



Italy and Her Invaders: Volume II - The Hunnish Invasion

Thomas Hodgkin

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THERE is a race on Scythia's verge extreme
Eastward, beyond the Tanais' chilly stream.
The Northern Bear looks on no uglier crew :
Base is their garb, their bodies foul to view;
Their souls are Ne'er subdued to sturdy toil
Or Ceres' arts : their sustenance is spoil.
With horrid wounds they gash their brutal brows,
And o'er their murdered parents bind their vows.
Not e'en the Centaur-offspring of the Cloud
Were horsed more firmly than this savage crowd.
Brisk, lithe, in loose array they first come on,
Fly, turn, attack the foe who deems them gone."
Claudian, In Rufinum,

Such is the account which the courtier-poet of Rome gave of the Huns half a century before the name of Attila became a terror to the nations. In the fifth chapter of the first book we witnessed the effect which the appearance of these wild Tartar hordes produced upon the Gothic warriors. The swarthy faces, without either beard or whisker, the twinkling black eyes, the squat figures, the perfect understanding which seemed to exist between the riders and their little steeds, were there described in the words of the Gothic bishop, Jordanes, and we heard what he had to say concerning their '*execranda origo*', descended, as he believed them to be, from Gothic sorceresses and from evil spirits.

The German professor of today emerges from his library to gaze at the descendants and representatives of the Huns, and liking them as little as his primeval kinsmen did, brands them with a term of deeper condemnation than Jordanes's epithets of "witch-born" or "fiend-begotten"—the terrible name, *Turanian*.

For by thus defining their ethnological position he cuts them off from all connection with the great Aryan stem whose branches have overspread Europe, America, and Australia, Persia, and India; he equally destroys their claim to share in any of the glory of the Semitic races through whose instrumentality Judaism, Christianity, and Mohammedanism were given to the world; and he shuts them up with a multitude of dull barbarians, mighty in destruction, powerless in construction, who have done nothing for the cause of civilization or human progress, and who, even where they have adopted some of the varnish of modern customs, have remained essentially and incurably barbarous to the present day...

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