

and masks and frippery with which they in vain attempted to conceal the ravages of age. The artist's studio gave up every picture that could raise a blush upon the cheek of innocence, and the vice-suggesting writings of Ovid, Boccaccio, and Pulci were heaped upon the growing pile. The heart of the city seemed moved by a common impulse to this moral purgation, as when at Ephesus, under the preaching of Paul fourteen centuries before, "many of them which used curious arts brought their books together and burned them before all men."

In the great Piazza del Signoria, a pyramid of "vanities" was collected, sixty feet high and eighty yards in circuit. After morning communion, a vast procession wound from the Duomo to the Piazza. The white-robed children lined the square, and their pure, clear voices chanted the "lauds" and carols written for the day. Then the torch was applied; the flames leaped and writhed and revelled amid the things of folly and shame; and the trumpets blared, and the clangorous bells filled the air with peals of triumph and joy.

"Florence was like a city burning its idols, and with solemn ceremony vowing fidelity in all the future to the worship of the one true God. One more offering up of 'vanities' by fire took place in the following year. Then followed a burning of a different sort on the same spot, in which the person of Savonarola furnished food for the flame and excitement for the populace; which burning ended the grand Florentine drama of the fifteenth century."

Already the clouds were gathering which were to shroud in a dire eclipse of woe the glories of that auspicious day. There were many in the once gay and luxurious Florence who were not in harmony with the high moral tone to which society was keyed. There were also secret agents and friends of the fugitive Medici. These combined against

the *Frateschi*, or followers of Savonarola, and chief supporters of the Republic. A conspiracy for the restoration of Piero was detected. Five of its leaders were tried and found guilty, and suffered the inevitable penalty, in that age, of high treason. Savonarola was averse to their execution, would have preferred their exile, but was overruled by what were deemed necessities of State.

Under the civil disturbances, trade languished and idleness and poverty prevailed. Then famine and pestilence followed—the mysterious and awful plague of the middle ages—and the sick, the dying and the dead were in every street and square. Savonarola remained at his post, although the plague entered the monastery, and was himself the chief source of succour to the terror-stricken community.

But the chief enemy of the intrepid friar was that "Nero of the Papacy," the infamous Borgia, Alexander VI. The Pope sent first a flattering invitation to "his much-beloved son, the most zealous of all the labourers in the Lord's vineyard," inviting him to Rome, in order to deprive Florence of his wise counsels. Savonarola respectfully declined the invitation, urging his broken health and the need of his services to the new Government. Then the tiger-claws which stroked so smoothly in their silken sheath were shown; and "Gerolamo Savonarola, a teacher of heretical doctrine," was summoned under heavy penalties to the presence of the Sovereign Pontiff. The prior of San Marco refused to leave his post; when the enraged Pope, dreading the power of his eloquence, prohibited his preaching.

For a time Savonarola yielded obedience, but the sweet constraint of the Gospel compelled him to proclaim its truths. "Without preaching," he exclaimed, "I cannot live" His Lenten sermons, as his voice