

fections of the home which in Savonarola never grew weak. His father, Niccolo, who in character was quiet and unobtrusive—coming in between the ambitious Michele and his mighty grandson, not unlike Isaac between Abraham and Jacob—seems to have died in the interval; at least no further mention is made of him, and the next letter of Savonarola is addressed to his mother alone. It is written from Pavia; and after presenting an excuse for his delay in writing, goes on to deal with the feeling which at the time so strongly occupied his mother's mind—namely, the desire to have her son nearer to herself. The tone of the letter indicates that his mother Helena must have been expressing her desire very strongly to him, since the chief aim he has before him is to present to her the great advantage connected with his absence from his native town, and to prove to her convincingly (if she would be convinced in such a matter) that it was true of him, as it was of a greater, "that a prophet hath no honour in his own country." "Be assured," he writes, "that I can do incomparably more for my own and others' welfare than I could if I were in Ferrara. For if I were living in Ferrara, and were to act in the same way as I do in other places, I know they would say to me, as the inhabitants of his native town said to Christ, 'Is not this the carpenter's son?' So would they say of me, 'Is not this that fellow Hieronymus, who committed such and such sins, and is no better than we?' and they would despise my words. Often in Ferrara was it said to me, as I was going about on duty, 'Well, our monks must be badly off for men, when they make use of such a pitiable fellow for such important work.' Away from home, however, such words have never been said to me; rather do men and women weep when I depart. Therefore, my deeply honoured mother,

trouble yourself not about my absence from home; for the more acceptable I make myself to God, the more influence shall my prayers for you have with him. I counsel you to bear all in patience, and to comfort my sisters, who ought to believe me when I say that God has cared for them better than they think. For if he had given them a different lot,—had bestowed on them wealth and honour, and opened up to them a way to the married life,—they might have fallen into many grievous sins they know nothing of now. Commend me to my uncle and aunt and cousins. God be merciful to you, and keep you from evil, for the sake of the love of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen."

The year 1490, in which this letter was written, marks an era in Savonarola's life. Hitherto his success as a preacher had been but moderate, and no one dreamt of the marvellous powers he possessed. But this was the year when, in the little town of San Geminiano, he first found his voice. "The inhabitants of San Geminiano," says Villari, in his brilliant History of Savonarola, "did not possess the perfect refinement of the Florentine; but neither over-study nor a fondness for hair-splitting had impaired the fresh naturalness of their spirit, and in their preachers they did not look merely to skill in the building up of sentences, and a harmonious fall of syllables. On their mountains and in their valleys there abides an eternal joy. The spring decks itself there in heavenly beauty; and the wide peaceful horizon which encircles those purpling heights, disposes man to harmony with nature, and brings him nearer to God." There it was, amid the towers of San Germiniano, that the great preacher's voice first was heard in its strength; and after hovering for a while in the neighbouring towns, burst in its fullness on Florence itself. In the few years fol-