

have no means of learning. One witness (Violh) declares that he had seen him, in one day, hoisted by the rope no fewer than fourteen times!"

In his lonely cell, in the intervals of his torture, the brave soul turned from the strife of tongues to commune with God. With his mutilated hand he wrote his meditations, which are still extant, on the thirty-first and fifty-first Psalms. "I shall place my hope on the Lord," he said, "and before long, I shall be set free from all tribulation."

His doom had long been decreed. Alexander Borgia had declared that Savonarola should be put to death even though he were John the Baptist. Sentence of death was therefore pronounced upon him and on his two devoted friends, Fra Dominico and Fra Salvestro.

On the morning of the 23rd May, 1498, after early communion in the prison, the destined victims walked together to the place of doom in the great square of the ordeal and of the "Bonfire of Vanities." The Pope's commissioner stripped off their gowns and pronounced the last anathema: "I separate you from the Church militant and triumphant." "That," replied with a calm, clear voice, the hero soul of Savonarola, "is beyond your power." A vast mob surged around the scaffold and the martyr pyre, but he seemed to see them not. With unflinching step and with a rapt smile upon his pale, worn face, he went to his death. His last words were, like those of his Lord and Master and of the proto-martyr, "Into Thy hands, O Lord, I commit my spirit." His comrades in life and in death with equal dignity met their fate. They were first hanged till dead and then burned to ashes. As the torch was applied, writes the biographer, "from the storied Piazza, the saddest and most suicidal 'burning' that Florence had ever witnessed sent up its flame and smoke into the bright heaven of that May morning. On

this 23rd day of May, 1498, aged forty-five years, the greatest man of his day—great on every side of him, great as a philosopher, a theologian, a statesman, a reformer of morals and religion, and greatest of all as a true man of God—died in a way which was worthy of him, a martyr to the truth for which he had lived."

"Lest the city should be polluted by his remains," says a contem-



STATUE OF DANTE, FLORENCE.

porary, "his ashes were carefully gathered and thrown into the Arno."

In the narrow cell at San Marco, in which Savonarola wept and watched and prayed, hangs a contemporary painting of this tragic scene, and by its side a portrait of the martyr monk with his keen dark eyes, his eagle visage, his pale cheek, and his patient thought-worn brow. In a case beneath are his vestments, his crucifix, rosary, Bible and MS. sermons. As we gaze on these relics, thought and feeling overleap the intervening centuries, and we seem brought into living