

**ATTILA: A  
ROMANCE; IN TWO  
VOLUMES, VOL. II**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649068531

Attila: A Romance; In Two Volumes, Vol. II by Rainsford James

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.  
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

[www.triestepublishing.com](http://www.triestepublishing.com)

**RAINSFORD JAMES**

**ATTILA: A  
ROMANCE; IN TWO  
VOLUMES, VOL. II**



*Sarah Tyler*

A T T I L A.

A ROMANCE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"THE GIPSY," "ONE IN A THOUSAND," &c., &c.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

NEW-YORK:

HARPER & BROTHERS, 22 CLIFF-STREET.

1838.

M 117

*M. James*

*N. W.*

# A T T I L A .

---

## CHAPTER I.

### THE RETRIBUTION.

SHIFT we the scene, and return to the kingdom of Attila! It was the fourth day after Theodore had left the country of the Huns for that sweet distant land where happiness, as we have seen, awaited him, and a bright gleam of sunshine was destined to checker his dark fate, when, at a short distance from the bank of the Tibiscus, two barbarians, who had left their horses with their followers by the stream, walked slowly on among the trees, wading through the long grass and tangled bushes. At length, suddenly, from a spot before them, came the flapping of heavy wings and a hoarse and scream from many a foul beak, while five or six large vultures rose up, crashing through the branches above, and leaving open to the sight all that remained of the unfortunate Arab, Cremera. From some cause, a nail, which had fixed one of the hands, had fallen out, and the skeleton, for to such a thing was the corpse now nearly reduced, hung by the other palm; but two arrows were still seen hanging amid the fleshless ribs, and telling the manner of the freedman's death.

"Lo!" said the shorter of the two strangers—"lo! I have now seen it with mine own eyes! And this man's crime was but that he had obeyed my commands, and saved the life of the man that I loved! Shall this be suffered, Ardaric! Shall it last another hour, to ring in the ears of my people, to sound in their inmost hearts, that Attila avenges not his own, that Attila cannot protect those who perform his bidding! Think you it was really Bleda's doing!"

"Doubt it not, oh king!" answered Ardaric. "Was not the Roman carried to his village? Would not death have been the stranger's portion, too, had he not escaped? Some one bore thy brother the tidings of the youth's journey, and they waylaid him, to cut the thread of life on which they fancied thine depended."

"Ay! It is even so!" answered Attila. "Therein is it that the Roman sinned in their eyes. But they shall find that I can rid me of mine enemies and avenge my friends! To horse, Ardaric! we will to our horses quick. The cup of vengeance is full and flowing over. He whom no warning could deter shall drink it to the dregs. The leaders we ordered must by this time have crossed the mountains."

"They must have done so, oh Attila!" replied the King of the Gepidæ; "but what is thy will to do now? Thou wilt not surely ravage a part of thine own people's lands; or, by waging war against thy brother, give new heart to the pale Romans!"

Attila stopped as he was advancing, and fixed his dark eyes full upon the countenance of Ardaric. "Hast thou known me so long," he said, "and canst not yet guess what Attila will do? Am I not king over this man also, to punish him for his evil deeds when they are directed against myself. No, no! I will not ravage mine own land, nor slay mine own people. But the son of Paulinus will I protect, and even you freedman will I avenge; and I will crush the worm that raises its head against me, even though it call me brother. Ardaric, dost thou not know what I will do? Bleda and I are no more for the same earth: I have borne with him long, but I bear with him no longer, and he dies! now thou understandest!" and, with a quick, firm pace, every footfall of which seemed to crush the earth it trod upon, he returned to the spot where the horses had been left.

About five hundred horsemen waited him there, and, at their head, Attila took his way towards the east. After two hours' riding, some three thousand more joined him on the road; and at the end of two hours more he paused, and sent messengers in different directions to chieftains whom he named. Night fell, and with the first star of evening the monarch resumed his way.

The autumn moon rose large and full, pouring over the wide plain in which the dwelling of Bleda was



placed with a yellow, tranquil light: the voice of nature was all still; and not a sound was heard but the sighing of the wind through the branches, or the falling of a withered leaf amid those that had gone down before it. A shooting star traversed the blue fields above, outshining, for the brief moment of its being, the moon herself, and then ending in emptiness. A heavy bird of night glanced across the moonlight, and, with a faint scream, disappeared.

It was about midnight, and then from the neighbouring woods came forth, in dead, deep silence, troop after troop of shadowy forms; and, leaving the village on one side, they drew a circle, fatal and sure as the unerring bowstring of a kindred race, around the dwelling of Bleda. They were all now on foot; and when they had reached the distance of about two hundred yards from the building, the circle was complete, and they paused.

"Now, Onegisus!" said Attila, "what hast thou to tell of the inquiries thou hast made. Speak, and if thou hast aught to say which should induce the king to spare his kindred blood, I will take thee to my heart, and give thee kingdoms! Speak!" and he clasped his hands together, and wrung the sinewy fingers hard, under emotions that even his iron soul could not restrain.

"Alas! oh king!" replied Onegisus, "I have naught to say which may mitigate thy wrath. I had hoped that it would be otherwise; but I find—and I must speak truth unto the king—that even across the mountains the followers of thy brother pursued the Roman youth, and ravaged a village, killing several and driving away the herds of all, because they lent the son of Paulinus a horse to fly when he demanded it in thy name. Their dwellings are in the dust, and their blood stains the grass, and the widows and the children cry to Attila for vengeance."

"They shall have it!" replied Attila. "Let those appointed follow me!" and he advanced to the portico of Bleda's house.

