

CHAPTER VII.

THE UMBRIAN SCHOOL AND THE PAINTERS OF
GUBBIO, FABRIANO AND THE MARCHES.

Nothing is clearer than that the Umbrian school arose under the impulse of Siennese examples. The geographical position of Gubbio and Fabriano, with reference to Sienna, might alone explain that result; the temper of the people, akin to the mercurial Siennese rather than to the graver Florentine, favoured it. The Umbrians produced on the models of Sienna with such singular felicity of imitation, that it would be puzzling to distinguish the progeny from the parent stock were it not that a vague stamp of originality still marks the Gubbian painter and his neighbour of Fabriano. Second in talent to the artists of Sienna, these men were characterized by a tendency to intensify the affectation of grace and tenderness which, from the earliest time, had been peculiar to their masters. Prettiness was their chief quality; and from the outset marked a class of men whose posterity was destined to contribute by its progress in Perugia and Urbino to the greatness of Raphael. A smiling gaiety and lightness gave charm to their works which, at the same time, bore the impress of the careful finish and the flat brilliancy of miniatures; and Dante, in the celebrated lines which rescued Oderisio from oblivion, struck the true character of the Umbrians when he spoke of the smiling pictures they produced:

“O diss’ io lui, non sè tu Oderisio,
L’onor d’Agobbio, e l’onor di quell’ arte
Ch’ alluminare è chiamata in Parisi?
Frate, diss’ egli, più ridon le carte