

**DAWN OF THE REFORMATION.  
SAVONAROLA. WITH  
EVENTS OF THE REIGN  
OF POPE ALEXANDER VI**

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Dawn of the Reformation. Savonarola. With Events of the Reign of Pope Alexander VI by  
William H. Rule

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**WILLIAM H. RULE**

**DAWN OF THE REFORMATION.  
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OF POPE ALEXANDER VI**





GIROLAMO SAVONAROLA.

BORN IN FERRARA, DEC. 12, 1491.  
DIED IN FLORENCE, MAY 23, 1520.

DAWN OF THE REFORMATION.

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SAVONAROLA.

WITH EVENTS OF THE REIGN OF  
POPE ALEXANDER VI.

BY THE  
REV. WILLIAM H. RULE,

AUTHOR OF "RICHARD I. AND THE THIRD CRUSADE,"  
"MOHAMMED II. AND THE FALL OF THE GREEK EMPIRE," &c.

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## CONTENTS.

### SAVONAROLA.

	Page.
Bizarz and Boyhood .....	1
Studies and Recollections .....	3
Entrance on Monastic Life .....	12
Professorship .....	18
First Pulpit Efforts .....	21
Impressions at Brescia .....	22
Is there a Gift of Prophecy? .....	23
At Reggio .....	44
First at Florence .....	46
In the Church of St. Mark .....	53
Made Prior of St. Mark .....	56
Sermons on Genesis .....	64
Death of Lorenzo De' Medici .....	69
Preaching at Bologna .....	75
Change of Affairs at Florence .....	78
Enters on a new Career .....	81
Tries to reform the Monks .....	83
Is made Vicar-General .....	88
Invasion of Italy by Charles VIII. ....	93
Mission to the King .....	98
Fall of the Medici .....	105
Charles VIII. in Florence .....	106
Pope Alexander VI. ....	112
Charles VIII. in Rome .....	114
Charles VIII. in Naples .....	118
Political Debates .....	123
Peculiarities of Doctrine .....	126
"The Revelation" .....	138



	Page.
The Grand Council .....	150
Monastic Labours .....	152
Beginnings of Trouble .....	154
Enemies in Rome .....	159
Juvenile Reformation .....	169
Burning of the Vanities .....	175
A Sunday Festival .....	177
Reformations continue .....	180
Offer of a red Hat .....	183
Persecution from Rome .....	185
Pestilence and War .....	187
A Scheme to ruin Florence .....	191
Last Carnival Devotions .....	192
Correspondence with Rome .....	194
Conspiracy at Florence .....	199
Suspension from the Office of Preacher .....	203
Papal Authority disregarded .....	209
The Reformer is forsaken .....	216
An Ordeal proposed .....	216
Blot and Assault .....	233
The Arrest .....	237
The Trial .....	239
The Execution .....	247
Forged Letters .....	252
Honoured Memory .....	255
Pontificate of Alexander VI. ....	259
Death of Alexander VI. ....	269

# DAWN OF THE REFORMATION.

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## SAVONAROLA.

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### BIRTH AND BOYHOOD.

NICCOLÒ D'ESTE, Duke of Ferrara, a brave soldier and wealthy man, flourished in the administration of his dukedom from the year 1393 to 1441. In the early part of his reign over the Ferrarese, he invited an eminent physician, then in extensive practice in Padua, to come over to his court. The invitation was accepted, and Michele Savonarola soon rose into public favour at Ferrara, acquired high reputation, enjoyed the freedom of the city, and was decorated with the insignia of St. John of Jerusalem, or, as we might now say, of the Knights of Rhodes.

The younger of two sons, named Niccolò, and his wife Helena, became the parents of the subject of our biography, on September 21st, 1452, St. Matthew's day. On October 4th following, marked in the Roman Calendar as the feast of St. Francis the Confessor, he was held at the baptismal font, in the church of S. Maria del Vajo, by Master Francesco de' Ribanori, chief counsellor of Borso, then Duke of Ferrara, who gave him the abundant name of *Girolamo Maria Francesco e Matteo*, and the solemnity was registered at home by his father.\*

As soon as he was capable of receiving the first rudiments of instruction, his grandfather, the physician, took him under his care. This person, a courtier, and, if we

\* Vita del P. F. Girolamo Savonarola dell' Ordine di Predicatori, Scritta del P. F. Pacifico Burlamacchi, Lucchese, dello stesso Ordine, e Familiare del medesimo. Nuova Edizione. In Lucca MDCLXIV.

#### SAVONAROLA.

may so call a physician of the fifteenth century, a man of science, directed the studies, and gave the first impression to the character, of the child who should become, to say the least, the first preacher of his age ; and, considering the assiduity and tenderness of such a tutor, we may easily conjecture what kind of intellectual bias would be given to his mind.

The aged Knight was used to frame hypotheses, innovate in practice, and had always aimed at outdoing his predecessors. Aspiring after professional distinction, he stepped beyond routine and prejudice, and dared to think and act for himself. Truly the doctor might be too much occupied with patients, and, even in advanced age, too frequently diverted by the frivolities of the palace, to pay minute attention to all the lessons of his pupil, and any conjectures of ours about the communication of intellectual qualities, and the determinating influences of constantly-repeated maxims, might be foreign from the reality of domestic life ; but this much may be taken as undisputed fact, that Michele Savonarola, Knight of St. John, and court physician at Ferrara, superintended the education of his grandchild. It is also certain that he was a scholar, and wrote several medical treatises. Some of his writings were on the baths of Italy, fevers, practice of medicine, pharmaceutics, minerals, and the composition and use of *aqua vitalis*, a thing which the present biographer is not learned enough to describe. And, as a less practical production, we find his *Mirror of Physiognomy*.

Relatively to the time on which we shall enter in a page or two, Michele was of the old school. Superstition and immorality luxuriated together in the age immediately preceding the revival of classical literature ; but the preceptors of youth still inculcated, although they did not exemplify, reverence of sacred things. The domestic tutor of Leo X., some years afterwards, turned out a polished infidel ; but the instructor of Savonarola, however speculative in other matters, was not irreligious in theory, but accustomed him to an exact observance of the acknowledged ceremonial. Making rapid progress in Latin, he soon understood perfectly the language of the clergy and of the learned ;