

"O Lord, if I have not wrought sincerity in my soul, if my word cometh not from Thee, smite me in this moment with Thy thunder, and let the fires of Thy wrath consume me."

In the awful silence of that moment he stood motionless, when suddenly a beam of golden light, striking on the pale and furrowed face, lit it up as with a celestial halo. "Behold the answer," said each man in his heart and many with their lips. Then, with the yearning solicitude of a father for his children about to be orphaned, he stretched out his wasted hand, and, in a voice in which tears trembled, pronounced the benediction on the people—"Benedictione perpetua, benedicat vos, Pater Eternus."

But the curse of Rome was a terror to all weaker souls than that of the intrepid martyr. The Pope threatened, unless Savonarola were silenced or imprisoned, to lay the whole city of Florence under an interdict, which should cut it off from all intercourse with the world, and render its merchants and citizens liable to the confiscation of their goods. That argument conquered. The voice through which God spoke to Europe was soon silenced forever.

Despairing of the reform of the Church by the Pope, Savonarola had written a letter to Charles VIII., urging the convocation of a General Council for that purpose. This letter was intercepted by fraud and sent to the vindictive Borgia, who thereupon launched new fulminations against his victim. These new terrors influenced the magistrates of Florence to abandon the prior to his impending fate, and at last to become the instruments of his ruin.

For the last time Savonarola addressed in words of cheer and counsel the brethren of San Marco. As they were assembled for evening prayers, sounds of tumult were

heard without, and soon a mob of armed men assailed the gates. Some thirty monks barricaded the doors and fought in their long white robes as bravely for their beloved prior as ever Knight Templar for the tomb of Christ. "Let me go and give myself up," he said, seeking to quell the strife. "I am the sole cause of this myself." "Do not abandon us," they cried. "You will be torn to pieces, and then what shall become of us?" Yielding to their entreaties, he summoned them to the choir that they might seek God in prayer.

Meanwhile the frantic mob set fire to the doors, scaled the walls and burst into the choir. The civic guards soon entered and led away, as prisoners, Savonarola and his intrepid friend, Fra Dominico. A brutal mob, made up of the very dregs of the city, clamoured for his blood and wreaked their rage upon their unresisting victim. He was kicked, smitten, spat upon, and bitterly reviled. "This is the true light," cried a low ruffian, as he thrust a flaring torch in his face. Other wretches buffeted him with their fists, and jeered, like another mob in the presence of another Victim, "Prophecy who it is that smote thee." But, like the Master whom he served, who, when He was buffeted answered not, the patient confessor endured with meekness the very bitterness of human rage and hate. He was thrust into prison, and was soon brought to trial. Charles VIII. died, and all hope of General Council or of succour for Savonarola was at an end. The Pope and his creatures had their victim in their power.

"During many days," says the historian of the event, "the prior was subjected to alternate examination and torture. He was drawn up from the ground by ropes knotted round his arms, and then suddenly let down with a jerk, which wrenched all the muscles of his sensitive frame. Fire, too, was at times put under his feet. How often torture was applied to him we