

CHAPTER XXIII.

GHERARDO STARNINA AND ANTONIO VITE.

An artist of undoubted talent and conspicuous fame owed his education to Antonio Veneziano. Gherardo Starnina bequeathed to Masolino a style reminiscent of that which Antonio had developed, and so claims a place in the direct descent of the Giottesques to Angelico and Masaccio. Yet this at first sight would seem to be but a deduction from the assertions of Vasari, a historian prone to error as we all know, for of Starnina not a single authentic work remains. Gherardo was born at Florence in 1354,¹ and spent a number of years under the tuition of Antonio Veneziano. Having mastered design and painting he settled in Florence where, in spite of rude manners and a hot temper, he found patrons. Not long after the completion of a series of frescos in the chapel of the Castellani at S. Croce, which he executed for Michele de' Vanni, the disturbances of the Ciompi (1378) occurred at Florence; and Starnina became involved in them. In danger of his life, he retired and journeyed under the protection of certain merchants to Spain. Here, says the historian, he lost the rudeness of his manners, took lessons of Castilian courtesy and acquired wealth in the exercise of his art. In 1387, he again resided in Florence and took the freedom of the painters' company.² He decorated the chapel of S. Girolamo at the Carmine, in which he not only introduced Spanish costumes but displayed a

¹ Vas. Vol. II. p. 200.

² He appears in the Libro de' Pittori in 1387, as Gherardo d' Ja-

copo Starna depintore. Gualandi, ub. sup. Ser. VI. p. 182.