

But he remained. The people would not let him go. He continued to preach to crowded congregations in the Duomo. He was not only severe against the vices of the time, but against the prelates who neglected their duty. "You see them," he said, "wearing golden mitres, set with precious stones, on their heads, and with silver croziers, standing before the altar with copes of brocade, slowly intoning vespers and other masses with much ceremony, with an organ and singers, until you become much stupefied. . . . The first prelates certainly had not so many golden mitres, nor so many chalices; and they parted with those they had to relieve the necessities of the poor. Our prelates get their chalices by taking from the poor that which is their support. In the primitive Church there were wooden chalices and golden prelates; but now the Church has golden chalices and wooden prelates."

Piero de' Medici, with a view to obtaining the sovereign power at Florence, had entered into an intimate alliance with the Pope and the King of Naples. But he suddenly deserted them when he knew that the French had invaded Italy. Ludovico, the Moor, usurped the government of Milan, and invited the French King, Charles VIII., to invade Italy, and undertake the conquest of the Kingdom of Naples. A French army accordingly passed the frontier and marched southward. They sacked the towns and cities which they took, and swept every obstacle away. Then it occurred to Piero to go to Charles VIII. and make peace with him. Piero placed in his hands the important fortress of Sarzana, as well as the town of Pietro Santa and the cities of Pisa and Leghorn.

The people of Florence were exasperated at the meanness of their ruler. They refused him admittance to the palace of the magistrates. His personal safety was endangered, and he hastily withdrew to Venice. Florence was on the verge of a general revolt.

The followers of the Medici wanted a king; the mass of the people wanted a republic. The two parties were at daggers-drawn. Savonarola was the only man who had influence with the people. He brought them together in

the Duomo, and there endeavored to pacify them. At the same time he called them to repentance, to unity, to charity, to faith. Thus the revolt that seemed impending was quelled.

An embassy of the principal citizens of Florence was chosen to wait upon the French King; of these Savonarola was one. The ambassadors went in carriages; Savonarola went on foot—his usual method of travelling. The ambassadors had an interview with the king, and failed in their endeavors. On their way to Florence they met Savonarola on foot. He went alone to the French camp, and saw the king. He requested, almost demanded, that he should pay respect to the city of Florence, to its women, its citizens, and its liberty. It was in vain. The French army shortly after entered Florence without opposition. The troops proceeded to plunder the palace of the Medici, and to carry away the most precious specimens of art. In this they were joined by the Florentines themselves, who openly carried off or purloined whatever they considered rare or valuable. Thus, in a single day, the rich accumulations of half a century were destroyed or dispersed.

When the French army marched southward, Florence was left without a ruler. The partisans of the Medici had disappeared as if by magic. The direction of the will of the people was left to Savonarola. With respect to the future government, he proposed to the council which he summoned that the Venetian form should be introduced. That, he said, was the only one that had survived the general ruin, and had increased in firmness, power, and honor. A long discussion ensued upon the subject, until the government was temporarily settled. Thus, in a single year, the freedom of Florence was established.

Savonarola continued to preach. He urged the reform of the State, the reform of the Church, the reform of manners. He enforced upon the people the uses of freedom. "True liberty," he said, "that which alone is liberty, consists in a determination to lead a good life. What sort of liberty can that be which subjects us to be tyrannized over by our passions? Well, then, to come to the purpose of this dis-

course, do you, Florentines, wish for liberty? Do you, citizens, wish to be free? Then, above all things, love God, love your neighbor, love one another, love the common weal. When you have this love and this unison among you, then you will have true liberty."

Among the things of practical value which the republic introduced were the reduction of taxation, the improvement of justice, the abolition of usury by the institution of a Monte de Pieta. The Jewish money-lenders had been charging $32\frac{1}{2}$ for interest on small sums lent to working people. On the other hand, the Monte de Pieta was established as a public institution for giving on the most merciful terms temporary loans to the poor. It was to Savonarola's sole efforts that this institution was established. The republic also brought back the descendants of the banished Dante, who had by this time been reduced to the extremest poverty.

