received my reward. Restraint in the use of authority is not to be expected from men who have merely assumed a mask of virtue in order to procure advancement. But I, having spent all my life in honourable pursuits, have so habituated myself to well-doing that it has become second nature to me.

'You have chosen me to conduct the war against Jugurtha, and this has greatly annoyed the nobility. Now consider

whether it would be better to alter your decision — I mean, to appoint for this or for any similar work some member of that coterie of noblemen, a man with a long pedigree and a houseful of family portraits, but without a single campaign to his credit, who, faced with a serious task which he does not know the first thing about, will get excited and run about trying to find some commoner to instruct him in his duty. This is in fact what generally happens: the man you appoint to take command looks for another to command him. I myself know cases in which a consul, after his election, has taken to studying history and Greek military treatises. This is reversing the natural order of things. For although you cannot discharge the duties of an office until you have been elected to it, the necessary practical experience should come first. Compare me, the “new” man, with these high and mighty ones. What they know only from hearsay or reading, I have seen with my own eyes or done with my own hands. What they have learned out of books, I have learned on the battlefield. It is for you to judge whether words or deeds are more to the point. They scorn my lack of illustrious ancestors, I scorn their indolent habits. The worst that can be said of me is that I am a man of humble condition; *they* can be charged with acts of infamy. For my part, I believe that all men are partakers of one and the same nature, and that manly virtue is the only true nobility. If the fathers of Albinus and Bestia could be asked whether they would rather have had me or them for sons, what other answer do you think they would give than that they desired to have the best possible children? If these men think they have a right to look down on me, they ought equally to look down on their own ancestors, who, like me, had no nobility but what they earned by their merits. They are jealous of my preferment; but they have no wish to share the life of austerity and toil — yes, and of danger too — by which I have obtained it. Eaten up with pride, they live as if they scorned the honours you can bestow, and then demand

them of you with the air of men who have lived honourably. They are making a grave mistake if they think that they can have it both ways — that they can enjoy, both together, things so incompatible as the pleasures of idleness and the rewards of honourable exertion. When they address you or the Senate they spend most of the time in praising their ancestors, because they fondly imagine that by dwelling on their brave exploits they enhance their own glory. On the contrary, the more illustrious the lives of their forefathers, the more shameful is their own indolence. The truth is that ancestral glory is like a torch that sheds a revealing light both on a man's virtues and on his faults. I admit, citizens, that I have nothing of this kind; but I have something much more glorious — deeds of my own that I can mention. See how unfair they are. The privilege they claim on the strength of other people's merits, they will not allow me in right of my own merits, just because I have no family portraits to show and am a newcomer to the nobility of office. Yet surely it is better to have ennobled oneself than to have disgraced a nobility that one has inherited.

‘I do not need to be told that my opponents, if they choose to reply to what I have said, are quite capable of making eloquent and elaborate speeches on the subject. But since they are seizing the occasion of this high honour that you have done me to heap abuse on both of us, I have chosen to speak, in case my reticence should be interpreted as a consciousness of my unworthiness. For myself indeed — and I say this in all sincerity — no speeches can do me harm: for if they speak the truth they cannot help speaking well of me, and falsehood my life and character will refute. But since they also impugn your judgement in assigning me such a high office and so important a task, I advise you to consider again and yet again whether you will have cause to regret your choice. I cannot, to justify your confidence in me, point to the portraits, triumphs, or consulships of my ancestors. But if need be I can show spears,

a banner, medals, and other military honours, to say nothing of the scars on my body – all of them in front. These are my family portraits, these my title of nobility, one not bequeathed to me, as theirs were to them, but won at the cost of countless toils and perils.

‘My words are not carefully chosen. I attach no importance to such artifices, of which true merit stands in no need, since it is plainly visible to all. It is my adversaries who require oratorical skill to help them cover up their turpitude. Nor have I studied Greek literature; I had no interest in a branch of learning which did nothing to improve the characters of its professors. The lessons I have learnt are such as best enable me to serve my country – to strike down an enemy, to mount guard, to fear nothing but disgrace, to endure winter’s cold and summer’s heat with equal patience, to sleep on the bare ground, and to work hard on an empty stomach. These are the lessons I shall teach my soldiers. And I shall not make them go short while enjoying the best of everything myself, nor steal all the glory and leave them the toil. This is the proper way for a citizen to lead his fellow citizens. To live in luxury oneself while subjecting one’s army to rigorous discipline is to act like a tyrant instead of a commander. It was by conduct such as I recommend that your ancestors won renown for themselves and for the state. Relying on that renown to shed a reflected glory on them, these noblemen, who are so different in character from those ancestors, despise us who emulate their virtues, and expect to receive all posts of honour at your hands, not because they deserve them, but as if they had a peculiar right to them. These proud men make a very big mistake. Their ancestors left them all they could – riches, portrait busts, and their own glorious memory. Virtue, they have not bequeathed to them, nor could they; for it is the only thing that no man can give to another or receive from another. They call me vulgar and unpolished, because I do not know how to

