

CHAPTER XII.

ANDREA DI PONTEDERA, AND THE SCULPTORS
OF THE XIV. CENTURY.

“There is no example of prosperity or perfection in the art of painting, unaccompanied by a relative display of excellence in that of sculpture; and an attentive student of the works produced in every age will be convinced that the two arts are sisters, born at the same time, and governed by the same spirit”. With these words Vasari opens the life of Andrea commonly called Pisano. That the two arts were sisters in the thirteenth century is true; but that sculpture might justly claim the right of primogeniture is equally so. Hence the argument of Vasari is, in a certain measure, false. The converse of his proposition would not yield a true conclusion; for in the time of Niccola Pisano, sculpture found no sister of equal birth in painting. When Niccola bequeathed his art to Giovanni, it underwent, in the hands of the latter, a perceptible change. To a cold and inanimate imitation of the antique succeeded a return to the study of nature. Giovanni, however, in the attempt to revert to the first principles of plastic delineation, had too much to forget; and he wavered ever between reminiscences of the formal classic and a material or false copy of nature. What Giovanni failed to compass was happily attained by Andrea Pisano, under the influence of Giotto; for he owed to the great Florentine the design of the bronze gates in the Baptistery of Florence,¹ that of the reliefs on the campanile, and

¹ “Una delle porte della quale aveva già fatto Giotto un disegno bellissimo.” Vasari. Vol. II. p. 38.