In the mean time the appearance of the city had been entirely changed. The women gave up their rich ornaments and dressed with simplicity. Young men became modest and religious. During the hours of midday rest the trademen were seen in their shops studying the Bible, or reading some work of the Friar. The churches were well filled, and alms to the deserving were freely given. But the most wonderful thing of all was to find merchants and bankers refunding, from scruples of conscience, sums of money, amounting sometimes to thousands of florins, which they had unrighteously acquired. All this was accomplished through the personal influence of a single man.

After the Lent service of 1495, Savonarola was completely exhausted. He had lived on low fare. He kept his fasts faithfully. His bed was harder than any other; his cell was more poorly furnished. He abjured all comfort. If he was severe with others, he was still more so with himself. He became emaciated to an extraordinary degree; his strength was visibly exhausted; and his weakness was aggravated by an inward complaint. "Such, however," says Villari, "was the indomitable courage of the Friar, that the political struggles had scarcely ceased ere he under-

took a series of sermons on Job. His physical weakness increased his moral exaltation. His eyes darted fire; his whole frame shook. His delivery was more than usually impassioned, but at the same time more tender."

Burlamacchi says, "Savonarola had preached a very terrible and alarming sermon, which being written down verbally, was sent to the Pope. The latter, being indignant, called a bishop of the same order, a very learned man, and said to him, "Answer this sermon, for I wish you to maintain the contest against this Friar." The bishop answered, "Holy Father, I will do so, but I must have the means of answering him in order to overcome him." "What means?" said the Pope. "The Friar says that we ought not to have concubines, or to encourage simony. And what he says is true." The Pope replied, "What has he to do with it?" The bishop answered, "Reward him, and make a friend of him; honor him with the red hat, that he may give up prophesying, and retract what he has said."

In 1495 Savonarola was threatened with assassination by the Arrabbiati, a Florentine club of conspirators in favor of the Medicis. They thought that by killing the Friar they would put an end to the republic. On this, a volunteer body of armed men surrounded him, and accompanied him from the Duomo to the convent of St. Mark's. The Pope, Borgia Alexander VI., sent a brief from Rome suspending his preaching, and at the same time denouncing him as a disseminator of false doctrine. While he was silenced the Arrabbiati prepared to revive the unbridled passions and the obscene amusements of the Carnival. Savonarola endeavored to stop this by the "Children's Reform." The children of his adherents formed themselves into a procession, and went through the streets of Florence collecting money to be given to the friars of St. Martin's for the relief of the poor.

The Pope at length withdrew his order, and permitted Savonarola to preach as before. He offered to make Savonarola a cardinal, provided he would in future change the style of language used in his sermons. The offer was made to him, and refused. In his sermon, preached in the Duomo

on the following morning, he said, "I want no red hat nor mitre, great or small. I wish for nothing more than that which has been given to the saints—death. If I wished for dignity, you know full well that I should not now be wearing a tattered cloak. I am quite prepared to lay down my life for my duty."

Great troubles came upon the republic. During the siege of Pisa the Florentines were reduced to great misery. The poor people were seen in the streets or by the roadsides dying of hunger. Then the plague broke out, and committed great ravages. It entered the convent of St. Mark's. Savonarola sent the timid and sick to the country, while he remained with his faithful followers. In the city about a hundred died daily. Savonarola was always ready to go to the plague-stricken houses and perform the last holy offices for the dying. After about a month the plague abated, and conspiracies against the republic began again.

Savonarola for the most part remained in his convent. He was diligently engaged in writing his "Triumph of the Cross" and correcting the proofs as they came from the printer. In that treatise he shows that Christianity was founded on reason, love, and conscience. It was a complete answer to the Pope's briefs, and was adopted as a text-book in schools and by the congregation *de propaganda fide*. Notwithstanding this, the Pope passed sentence of excommunication on Savonarola in May, 1497. Every one was prohibited from rendering him any assistance, or having any communication with him, as a person excommunicated and suspected of heresy. The excommunication was published with great solemnity in the cathedral in the following month. The clergy, the friars of many convents, the bishop, and the higher dignitaries, assembled there. The Pope's brief was read, after which the lights were extinguished, and all remained in silence and darkness.

