

his native town of Ferrara he could not get a hearing, and he bitterly remarked, "A prophet has no honour in his own country." Even in Florence his first audiences never exceeded twenty-five persons collected in the corner of a vast church. "I could not," he said, "so much as move a chicken."

But "the Word of God was as a fire in his bones," and could not be restrained. On his removal to the convent of San Marco he besought the prayers of the brethren and essayed to preach. He began a course of sermons on the Book of Revelation "and applied," says his biographer, "with tremendous force the imagery of John's vision to the condition and prospects of Italy. With a voice that rolled like thunder or pierced with the wild and mournful anguish of the loosened winds he denounced the iniquities of the time, and foretold the tribulations that were at hand." Soon, so rapidly his audience grew, he had to leave the chapel and preach in the open cloisters, "standing beneath a damask rose tree," to the multitudes who thronged to hear. To this day the place is pointed out, and a damask rose tree still marks the spot. He had found, at length, his work, and for the remaining eight years of his life his voice was the most potent in Italy.

The burden of his preaching, he tells us, were these three propositions: "That the Church of God would be renovated in the then present time; that fearful judgments would precede that renovation; and that these things would come soon." With the anointed vision of the seer, discerning wisely the signs of the times, he exhorted men to repentance from sin and reformation of life. Soon the convent of San Marco became too small to hold the crowd of eager listeners, and the great Duomo became thenceforth the theatre of the mighty eloquence of the preaching friar. The pale

face and deep, dark eyes gazed around on the vast assembly, and the thrilling, awe-inspiring voice filled the mighty dome.

His bold preaching proved very distasteful to the princely Lorenzo de Medici, by whom he had been promoted to the dignity of prior of San Marco. After attempting in vain to bribe him with gifts, the Prince sent a message threatening banishment from the city unless he learned more courtly ways. "Tell Lorenzo, from me," was the intrepid answer, "that though he is the first in the state, and I a foreigner and a poor brother, it will, nevertheless, happen that I shall remain after he is gone." These bold words were afterwards called to mind, as the greatest of the Medici lay upon his death-bed. In that solemn hour the dying prince sent for the only man in Florence who had dared to cross his will. The faithful preacher urged, as the condition of divine pardon, reparation for deeds of oppression, and the restoration of the usurped liberties of Florence. But the ruling passion was strong in death, and the prince passed to the tribunal of the skies without the priestly absolution that he craved.

The succeeding prince, Piero de Medici, was no less a tyrant than his sire. But the pulpit of Savonarola continued to be the ruling power in Florence. The bold monk was therefore banished to Bologna, where he ceased not to proclaim the judgments of God. At length he returned, on foot, with nothing but his staff and wallet, to the destined scene of his brief triumph and glorious martyrdom.

Foreseeing the evils that threatened the state, he saw, or thought he saw, in the midst of the smiling heavens, the vision of a sword bearing the words "*Gladius Domini super terram cito et velociter*—The sword of the Lord on the earth, swiftly and soon." That sword proved to be the French king,