adds that he foretold he should preach for eight years. And now, for the better setting forth of his doctrines, to silence pedants, and confute malignant misinterpretation, he published a collection of his writings. These proved his knowledge of the ancient philosophy he so fiercely condemned, and showed that no ignor­ance of the fathers caused him to seek inspiration from the Bible alone. *The Triumph of the Cross* is his principal work, but everything he wrote was animated by the ardent spirit of piety evidenced in his life. Savonarola’s sole aim was to bring mankind nearer to God.

In 1491 he was invited to preach in the cathedral, Sta Maria del Fiore, and his rule 'over Florence may be said to begin from that date. Lorenzo sent leading citizens to him to urge him to show more respect to the head of the state. Savonarola rejected their advice and foretold the impending deaths of Lorenzo, of the pope and of the king of Naples. In the July of the same year he was elected prior of St Mark’s. As the convent had been rebuilt by Cosimo, and enriched by the bounty of the Medici, it was considered the duty of the new superior to present his homage to Lorenzo. Savonarola, however, refused to conform to the usage. His elec- tion was due to God, not Lorenzo; to God alone would he promise submission. Upon this the sovereign angrily exclaimed: “ This stranger comes to dwell in my house, yet will not stoop to pay me a visit.” Nevertheless, disdaining to recognize the enmity of a mere monk, he tried, but in vain, conciliatory measures. The Magnifico then sought to undermine his popularity, and Frà Mariano was employed to attack him from the pulpit. But the preacher’s scandalous accusations missed their mark, and disgusted his hearers without hurting his rival. Savonarola took up the challenge; his eloquence prevailed, and Frà Mariano was silenced. But the latter, while feigning

indifference, was thenceforth his rancorous and determined foe.

In April 1492 Lorenzo de’ Medici was on his death-bed at Careggi. Oppressed by the weight of his crimes, he summoned the unyielding prior to shrive his soul. Savonarola reluctantly came, and offered absolution upon three conditions. Lorenzo asked in what they consisted. First, “You must repent and feel true faith in God’s mercy.” Lorenzo assented. Secondly, “ You must give up your ill-gotten wealth.” This, too, Lorenzo promised, after some hesitation; but upon hearing the third clause, “ You must restore the liberties of Florence,” Lorenzo turned his face to the wall and made no reply. Savonarola waited a few moments and then went away. And shortly after his penitent died unabsolved.

Savonarola’s influence now rapidly increased. Many adherents of the late prince came over to his side, disgusted by the violence and incompetency of Piero de’ Medici’s rule. The same year witnessed the fulfilment of Savonarola’s second prediction in the death of Innocent VIII.

(July 1492); men’s minds were full of anxiety, an anxiety increased by the scandalous election of Cardinal Borgia to the papal chair. The friar’s utterances became more and more fervent and impassioned. It was during the delivery of one of his Advent sermons that he beheld the celebrated vision, recorded in contemporary medals and engravings, that is almost a symbol of his doctrines. A hand appeared to him bearing a flaming sword inscribed with the words: “ Gladius Domini supra terram cito et velociter.” He heard supernatural voices pro­claiming mercy to the faithful, vengeance on the guilty, and mighty **cries that** the wrath of God was at hand. Then the sword bent towards the earth, the sky darkened, thunder pealed, lightning flashed, and the whole world was wasted by famine, bloodshed and pestilence. It was probably the noise of these sermons that caused the friar’s temporary removal from Florence at the instance of Piero de’ Medici. He was presently addressing enthusiastic congregations at Prato and Bologna. In the latter city his courage in rebuking the wife of Bentivoglio, the reigning lord, for interrupting divine service by her noisy entrance nearly cost him his life. Assassins were sent to kill him in his cell; but awed, it is said, by Savonarola’s words and demeanour they fled dismayed from his presence. At the close of his last sermon

the undaunted friar publicly announced the day and hour of his departure from Bologna; and his lonely journey on foot over the Apennines was safely accomplished. He was rapturously welcomed by the community of St Mark’s, and at once proceeded to re-establish the discipline of the order and to sweep away abuses. For this purpose he obtained, after much difficulty, a papal brief emancipating the Dominicans of St Mark from the rule of the Lombard vicars of that order. He thus became an independent authority, no longer at the command of distant superiors. He relegated many of the brethren to a quieter retreat outside the city, only retaining in Florence those best fitted to aid in intellectual labour. To render the convent self-supporting, he opened schools for various branches of art, and promoted the study of Oriental languages. His efforts were successful; religion and learning made equal progress; St Mark’s became the most popular monastery in Florence, and many citizens of noble birth flocked thither to take the vows.

Meanwhile Savonarola continued to denounce the abuses of the church and the guilt and corruption of mankind, and thundered forth predictions of heavenly wrath. In 1494 the duke of Milan demanded the aid of France, and King Charles VIII. brought an army across the Alps. Piero de’ Medici, made alliance with the Neapolitan sovereign whose kingdom was claimed by Charles. Then, repenting this ill-judged step, he hurried in person to the French camp at Pietra Santa and humbled himself before the king. Not content with agreeing to all the latter’s demands, he further promised large sums of money and the surrender of the strongholds of Pisa and Leghorn. This news drove Florence to revolt. But even at this crisis Savon- arola’s influence was all-powerful, and a bloodless revolution was effected. Piero Capponi’s declaration that “ it was time to put an end to this baby government ” was the sole weapon needed to depose Piero de’ Medici. The resuscitated republic instantly sent a fresh embassy to the French king, to arrange the terms of his reception in Florence. Savonarola was one of the envoys, Charles being known to entertain the greatest veneration for the friar who had so long predicted his coming and declared it to be divinely ordained. He was most respectfully received at the camp, but could obtain no definite pledges from the king, who was bent on first coming to Florence.

Returning full of hope from Pietra Santa, Savonarola might well have been dismayed by the distracted state of public affairs. Nevertheless, with the aid of Capponi, he guided the bewildered city safely through these critical days. Charles entered Florence on the 17th of November 1494, and the citizens’ fears evaporated in jests on the puny exterior of the “ threatened scourge. ” But the exorbitance of his demands soon showed that he came as a foe. Disturbances arose, and serious collision with the French troops seemed inevitable. The signory resolved to be rid of their dangerous guests; and, when Charles threatened to sound his trumpets unless the sums exacted were paid, Capponi tore up the treaty in his face and made the memorable reply: “ Then we will ring our bells.” The monarch was cowed, accepted moderate terms, and, yielding to Savonarola’s remonstrances, left Florence on the 24th of November.

After seventy years’ subjection to the Medici Florence had forgotten the art of self-government, and felt the need of a strong guiding hand. So the citizens turned to the patriot monk whose words had freed them of King Charles, and Savonarola became the lawgiver of Florence. The first thing done at his instance was to relieve the starving populace within and without the walls; shops were opened to give work to the unemployed; all taxes, especially those weighing on the lower classes, were reduced; the strictest administration of justice was enforced, and all men were exhorted to place their trust in the Lord. And, after much debate, as to the constitution of the new republic, Savonarola’s influence carried the day in favour of Soderini’s proposal of a universal or general government, with a great council on the Venetian plan. The great council consisted of 3200 citizens of blameless reputation and over twenty-five years of age, a third of the number sitting for six months in turn in the hall of the Cinquecento expressly built for the purpose. There was also an