Two days after, while the friars of St. Mark's were chanting their services, they were disturbed by persons outside shouting and throwing stones into the convent windows. The magistrates did not interfere, and matters became worse from day to day. Profligacy was again in the ascendant.

The churches were empty; the taverns were full. All thoughts of patriotism and liberty were forgotten. These were the first-fruits of the excommunication of Savonarola by Borgia. Many attempts were made to have the excommunication recalled, but they all failed. The Pope threatened the city with an interdict, and with the confiscation of the property of the Florentine merchants settled at Rome. He ordered the Signory to send Savonarola to Rome. They answered that to banish the Friar from Florence would be to expose the city to the greatest perils. They again persuaded him to preach in the cathedral, and he did so. He preached his last sermon on the 18th of March, 1498.

Then followed a great change in public opinion. It went round suddenly, like a vane blown by the wind. Savonarola had worked for eight years in the city of Florence. He had warned the people to repent, to live at peace with each other, to struggle for liberty, to put aside profligacy and gambling, and, worst of all—as regarded himself—he had urged them to proceed immediately, with the help of God, to a universal reform of the church. He had been the most popular man in Florence; and now he was the most unpopular. The tide had suddenly turned. The followers of Savonarola had either disappeared, or concealed themselves, for now the whole of Florence seemed hostile to him.

The Franciscans challenged him to the ordeal of fire—one of the strange practices of the Middle Ages. Savonarola set his face against it, though his brother, Domenico, was willing to accept it—for he had great faith in the Friar. Others were willing to join him; but Savonarola saw the utter weakness and foolishness of the proposed test, and he refused to enter the fire. The result soon followed. The convent of St. Mark's was attacked by the mob, led by the Compagnacci, who determined to set it on fire. Some of Savonarola's armed friends were there, who wished to defend the place; but he said to them, "Let me go, for this tempest has arisen on my account; let me give myself up to the enemy." The friars forbade him to deliver himself up.

The Signory then sent a body of troops to the Piazza. The mace-bearers ordered every man in the convent to lay down his arms, and declared that Savonarola was banished, and was required to quit the Florentine territory within twelve hours. The armed men in the convent proceeded to defend it, and many were killed on both sides. Savonarola continued in prayer. At last, seeing the destruction of life within and without, he called upon his brethren and friends to give up the defence and follow him into the library, situated behind the convent.

In the middle of that hall, under the simple vaults of Michelozzi, he placed the sacrament, collecting his brethren around him, and addressed them in his last and memorable words: "My sons, in the presence of God, standing before the sacred host, and with my enemies already in the convent, I now confirm my doctrine. What I have said came to me from God, and He is my witness in heaven that what I say is true. I little thought that the whole city could so soon have turned against me; but God's will be done. My last admonition to you is this: Let your arms be faith, patience, and prayer. I leave you with anguish and pain, to pass into the hands of my enemies. I know not whether they will take my life; but of this I am certain, that dead, I shall be able to do far more for you in heaven, than living I have ever had power to do on earth. Be comforted, embrace the cross, and by that you will find the haven of salvation."

The troops burst in, and Savonarola was taken prisoner. His hands were tied behind him, and he was led a prisoner to the Signory. The people were ferocious, and were with difficulty held from slaying him. Two of the brethren insisted on accompanying him. Arrived at the Signory, the three friars were shut up in their respective cells. To Savonarola was assigned that called the *Alberghettino*—a small room in the tower of the *Palazzo*—the same in which Cosmo de' Medici had for some time been imprisoned.

