

him? Nello, that droll and wonderful barber-littérateur, introduces him to the blind old scholar Bardo di Bardi. Little wonder that after the youth's bright visits to their secluded abode, the lonely man and his young companionless daughter regard him as son, and more than brother. Happy months pass, and the young people are married. One day, when the city of Florence is in a ferment through the preachings of Savonarola, Baldassarre comes unexpectedly upon the scene—a mental wreck in whom former love for Tito has developed into the one overmastering passion for revenge. All thought for his father, save to regard him as an avenging Nemesis, forsakes the young politician. Subterfuge in private life, as in State affairs, now becomes his constant recourse. The white, statuesque beauty, and the almost austere purity of soul in his golden-haired wife now chill rather than inspire his debased nature. How bitter the revulsion in the gentle-minded Romola at the discovery of his perfidy toward her buried father, in betraying the trust of an executor! How patient her living response to the fervent command of Savonarola to bear still her cross as a wife! But his baseness is now to be revealed in full to her, and in part to the world: his triple plot with the Medici, the old aristocracy, and the commons; his denial and ill-treatment of Baldassarre; his deception of simple Tessa, the mother of his peasant children. The toils close about the fated man; pursued by an enraged mob he seeks escape in the river. Struggling wearily ashore, he finds himself at the mercy of the long-waiting old man whom he had so foully wronged. The clutching fingers do their fatal work; Baldassarre's life-worn spirit, over-satiated with fulfilled revenge, goes to stand before Him who said "Vengeance is mine." Romola finds the true purpose in living—life for others—and makes her home with the little family of the childish Tessa, who, in her simple ignorance, still worships in memory the one whose life was falsehood.

Vividly mirrored in the delineation of Tito's character is the condition of Florentine society during the Renaissance period. It was an existence of brilliant externals, intellectual and temporal wealth, but whose every seeming success depended upon subtle intrigue and the subserviency of all means to a desired end. As at the very core of Tito's career lay the canker of deception, so, too, this national hypocrisy sought to form, from a society lax in morality and lacking in true public spirit, a state with a factitious appearance of perfection in government. In reality vice and crime were never more prevalent; the New Learning served only externally to adorn them. The one influence toward social morality was the personality of Savonarola—the fervent and mystical Dominican friar. Filled with a horror at the growing corruption about him, and discerning something of a probable foreign influence in the affairs of the peninsula, he called upon his countrymen to accept the scourge of heaven which, in the person of Charles VIII. of France, was to drive from Italy all that polluted her life. In trying to reach the debased masses, he himself, perhaps, so lowered his means of attainment that he vitiated the strenuous efforts to realize his exalted end. But the powers of evil overwhelmed him "not because of his sins but because of his greatness—not because he sought to deceive the world but because he sought to make it noble." His endeavour toward reform proved but an impotent reaction against the characteristic trend of the nation. It was not merely that an individual reformer was needed. True moral force could come only from a nation with a deeper moral consciousness than that possessed by fallen Italia—then, as in later years,

"Of her own past impassioned nympholept."

The moral effects of the classic revival of learning were at most negative and incredulous; its spirit was mocking and cynical. The common people remained sunk in superstition; the higher classes became in heart anti-