

Besides the Teutons we hear also in ancient times of the Cimbri, another wild tribe of the same Germanic family. These blue-eyed savages hated peace too. They were for ever wandering forth, clamorous for new lands, so again and again they came into conflict with the Romans. And even the world-conquerors could not stand against them. Many battles these Germans won, and for twelve years the Romans trembled before the Cimbric Terror. Thrice the way to Rome lay open to the plundering hordes, but each time, why or wherefore we know not, they turned aside to Spain or Belgium, and Rome was saved. For the moment, it may be, they desired not conquest south of the Alps, but a home north of them. At length, however, the German hordes decided to attack Rome, to waste all Italy, and lay the capital in ruins. An enormous host gathered. It was not merely an army of warriors, it was a whole people on the march. They came with their tents and their household goods, their wives and children, their slaves and servants, their cattle and dogs. Slowly this enormous host wound southward, divided into two great bands, the Teutons under their King Teutobod and the Cimbri under their King Boiorix. The two hosts marched upon Italy by different routes, and it was the Teutons who first met the Roman army arrayed against them. For the Roman leader Marius resolved not to wait for Italy to be attacked, but crossed the Alps and marched to meet the foe. It was at the mouth of the Rhone valley that the two armies met. Here Marius fortified his camp well, and dug a deep trench about it. Then he awaited the enemy. It was not long before the Teutons appeared upon the plain in numbers beyond all imaginings. On and on they came, hungering for battle. Soon their terrible war-song resounded, rising and falling in harsh roars. It was very awful to hear, for each man held his shield in front of his mouth, so that it acted like a sounding-board, and gave to his voice a strange unearthly tone. Urged on by this wild music the warriors advanced. But Marius and his men lay still within their strong encampment. They refused to fight. For three days the barbarians raged around the camp in vain. From every attempt to storm it they were beaten back with great loss. But if the barbarians raged without, the Roman soldiers raged within the camp. They were eager to sally forth, give battle to the foe or scatter them in flight, and they were made to sit still, or allowed at best only to throw a few arrows from the walls. What does Marius take us for, they grumbled, that he thus locks us up and will not let us fight? Is building walls and digging trenches worthy labour for a soldier? Are we not here to fight for our country? Marius was not ill-pleased to find his soldiers so eager for battle. He soothed them gently and bade them wait. At length, weary of the useless attack, the Teutons resolved to march past the Roman army and reach Italy without further delay. Marius allowed them to go. Growing bolder and ever bolder, they passed close to the camp, flinging taunts at the Romans. Have you any messages for your wives and families? they asked, for we shall soon see them.

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