

CHAPTER XX.

DOMENICO GHIRLANDAIO.

We now pass to the consideration of the works of a man whose life forms, like that of Giotto, one of the great landmarks in the history of Florentine art. Domenico Ghirlandaio was a painter whose energy and creative power contemned the mere practise of painting altarpieces, and whose grasp of the essential qualities of art enabled him to conceive and carry out greater creations. Unequal to Masaccio or even to Fra Filippo in the power of charming by brightness or richness of tone, he first claimed attention by his intelligence of grand and decorous laws of composition. His strongly tempered mind, braced with a nerve equal to that of Michael Angelo, was above the artifices of colour, and he doubtless considered them second to the science of distribution and of form, and calculated to fetter his inclination for expressing on large surfaces and with great speed the grand conceptions of his genius. In these conceptions, fruits of long study and careful thought, he aimed at embodying all the essential elements conducive to a perfect unity. That unity he had found in Giotto, and strove with such success to emulate, that he may be said to have completed the body of the edifice whose first stone had been laid almost two centuries before by that successful artist. Yet he might have struggled to the goal in vain, had he not taken for a guide in his pictorial manhood the works of one who had given proof, during a career too short for his cotemporaries, but long enough for his fame, that he possessed the noblest faculties. Ghirlandaio studied attentively and fruitfully the master-