Savonarola was immediately put to the torture. He was taken to the upper hall in the *Bargello*, before the magistrates; and after being interrogated, threatened and in-

sulted, they bound him to the hoisting rope. In this species of torture a rope was attached to a pulley fixed at the top of a high pole. The person to be tortured had his hands tied behind his back; the end of the rope was wound round his wrists; and in this position he was drawn up, and let down suddenly by the executioner. The arms, by being drawn up backward, were made to describe a semicircle. The muscles were thus lacerated, and all the limbs quivered with agony. When persevered in for a time, the punishment was certain to produce delirium and death.

Savonarola, from his earliest life, was of a delicate and sensitive frame; and in consequence of his habitual abstinence, his long night watchings, his almost uninterrupted preaching, and his serious inward complaint, he had become so very weak and nervous that his life may be said to have been a constant state of suffering, and that it was only preserved by the force of his determined will. All that occurred to him in his last days—his dangers, the insults he had received, his grief at finding himself forsaken by the people of Florence—had not a little added to his sensibility. In this condition he was subjected to this violent and cruel torture. He was drawn up by the rope, and suddenly let down many times. His mind soon began to wander, his answers became incoherent, and at last, as if despairing of himself, he cried out, in a voice enough to melt a heart of stone, "O Lord! take, O take, my life!"

At last the torture was discontinued. He was taken back, crushed and bleeding, to his prison. One can scarcely imagine his sufferings during the night. The day dawned, and toward midday his so-called trial was begun. His judges were all his enemies. He was interrogated, and he answered. A Florentine attorney, Ceccome, hearing the regrets among the Signory that they could find nothing against Savonarola, said, "Where no cause exists we must invent one." An offer of four hundred ducats was made to him by the judges if he would make a false minute of the examinations, with alterations in the answers, so as to secure the condemnation of the Friar.

The torture proceeded from day to day, during the dark

hours of Lent, and the triumphant gladness of Easter. The examinations continued for a month. One day Savonarola was drawn up by the rope and let down violently on the ground fourteen times. He never failed in his courage. His body was quivering with pain, but his determination was undaunted. They applied live coals to the soles of his feet. But his soul never flinched. He was again sent back to prison, where he remained a month.

The Pope's commissioners arrived on the 15th of May, 1498. Savonarola was again subjected to examination for the third time. At the command of Cardinal Romolino, he was again stripped and tortured with savage cruelty. He became delirious, and made incoherent answers, which the attorney entirely altered. He made him say what the torturers wished him to say. And yet they entirely failed in their purpose. The minutes of the examination were never signed and never published.

The commissioners met on the 22d of May, and passed sentence of death on the three friars, with the assent of the Signory. The friars were at once told of the sentence. They were quite prepared for it. Domenico received the announcement of his death as if it had been an invitation to a feast. Savonarola was found on his knees, praying. When he heard the sentence he still continued earnest in his prayers. Toward night he was offered his supper, but he refused it, saying that it was necessary to prepare his mind for death.

Soon after, a monk, Jacopo Niccolini, entered his cell. He was clothed in black, and his face was concealed under a black hood. He was a Battuto, the member of an association that voluntarily attends the last moments of condemned criminals. Niccolini asked Savonarola whether he could do anything that might be of service to him. "Yes," he replied; "entreat the Signory to allow me to have a short conversation with my two fellow-prisoners, to whom I wish to say a few words before dying." While Niccolini went on his mission, a Benedictine monk came to confess the prisoners, who, devoutly kneeling, fulfilled with much fervor that religious duty.

The three friars met once more. It was the first time they had seen each other after forty days of imprisonment and tortures. They had now no other thought than that of meeting death with courage. The two brethren fell on their knees at the feet of Savonarola, their superior, and devoutly received his blessing. The night was already far advanced when he returned to his cell. The benevolent Niccolini was there. As a sign of affection and gratitude, Savonarola laid himself down on the floor, and fell asleep in the monk's lap. He seemed to dream and to smile, such was the serenity of his mind. At break of day he awoke and spoke to Niccolini. He tried to impress upon his mind the future calamities of Florence.

