

CHAPTER X.

BRUNELLESCHI. Ghiberti. DONATO.

The close of the fourteenth century is marked, in the policy and literature of Italy, by a decline of general culture. The genius of the Italian tongue, brilliantly represented by Petrarch and Boccaccio, disappeared in the cloud of soulless writers who present to us less the spirit than the husk or shell of the past. The fifteenth century, however, witnessed the restoration of learning and the rekindling of a sacred fire, whose flame has never since been suffered to expire. Art partook of the same changes, and became tinged, in the fifteenth century, by the partiality evinced for ancient Greece and Rome. Brunelleschi restored to architecture, at least, the measures and proportions of the antique, and reinstated their rules and order. He incidentally studied and gave an impulse to sculpture. Ghiberti, too, devoted time and thought to the analysis of the models of the classic time;¹ but the man on whom those models were most indelibly impressed was Donatello.

It is foreign to the aim and purpose of these pages to tell the story of the lives of these great and interesting men. Yet their influence upon their cotemporaries and successors was so great and so important that we are

¹ He describes, in his commentary, many then recent discoveries of antiques, and Albertini (*Memoriale*, ub. sup. p. 12) mentions several as existing in the Casa Ghiberti, one especially a marble vase, which Ghiberti had caused to be brought from Greece. Vasari too mentions certain torsos and "Anticaglie", as he calls them, of bronze and marble. Vas. Vol. III. p. 120.