put on an elegant dinner and do not have actors at my table or keep a cook who has cost me more than my farm overseer. All this, my fellow citizens, I am proud to admit. For I was taught by my father and other men of blameless life that while elegant graces befit a woman, a man’s duty is to labour; that every good man should live for honour rather than for riches; that the weapons he carries in his hands, and not the furniture he keeps in his house, are the ornaments most worth having. Well then, let them continue to do what pleases them – the love-making and drinking that they set such store by; let them spend their old age as they spent their youth, in the pleasures of the table, the slaves of gluttony and lust. Let them leave the sweat, the dust, and the rest of it to us, to whom such things are better than a feast. But no: after covering themselves with infamy these rakes contrive to steal the rewards that are the due of honest men. Thus, in defiance of all justice, these foul vices of luxury and sloth are no hindrance to them in their careers; it is the innocent state that suffers ruin.

‘Having said enough on that subject to defend my own character – though much less than their crimes deserve – I shall speak briefly of public affairs. In the first place, citizens, Numidia need cause you no anxiety. Hitherto Jugurtha has been saved from defeat by the greed, incompetence, or vanity of your generals; but you have now changed all this. Moreover you have an army there which knows the terrain, though its success has not been equal to its valiant efforts; for it has been gravely weakened by the corruption or rashness of its leaders. I therefore call upon all men of military age to cooperate with me in the service of our country. And no one need fear a repetition of the misfortunes which your comrades suffered under my arrogant predecessors. I shall be with you on the march and on the field of battle, to be your guide and to share your perils; and I shall claim no special privileges for myself. Rest assured that, with the gods’ help, all the fruits of

battle are ready to be plucked; victory, spoils, and glory await you - though even if these rewards were doubtful or remote, it would still be the duty of all patriots to rally to the aid of their fatherland. Cowardice will not enable a man to live for ever, and no parent ever prayed that his children might have immortality, but rather that they might live virtuous and honourable lives. There is more that I might say, if faint-hearted could have courage put into them by words; for the brave, I think I have said quite enough.'

Satisfied that his speech had aroused the enthusiasm of the people, Marius hastened to load his ships with stores, money, arms, and other requisites, and ordered his lieutenant Aulus Manlius to set out with the convoy. Meanwhile he continued to sign on soldiers, not, in accordance with traditional custom, from the propertied classes, but accepting any man who volunteered - members of the proletariat for the most part. Some said he did this because he could not get enough of a better kind; others, that he wanted to curry favour with men of low condition, since he owed to them his fame and advancement. And indeed, if a man is ambitious for power, he can have no better supporters than the poor: they are not concerned about their own possessions, since they have none, and whatever will put something into their pockets is right and proper in their eyes. The result of this new method of enlistment was that Marius set sail with a force considerably larger than that authorized by the decree, and a few days later he put in to Utica, where the army already in Africa was handed over to him by the lieutenant Publius Rutilius; for Metellus had avoided meeting Marius, not wishing to see what he could not bear even to hear about.

CHAPTER X

MARIUS'S FIRST CAMPAIGN (107 B.C.)

AFTER making up his legions and auxiliary cohorts to their full strength the consul advanced into a fertile region where there was abundance of spoil, all of which he let the soldiers have. He then attacked some fortresses and settlements that were badly situated for defence and ill-manned, and fought a number of small engagements in various places. In course of time the new recruits learnt to go fearlessly into action; for they saw that runaways were captured or killed, while the bravest stood the best chance of coming through unscathed, and they soon realized that the arms they carried afforded the only means of protecting liberty, fatherland, parents, and everything else, or of winning glory and riches. Thus in a short time novices and veterans were welded into a homogeneous body, all of them equally courageous. As for the two African kings, directly they heard of Marius's arrival, they separated and retired into difficult country - a plan devised by Jugurtha in the hope that before long the Romans, by dividing their forces, would expose themselves to attack; for most armies are tempted by the removal of immediate danger to relax their standards of care and discipline. Metellus meanwhile went to Rome, where, to his surprise, he was welcomed with great joy. The feeling against him had died down, and he was now as popular with the people as with the senators.

Marius acted with energy and foresight, keeping watch on his own men and on the enemy and noting their strong and weak points, observing the kings' movements, forestalling their designs and stratagems, allowing his own army no relaxation and theirs no respite from alarm. He had, for

