

by dreams; by the inscription we know it to be the face of Girolamo Savonarola, one of the grandest men and at the same time the strangest man that Italy has ever known. Born at Ferrara, in 1452, the son of a courtier, he was fitted for a similar station in life. But, though the court of that city was the gayest and the aristocracy the most magnificent in all Italy, it was within the precincts of that very palace that he learned to hate alike the vices and the despotic cruelty of the times.

The elegant youth of Ferrara, with their bright garments and their black hearts, filled with deeds of lust and violence, were no associates for him. He was so filled with disgust, with hatred for evil that he cried: "The whole world is in confusion; all virtue is extinguished and all good manners; I find no living light abroad, nor one who blushes for his vices." This is the keynote of his life and it was this intolerable sense of sin which dominated his future career.

Austere and haggard, consumed with the zeal of the Lord, he was unable longer to endure the enormous wickedness of the blinded people of Italy. And now, his hot young heart, impatiently yearning for rest, was swayed by the attractions of the cloister and at the age of twenty-three he assumed the robe of a Dominican friar. But, alas! there was no rest for that anguished soul as God had chosen instead of bringing him into calm waters, to cast him on a tempest-swollen sea. Who can know the feelings of that man, voiceless, powerless, unconscious of his genius, tortured by the fierce desire to reform the church, to free Italy of her despots, and, above all, to bring man nearer to God?

Let us, however, lower the curtain upon these vicissitous years and raise it again upon the man in Florence, the theatre in which was enacted the tragedy of his life. Florence was the city dearest to his heart. "The charm of the hills and the gardens of Valdarno, the loveliness of Giotto's tower, the amplitude of Brunelleschi's dome" sank deep into his soul. But overshadowing all was Lorenzo de Medici, the very incarnation of paganism, a man "whose policy it was to stifle freedom by caressing the follies, vices, and intellectual tastes of his people." Savonarola recognized in him the enemy of God and the despot of Florence, and the fires which had been smouldering in his soul burst forth in a powerful conflagration. He was now no longer voiceless, power-