

CHAPTER XIII.

FRA FILIPPO LIPPI.

The historians of Italian art may indulge in a justifiable exultation at having rescued one of their great painters from the stigma cast upon him by Vasari. It were to be desired that the character of Fra Filippo should be freed from the stain which rests upon it, as that of Andrea del Castagno has been cleared from the imputation of murder, which made his name for centuries a byword amongst artists. It is unfortunately not possible to give distinct proofs that Fra Filippo was not a monk of loose habits. Yet there is much in the history of his life, such as it lies before the student of this century, to cast doubts on the veracity of his accusers, and to mitigate the censure of the critic.

Filippo was the son of a butcher named Tommaso Lippi by Madonna Antonia.¹ Her death, shortly after 1412, — the date of this event, — his decease two years later, left Filippo an orphan in the hands of an aunt, whose poverty disabled her for the duties of a mother. In 1420 Filippo was registered in the community of the Carmine at Florence.² From that time till 1432, he remained an inmate of the monastery,³ and probably studied painting in the neighbouring chapel of the Brancacci.⁴ In 1430 he appears for the first time in the books of the Carmine

¹ This fact is ascertained from records kindly furnished by Dottore Gaetano Milanesi. According to Vasari, Filippo was born in the Contrada dell' Ardiglione by the Canto alla Cuculia in Florence

and behind the convent of the Carmine. (Vol. IV. p. 114.)

² Records, furnished by Dottore G. Milanesi. *ub. sup.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ The doubts hitherto raised on