example, inflicted several defeats on the Gactulians and on Jugurtha while they were driving off cattle seized from the inhabitants of the Province, and not far from Cirta he forced the king's own troops to abandon their arms and flee. But when he saw that these successes merely won him credit without bringing the end of the war any nearer, he decided to invest each of the towns which, by reason of their natural strength or the number of their inhabitants, were best able to help the enemy and to hinder him. This, he thought, would either deprive Jugurtha of his power of defence, if he did not interfere, or would compel him to give battle. As to Bocchus, he had several times sent word to Marius that he desired the friendship of Rome and had no intention of fighting. This may have been a ruse to enable him, by means of a surprise attack, to strike with more effect; or it may be that his natural inability to make up his mind made him thus chop and change about. The consul, in accordance with his plan, marched on various fortified towns and strongholds; some were taken by storm, others surrendered because the garrisons took fright or were seduced by Marius's bribes. At first he contented himself with minor operations, expecting that Jugurtha would fight to protect his subjects. But when he heard that the king was far away and absorbed in other tasks, he judged that the time was ripe for bigger and harder undertakings. In the middle of a huge desert lay the important and strongly defended town of Capsa,* the traditional founder of which was the Libyan Hercules. Under Jugurtha's rule its inhabitants were exempted from taxation and well treated. They were therefore particularly loyal to him, and the place was protected not only by its ramparts and a well-armed garrison, but still more by the difficulty of the surrounding country. For, except the immediate neighbourhood of the town, the whole district is desolate, uncultivated,

* The modern Gafsa, about 130 miles south of the river Muthul, at the south-eastern extremity of Jugurtha's kingdom.

waterless, and infested by deadly serpents, which like all wild animals are made fiercer by scarcity of food, and especially by thirst, which exasperates their natural malignity. Marius's mind was set on capturing this place, not only on account of its strategic importance, but also because he wanted to try his hand at what looked like a difficult enterprise, and because Metellus had won great renown by his capture of Thala, the situation and defences of which were similar, except that at Thala there were several springs of water near the walls, whereas the people of Capsa had only one never-failing supply - situated inside the town - apart from which they relied on rain water. This scarcity of water, both here and in all the comparatively uncivilized interior of North Africa, was rendered more endurable by the Numidian habit of living chiefly on milk and the flesh of wild animals and not using salt or other appetizers: they ate and drank to satisfy their hunger and thirst, not to indulge gluttonous cravings.

After making a thorough reconnaissance Marius decided - one must presume - to put his trust in heaven. For the difficulties that faced him were too formidable for human wisdom to provide against them unaided. He was even threatened by a dearth of corn, because the Numidians pay more attention to grazing than to raising crops; moreover, such grain as there was had by the king's order been conveyed into the fortresses, and the fields were parched and bare at the end of the summer. Nevertheless, Marius made such provision as his means allowed and his foresight suggested. The auxiliary horsemen were told to drive forward with the marching column all the cattle taken during the previous days. The lieutenant Aulus Manlius was sent with the light infantry to the town of Lares,* where the wage-money and reserve supplies were stored; and Marius gave out that he would come there himself

* About eleven miles south of Sicca (Le Kef).

in a few days in the course of a plundering expedition. This was said in order to conceal his real objective. He then advanced to the river Tanais.

Every day during this march he had distributed a ration of cattle to the men of each century and squadron, who were told to make water-containers out of the hides. In this way he made up for the short supply of corn and at the same time, without letting anyone discover his purpose, provided the utensils that he knew would shortly be required. By the time they reached the river, on the sixth day, they had a large stock of skins. There, after making a lightly fortified camp, he ordered the men to eat their dinners and be ready to march at sunset, abandoning their packs and taking nothing but the filled skins – as many as they themselves and their beasts could carry. In due course he set out, marched all night, and then halted. The same procedure was followed the next night; and during the third night, some time before dawn, he reached a hilly district not more than two miles from Capsa, where, with the whole army carefully screened from observation, he waited. At daybreak the Numidians, who had no reason to fear an attack, came out of the town in force, and Marius ordered all his cavalry and the swiftest of his infantry to run and occupy the gates. He was so eager for success that he hurried after them himself, to prevent the men from going after plunder. When the townspeople saw themselves thus taken by surprise, with a part of their number outside the walls and in the enemy's power, they were seized with such panic and dismay that they surrendered. Nevertheless, the town was set on fire, the adult men massacred, the remainder of the population sold into slavery, and the booty divided among the soldiers. This violation of the usages of war was not inspired by avarice or brutality on the consul's part: the fact was that the place was important to Jugurtha and difficult for the Romans to reach, and the inhabitants were a fickle and

untrustworthy lot, whom neither kindness nor fear had ever been able to control.

The achievement of this noteworthy victory without any casualties enhanced still more Marius's already great reputation. Any ill-considered action on his part was now regarded as a proof of his gallantry; the soldiers, treated with consideration and enriched with plunder, praised him to the skies, while the Numidians seemed to think he had superhuman powers, so terrified were they of him; in fact everyone, friend and foe alike, believed that he either possessed divine insight or was the recipient of signs vouchsafed him by favour of the gods. After this first success he marched to other towns, and took by storm the few which resisted; the majority however had been abandoned in consequence of the terror inspired by the dreadful fate of Capsa; these he burnt, and filled all the land with bloodshed and lamentation. After capturing many places* – most of them without shedding a drop of his soldiers' blood – he embarked on a fresh enterprise, which, without being as perilous as the assault on Capsa, was equally difficult.

* These operations probably occupied a considerable time, i.e. the remainder of the year 107 and the early part of 106. Sallust says nothing about a cessation of hostilities during the winter, and in fact there may have been no cessation.