The chief door opened at once to the monarch's hand—"And can treason and treachery sleep so securely?" demanded Attila, in a sad tone, as he turned through the first passage of the noiseless dwelling to the large hall in which banquets were usually held. It



still smelt strong of the feast; and the monarch paused in the midst, folding his arms upon his chest, and gazing bitterly upon the ground.

"Uldric," he said at length, "Uldric, where art thou!"

A man of powerful frame, and countenance more than usually ferocious, advanced before the king, saying, "I am here, oh Attila, and ready."

"Is thy sword sharp, and thy heart strong?" demanded Attila. The chief bent his head in token of assent, and the monarch went on: "Go, then," he said, "and do the deed which none but a noble and brave hand should do! But slay him not in his sleep, for that would seem as if thou wert a murderer, and he a coward afraid to die. Wake him! Tell him his doom! Tell him the cause! Say he was warned, and would not hear; and that the cup has overflowed! Ardaric, do thou see it done! Take warriors enough with thee that there be no resistance. Go! go! Yet stay!" continued Attila: "stay! Oh ye gods! why have ye put this upon me! Is there none here who can speak a word in favour of my brother! none who can say aught to stay the anger of the king! All silent! Go, then! go, Ardaric! It is time that it were done."

Attila waved his hand; then, bending down his eyes again, he remained motionless in the midst of those who stayed with him. But the only moment of indecision that he had ever shown throughout his life had passed away; and, as the moonlight streamed on his dark countenance, no trait of wavering doubt could there be seen. All was firm and calm, though stern and gloomy; and the knitted brow, the compressed lip, the clinched hand, told that there were pangs, but no hesitation within.

The last of those sent upon the mission of death left the hall, and with steps which were scarce heard even by waking ears, they went upon their errand. A minute elapsed, and then there came a murmur of voices, and then two or three loud shrieks from a woman's voice, mingled with sobbing, prayers, and sad entreaties: then a dead heavy fall—and then the tones of lamentation. Distant sounds succeeded, and the noise of steps in various parts of the building; cries of grief and terror followed, and some signs of contention were distinguished.

"Bid them shed no more blood!" said Attila, turning

to one who stood near: "cut off the head, but mangle not the body!"

Almost as he spoke, however, a slave rushed in with a lighted torch of pine in one hand, and a drawn sword in the other; but when the light glared upon Attila, he stood suddenly motionless before the king, as if petrified with fear and astonishment. "Oh king, they have slain thy brother!" he cried at length.

"It is well!" answered Attila: "get thee on one side, so shall no harm befall thee." The next instant there came the sound of footsteps running quickly; and Neva, with her hair dishevelled, and her feet uncovered, ran into the hall, and cast herself at the feet of Attila.

"Oh, spare him! spare him!" she cried; "spare him for the memory of thy father! Spare him for the remembered days of infancy! Spare him, because of his weakness and thy strength! Pour not out thy kindred blood upon the dust! Remember that thou wert a brother ere thou wert a king! Spare him; forgive him if he have offended thee! But it cannot be! They have lied unto me; thou canst not seek thy brother's life! Thou wouldst never slay him who has slept in the same cradle, eaten the same food, and stood by thy side in battle! Yet what dost thou here! Oh, spare him! spare him!" and she clasped the knees of the dark monarch in the agony of apprehension.

Others had followed her, women, and children, and slaves; and at nearly the same time the chieftain called Uldric stood in the doorway, and held up before the eyes of Attila a naked sword, along the blade of which a drop or two of a dark red hue was seen to trickle in the torchlight.

"Maiden!" said Attila, laying his hand on Neva's head, "cease thine entreaties! they are now vain. Yet have not I done this thing. His own hand it was that pulled the ruin on his head. He it was that cast himself upon my sword, knowing that it was drawn, and that the hand was firm that held it. Weep, if thou wilt! Go to thy chamber and weep! it is the right and the weakness of woman. Go! but entreat no longer; thou hast none now to save!"

She heard not, or heeded not his words, but still clasped his knees, and with wild looks and streaming eyes she poured forth her supplications. They were

interrupted, however, by her mother's voice, who passed through the crowd like a spectre, and, with spots of blood upon her garments, stood before the king. "Ask him not to spare, my child," she said, in a voice as calm as death; "ask him not to spare! He knows no mercy! Ask him rather to give us our own doom quickly. Thy father is dead already; why should we be left alive? Or is it thy will, oh king, that we be sold as slaves? We are ready; but we would rather die if the choice were left to such as us. We are but thy brother Bleda's widow and children, and therefore have no claim upon the conqueror of the world: no, not even to choose between death and bondage. He that spared not his own brother will not spare the women and the babes."

"Woman, I did spare him!" answered Attila, solemnly: "three times did I spare, when any other man on earth, had he been monarch or slave, had died for so offending Attila. Woman, I spared him so long as his deeds affected but myself; but when he forgot all law and justice to my people, when he made ready the spear and sword to raise up contention in the land, when he slew the innocent and the noble, Attila forgot he had a brother. Neither bondage nor death await thee and thy children; thy husband's crimes have not affected thee; honour, and wealth, and peaceful possession of all that he possessed shall be thine; thy children shall be as my children, and I will defend them against their enemies. Attila sought not his brother's wealth; he sought but to do justice, and justice has been done. Take them hence, Ardaric! take them hence! she is privileged to reproach and murmur; but Attila would not that his ear should have any words that might offend him. Take them hence!"

They were removed without resistance; and, after pausing for a moment in thought, Attila demanded of those who had been present at his brother's death, "What men have ye found in the house?"

"But few," was the reply; "and they were slaves."

"Was the deformed negro, Zercon, among them?" asked the monarch again.

"No," replied the Hun to whom he spoke; "we found him not."

"Let him be sought," said Attila, sternly. "He it was, he it must have been who betrayed to Bleda the