

CHAPTER XIV.

THE PESELLI.

We have traced the progress of innovation in the Florentine art of the fifteenth century through some of its most important phases. The peculiarities of Uccelli, Castagno and Domenico Veneziano have been noted as far as the natural difficulties of the subject would allow. We have watched the development of Fra Filippo's career, and illustrated the variety of his style as affected by the tendencies of his age; and we have sufficiently described the technical processes of his art, to show, that, whilst he perfected the old system of panel painting, he kept aloof from those who strove to supersede the old system by a new one. The poorness of the materials for a life of Domenico Veneziano forbids the historian to venture on the task of explaining the substance of the efforts made in the fifteenth century to alter the old systems of panel painting. But this task is only adjourned, and claims performance when the natural lapse of time brings us to the consideration of the works of the Peselli, Baldovinetti and the Pollaiuoli.

We shall presently attempt to clear the lives of the first of these painters from some obscurities, dwelling on the peculiar obstacles which impede the critic in assigning a series of remarkable productions to the one or to the other of them. But before proceeding to the performance of this duty, the complex of the works of both may be embraced in a general view for the purpose of laying down certain broad and general facts which follow from a critical analysis of them.