

The moral condition, not only of Florence, but also of all Italy, at this time was morally deplorable. Long rent by the fierce conflicts of opposing factions, and corrupted by the influence of rulers, spiritual and temporal, whose names are synonymes for iniquity and crime, the land was a very hot-bed of sin. Even the splendid revival of arts and literature in this century had only served to make more dangerous the wanton Vice, who disported herself all the more publicly for her beautiful guise, that only concealed her utter vileness without making it any the less contaminating.

Savonarola set himself boldly and zealously to strip the tinsel and trappings from the foul wanton, and to uproot the evils that threatened to overcome the city and state, and prevent the growth of everything pure and virtuous.

Taking for his theme the terrible denunciations and wars of the Apocalypse, he proclaimed in the ears of the terrified people the certainty of their doom unless they would repent and turn to God. Nor did he spare the clergy, but, even to the Pope himself, attacked them for their corruption, and proclaimed boldly their sad departures from purity and holiness.

Under his leadership reforms were begun in both state and church, the Pope even approving so far as to name him first General Vicar of the Dominican Order. Swayed by his influence, multitudes forsook their evil ways, and soon his party, The Piagnoni, or Weepers, gained the ascendancy in the State.

He would seem at this point to have turned aside from his work as a reformer of morals to decidedly political preaching and measures; and having once left his high moral ground, he was caught by the strong current of popular feeling, and gradually involved in the political complications, which undoubtedly led to his imprisonment and death.

Having once gained control of the masses, who believed him to be inspired, and revered him as their friend and deliverer from the power of the haughty nobles, he must continue by some means to retain the mastery, or else his hopes would