In the morning the three friars met again, to receive the sacrament. Savonarola administered it with his own hands. They received it with joy and consolation. They were then summoned down to the Piazza. Three tribunals had been erected on the Ringhiera, where the Bishop of Vasona, the Pope's commissioner, and the Gonfaloniere, were placed. The scaffold extended into the square of the Palazzo Vecchio. At the end a beam was erected, from which hung three halters and three chains. The three friars were to be put to death by the halters, and the chains were to be wound round their dead bodies while the fire underneath consumed them.

The prisoners descended the stairs of the Palazzo. They were disrobed of their brown gowns, and left with their under tunics only. Their feet were bare, and their hands were tied. They were first led before the Bishop of Vasona, who pronounced their degradation. The bishop took hold of Savonarola's arm, and said, "I separate thee from the Church militant and triumphant," when the friar corrected him, saying, "Militant, *not triumphant*, that is not yours to do!" They were then taken before the Pope's commissioner, who declared them to be schismatics and heretics. Lastly, they came before the Otto, who, in compliance with custom, put their sentence to the vote, which passed without a dissentient voice.

They were now ready for execution. The friars ad-

vanced with a firm step to the scaffold. A priest, named Nerotti, said to Savonarola, "In what state of mind do you endure this martyrdom?" to which he replied, "The Lord has suffered as much for me." These were the last words he spake. Friar Salvestro was executed first, then Friar Domenico, after which Savonarola was directed to take the vacant place between them. He reached the upper part of the ladder, and looked round on the people, who had before hung upon his lips in the Duomo. What a change! The fickle mob were now screaming for his death. He submitted his neck to the rope, and was turned off by the hangman. His death was sudden. The chains were wrapped round the friars' bodies, and the fire below soon consumed them. Their ashes were carted off and thrown over the Ponte Vecchio into the Arno. The execution took place on the 23d of May, 1498, when Savonarola was only in his forty-fifth year.

Though Luther canonized him as a martyr of Protestantism, it was not because of this that he was put to death;* but because of his intense love of liberty. His aim was not to desert the Church, but to tighten the bonds of liberty and religion, restoring both to their true principles. It was for this that he bore his martyrdom; for this that he gave up his life for his God and for his country. When the reforms which he urged shall have advanced to the reality of facts, Christianity will reach its true and full development, and Italy may again stand at the head of a renovated civilization.

Florence is one of the most memorable of cities. It has been the dwelling-place of great thinkers, great poets, great artists—of Dante, Galileo, Leonardo da Vinci, Michael Angelo, Raphael, † Donatello, Lucca della Robbia, Machiavelli, and many more illustrious men. There are to be seen "the statue that enchants the world," the glorious

* Indeed, Savonarola was more catholic than the Catholics themselves. One of the charges which he most frequently brought against the priests was their want of belief in transubstantiation.

† Born in a dependency of Florence,

works of the greatest painters in Italy, the observatory of Galileo, the birthplace of Dante, the dying place of Lorenzo de' Medici, the home and tomb of Michael Angelo.

But perhaps the most interesting places in Florence are the Duomo, where Savonarola preached with such impassioned eloquence; the convent of St. Mark's, where he lived his life of poverty, piety, and study; and the Palazzo Signora, where he was delivered over to the hands of tyrants, and died the death of a martyr. At the convent of St. Mark's you see the little cell in which he lived, the Bible which he read and preached from in the pulpit—a little hand Bible, its margins covered with innumerable autograph notes, in a handwriting so small that it is almost impossible to read them without the aid of a microscope. All these are to be seen, together with his portrait, his manuscripts, his devotional emblems, and many other interesting memorials.

Italy has long since revoked the banishment of Dante from Florence, and she has rebuked it by erecting statues to his memory in all her great cities. Why should she not also do justice to Savonarola, the patriot and martyr, and erect a memorial of him, as an example to all time coming? The site is there—the square of the Palazzo Vecchio—where he so bravely gave up his life to the cause of religious liberty and of human freedom.