

bazaars of the Tigris to the monasteries of the Clyde, was ransacked for medals and manuscripts. Architecture, painting and sculpture were munificently encouraged. We can hardly persuade ourselves that we are reading of times in which the annals of England and France present us only with a frightful spectacle of poverty, barbarity and ignorance. From the oppressions of illiterate masters and the sufferings of a brutalized peasantry, it is delightful to turn to the opulent and enlightened states of Italy—to the vast and magnificent cities, the ports, the arsenals, the villas, the museums, the libraries, the marts filled with every article of comfort and luxury, the manufactories swarming with artisans, the Apennines covered with rich cultivation to their very summits, the Po wafting the harvests of Lombardy to the granaries of Venice, and carrying back the silks of Bengal and the furs of Siberia to the Palaces of Milan. With peculiar pleasure every cultivated mind must repose on the fair, the happy, the glorious Florence. . . . But alas for the beautiful city! A time was at hand when all the seven vials of the Apocalypse were to be poured forth and shaken out over those pleasant countries—a time for slaughter, famine, beggary, infamy, slavery, despair.”

A characteristic of Florence has ever been her passionate love of liberty. On her arms for six hundred years has been inscribed the glorious word “*Libertas*.” When other cities crouched beneath the heel of tyrants she flourished as a free republic. At length the princely House of the Medici obtained a sway which was really that of a monarch. The ostentatious prodigality of Lorenzo the Magnificent at once beguiled Florence of her liberty, corrupted her virtue, and hastened the calamities by which she was overwhelmed.

At this time, and on such a stage, God called the great Savonarola to play his brief but heroic part. The grandest soul of the fifteenth century animated his frail body. He beheld with dismay the awful corruptions of the times. He foretold the outpouring of the vials of wrath upon the land. He sought to set up Christ's throne in the earth. Like

John the Baptist he was a voice crying, “Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is a hand.” Like John the Baptist he fell a martyr to the truth which he proclaimed.

Savonarola was the scion of a noble family of Padua, but he was born at the ancient city of Ferrara, whose mouldering palaces and deserted streets still speak of its former opulence and splendour. He derived much of his heroic character from his brave-souled mother, who recalls the noble women of the early days of Rome. To her unfaltering faith his heart turned ever for support and inspiration even in his sternest trials and his darkest hour. He had been educated for the profession of medicine, but the deeper misery of the world's moral maladies were to demand his sympathy and succour rather than its physical ills. He felt in his soul a call of God to devote himself to a religious life, and he fled from a world lying in wickedness to the cloistered seclusion of the Dominican monastery of Bologna. Here he performed the humblest duties of the convent, toiling in the garden, or repairing the garments of the monks. “Make me as one of thy hired servants” was the cry of his world-weary heart as he sought refuge in the quiet of God's house. At the same time he devoted every hour of leisure to the works of St. Thomas Aquinas, the Angelical Doctor, to those of St. Augustine, and, above all, to the study of the Word of God. He was much given to prayer and fasting, to perplexed and often tearful thought. Like all great souls he nourished his spiritual strength by solitary communings with God, and wrestling with the great problems of duty and destiny. In two poems of this period, *De Ruina Mundi* and *De Ruina Ecclesie*, he mourns over the moral ruin of the Church and of the world.

In his soul there rankled, too, the deep and tender wound of disap-