from one side, the Franciscans from the other, marched in solemn procession to the Loggia dei Lanzi, which had been divided by a hoarding into two separate compartments. The Dominicans were led by Savonarola carrying the host, which he reverently deposited on an altar prepared in his portion of the loggia, and when Fra Domenico was seen to kneel before it the Piagnoni burst into a song of praise. The magistrates signalled to the two champions to advance. Fra Domenico stepped forward, but neither Rondinelli nor Fra Francesco appeared. The Franciscans began to urge fantastic objections. The Dominican’s vestments might be bewitched, they said. Then, when he promptly changed them for a friar’s robe, they pretended that his proximity to Savonarola had probably renewed the charm. He must remove the cross that he wore. He again complied,—was ready to fulfil every condition in order to enter the fire. But fresh obstacles were suggested by the Franciscans, and, when Savonarola insisted that his champion should bear the host, they cried out against the sacrilege of exposing the Redeemer’s body to the flames. All was turmoil and confusion, the crowd frantic. And, although Rondinelli had not come, the signory sent angry messages to ask why the Dominicans delayed the trial. Meanwhile the Arrabbiati stirred the public dis­content and threw all the blame on Savonarola. Some Compagnacci assaulted the loggia in order to kill him, but were driven back by Salviati’s band. The foreign soldiery, fearing an attack on the palace, charged the excited mob, and the tumult was temporarily checked. It was now late in the day, and a storm shower gave the authorities a pretext for declaring that heaven was against the ordeal. The crafty Franciscans slipped away un­observed, but Savonarola raising the host attempted to lead his monks across the piazza in the same solemn order as before. On this the popular fury burst forth. De­frauded of their bloody diversion, the people were wild with rage. Fra Girolamo’s power was suddenly at an end. These Florentines who had worshipped him as a saint turned on him with rabid hate. Neither he nor his brethren would have lived to reach St Mark’s but for the devoted help of Salviati and his men. They were pelted, stoned, and followed with the vilest execrations. Against the real culprits, the dastardly Franciscans, no anger was felt; the zealous prior, the prophet and lawgiver of Florence, was made the popular scapegoat. Notwith­standing the anguish that must have filled his heart, the fallen man preserved his dignity and calm. Mounting his own pulpit in St Mark’s he quietly related the events of the day to the faithful assembled in the church, and then withdrew to his cell, while the mob on the square outside was clamouring for his blood.

The next morning, the signory having decreed the prior’s banishment, Francesco Valori and other leading Piagnoni hurried to him to concert measures for his safety. Meanwhile the Government decided on his arrest, and no sooner was this made public than the populace rushed to the attack of the convent. The doors of St Mark’s were hastily secured, and Savonarola discovered that his adherents had secretly prepared arms and munitions and were ready to stand a siege. The signory sent to order all laymen to quit the cloister, and a special summons to Valori. After some hesitation the latter obeyed, hoping by his influence to rally all the Piagnoni to the rescue. But he was murdered in the street, and his palace sacked by the mob. The monks and their few remaining friends made a most desperate defence. In vain Savonarola besought them to lay down their arms. Fra Benedetto the painter and others fought like lions, while some hurled tiles on the assailants below. When the church was finally stormed Savonarola was seen praying at the altar, and Fra

Domenico, armed with an enormous candlestick, guarding him from the blows of the mob. Profiting by the smoke and confusion a few disciples dragged their beloved master to the inner library and urged him to escape by the window. He hesitated, seemed about to consent, when a cowardly monk, one Malatesta Sacramoro, cried out that the shepherd should lay down his life for his flock. Thereupon Savonarola turned, bade farewell to the brethren, and, accompanied by the faithful Domenico, quietly surrendered to his enemies. Later, betrayed by the same Malatesta, Fra Silvestro was also seized. Hustled, insulted, and injured by the ferocious crowd, the prisoners were conveyed to the Palazzo Vecchio, and Savonarola was lodged in the tower cell which had once harboured Cosimo de’ Medici.

Now came an exultant brief from the pope. His well- beloved Florentines were true sons of the church, but must crown their good deeds by despatching the criminals to Rome. Sforza was equally rejoiced by the news, and the only potentate who could have perhaps saved Savonarola’s life, Charles of France, had died on the day of the ordeal by fire. Thus another of the friar’s prophecies was verified, and its fulfilment cost him his sole protector.

The result of the trial was a foregone conclusion. The signory refused to send their prisoners to Rome, but they did Rome’s behests. Savonarola’s judges were chosen from his bitterest foes. Day after day he was cruelly tortured, and in his agony, with a frame weakened by constant austerity and the mental strain of the past months, he made every admission demanded by his tormentors. But directly he was released from the rack he always withdrew the confessions uttered in the delirium of pain. And, these being too incoherent to serve for a legal report, a false account of the friar’s avowals was drawn up and published instead of his real words.

Though physically unable to resist torture, Savonarola’s clearness of mind returned whenever he was at peace in his cell. So long as writing materials were allowed him he employed himself in making a commentary on the Psalms, in which he restated all his doctrines. His doom was fixed, but some delay was caused by the pope’s unwillingness to permit the execution in Florence. Alex­ander was frantically eager to see his enemy die in Rome. But the signory remained firm, insisting that the false prophet should suffer death before the Florentines whom he had so long led astray. The matter was finally com­promised. A second mock trial was held by two apostolic commissioners specially appointed by the pope. One of the new judges was a Venetian general of the Dominicans, the other a Spaniard. Meanwhile the trial of Brothers Domenico and Silvestro was still in progress. The former remained nobly faithful to his master and himself. No extremity of torture could make him recant or extract a syllable to Savonarola’s hurt; he steadfastly repeated his belief in the divinity of the prior’s mission. Fra Silvestro on the contrary gave way at mere sight of the rack, and this seer of heavenly visions owned himself and master guilty of every crime laid to their charge.

The two commissioners soon ended their task. They had the pope’s orders that Savonarola was to die “ even were he a second John the Baptist.” On three successive days they “ examined ” the prior with worse tortures than before. But he now resisted pain better, and, although more than once a promise to recant was extorted from him, he reasserted his innocence when unbound, crying out, “ My God, I denied Thee for fear of pain.” On the evening of May 22 sentence of death was pronounced on him and his two disciples. Savonarola listened unmoved to the awful words, and then quietly resumed his interrupted devotions. Frà Domenico exulted in the thought of dying