

CHAPTER XV.

ALESSO BALDOVINETTI.

Among the artists, whom Vasari specially distinguishes as the authors of tentative efforts for the improvement of vehicles, Alesso Baldovinetti occupies a prominent place. Born in 1422,¹ he lived to the very close of the century, gaining a name for the minuteness with which he studied still life in nature, the boldness, more than the success, with which he introduced the old tempera varnish amongst the mediums employed in wall painting, and the cleverness with which he executed or repaired mosaics. The number of his works preserved at this time is in marked contrast to the uncommon length of his career, and it is difficult to name more than two or three productions entitled to be called his. That his father, who was in trade, should have yielded reluctantly to Alesso's inclination for artistic studies, proves the painter's early enthusiasm and perseverance. Whether he followed the precepts or frequented the workshop of more than one painter is not ascertained. The master to whom he owed his early education is not even known; and Baldinucci only conjectured that that master was Paolo Uccelli.² Some foundation may be admitted for this belief; because Baldovinetti displays

¹ Gaye (Carteggio, ub. sup. Vol. I. p. 224) publishes in full Alesso's income tax return for 1470, in which he declares his age to be 40. The same author quotes, however, another income tax paper returned by Alesso's father Baldovinetti d'Alessandro Baldovi-

netti, in 1427, in which he states that his son Alesso is 5 years of age. We may assume, therefore, that Alesso had forgotten his birth day, and accept in preference the statement of his progenitor.

² Baldinucci, Opere. ub. sup. Vol. 5. p. 318.