

CHAPTER II.

DON BARTOLOMMEO. PECORI. SOGGI

Signorelli, we have said, was not gifted with the peculiar talent of a teacher, though he exercised a vast influence over painters of his own and succeeding times. Amongst cotemporaries there is none on whom he more surely impressed his style than on Don Bartolommeo della Gatta.

This friar was older than Signorelli by many years and had entered the Camaldole convent of the Angeli at Florence in the first half of the fifteenth century.¹ He learnt miniature there, and attended to religious duties with satisfaction to the community and advantage to himself. His vellums were considered valuable; and a missal, into which he introduced scenes from the Passion, was found of sufficient beauty to warrant its presentation to Sixtus the Fourth.² A small abbey served by very few monks belonged to the Camaldoles of Arezzo. It was called Badia di S. Clemente, and was poorly endowed. Its walls were bare, and the choir was not enlivened by the sounds of an organ. Della Gatta was made abbot of this small fraternity and

¹ Vas. V. 44. A family of della Gatta existed at Florence. One of its members, a stationer called Francesco di Bartolommeo, registers three sons in his income paper of 1442. One of these sons, called Mattio, is described as being then nine years of age; and does not reappear in the subsequent returns of his father. The commentators of Vasari believe in consequence that this Mattio became a monk under the name of Don Bar-

tolommeo (see "Tavola alfabetica delle vite degli artefici descritte da Giorgio Vasari" published separately; 8^o. Florence. Lemonnier. 1864. art. "Bartolommeo.") Vas. says that Don B. died in 1461 aged 83. But it is probable that the date should be 1491, and in that case the birthday of Don Bartolommeo would lie in 1408.

² Vas. V. 44.