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GIOTTO



# GIOTTO

BY

BASIL DE SELINCOURT



LONDON: DUCKWORTH AND CO.  
NEW YORK: CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

1905

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At the Ballantyne Press



TO MY FRIEND  
MAY STURGE HENDERSON  
I DEDICATE A BOOK  
WHICH IN GREAT PART  
IS ALREADY HERS



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## CHAPTER I

### GIOTTO AND THE EARLY FLORENTINE SCHOOL

TRADITION has spun a pleasant pastoral tale about the origin of the great painter, Giotto, and first reveals him as a boy whose days were passed upon the breezy hill-side where he watched his father's sheep. His amusement was to scratch their forms with a sharp stone upon the rock, and Cimabue chanced to find him thus playing as he went by on the Bologna road. Recognition was instantaneous and mutual; and Buondone, the boy's father, being so poor that his home ties were not more than nominal, with his father's blessing the boy abandoned them to claim a higher birthright.\*

In her romantic, idle way, sleepy old tradition aims at truth-telling, and if she is too dreamy to appease the scientist, and may even be caught lying by him, as well as napping, his happiest conclusion will be that truth is of different orders, and that he and she "conceive it differently. As it is, tradition and criticism are wont

\* Another version of the story is that Giotto was apprenticed to a wool merchant, and played truant, preferring the workshop of Cimabue.

to indulge in an unprofitable warfare, the aggressive apparatus, with which the critic arms himself, being ill adapted to induce his opponent to unlock the treasure she conceals. She fronts him with a large inscrutability, impervious to the fine tools he uses; whereupon he proclaims triumphantly that the treasure was an illusion, and the war ends, like some others, with the aggressor's confession that it was not worth waging. It is thus that we have learned, by investigation and research, that the artist's father was of less humble station, and can quote a document that dubs him "vir praeclarus," and shows that he was a proprietor at Colle in the commune of Vespignano. Yet to quote it as a serious attack upon the story might expose us to caricature: it were better to leave our corn standing than to set about reaping it with a razor. The despised tradition itself admits Buondone the possessor of a flock of sheep, and, for his poverty, they may have taxed a bare upland pasture beyond its means.

To look for detailed accuracy in a tradition of this kind argues failure of imagination; for its merit is independent of its correctness. It provides the life of one, whose movements were on a scale not measurable by normal methods, with a harmonious background, touching at once the mainspring of his nature and disclosing his greatness at its source. For in those early years of unconscious communion with the wide influences of earth and sky, a mind was formed that cannot rightly be associated with lesser things, a mind that could compass an avocation—perhaps the highest

## EARLY FLORENTINE SCHOOL 3

that human activity can attain—with such calm, unceasing endeavour as we might suppose confined to the common tasks of every day, and which, recognising how lofty was its goal, how delicate must be the aim, wasted no particle of life in profitless reflection, but with thought held always to the issue, steady as the marksman's hand, grew to its immortal enterprise with inspiration as infallible as prompts the rising or the setting sun.

Boccaccio records that Giotto, in spite of his unrivalled genius, was of peculiarly modest temperament, and, though it was customary for painters of a certain standing to assume the title of master, he, the master of all, shrank from it, and would never assume it.\* In many, even among great men, it might be possible to regard a determination of this kind as a pose; but Giotto's most marked characteristic is precisely that piercing directness of mind which neither swerves nor flinches till it is in touch with the truth at its heart—a quality before which no sham or affectation, whether in himself or others, could maintain itself for an instant undetected. There is no choice, therefore, but to take this trait as the indication of a true humility, to believe that it was consistent in him with frank recognition of his place as, without question, the greatest artist of his day. And granting him the

\* The signature of the Baroncelli Altar-piece in Santa Croce is "Opus Jocti Magistri," and this signature was once erroneously taken as a seal of authenticity. The similar signature on the altar-piece at Bologna is to be regarded as evidence unfavourable to a work whose authenticity is in itself doubtful.

possessor of this sort of humility, we have a key to the secret of that continuous progress so remarkable in his career. We recognise at once a man to whom the fact of his pre-eminence was, in the deepest sense, an irrelevant matter, because it was not his way to compare either his efforts or his achievements with those of others, but to relate them to that ultimate standard, call it real or ideal as we will, which, taken as the test of human aspiration in whatever kind, continues to reveal not so much what has been attained already as the immeasurable possibilities in things yet unattained. And on this account tradition may claim pardon, if she has laid undue emphasis on the lowliness of Giotto's origin, and changed Buondone, the proprietor, with his flocks, perhaps, as well as his pasture, to Buondone the labourer, with his "few sheep."<sup>1</sup> She reminds us, after her fashion, of a truth which needs no enforcement, that to the great spirits among men our common separation of high and low is irrelevant.

It is conceivable that criticism, aggressive as she is, might have been content to leave these vaguer suggestions unmolested, had not the tale that gives them mentioned the much-vexed name of Cimabue, indicating thus the origin of Giotto's artistic development. Cimabue is popularly believed to have been Giotto's master, and the first to set about an emancipation of Italian art from the rigid formalism characteristic of the so-called Greek manner of painting, which, perfected in Byzantium, had been the source of whatever distinction, little enough at the best, can be traced

## EARLY FLORENTINE SCHOOL 5

in the works of earlier Italian artists. This belief, though by no means without foundation, has been wildly and violently assaulted by numerous critics, and with such result that the very name of Cimabue is beginning to be regarded as mythical, and the fact of his existence as a moot question. Yet our main authority for the belief is of the highest reputation, and has the advantage of being Cimabue's contemporary.

The following lines are no doubt familiar:

" Credette Cimabue nella pintura  
Tener lo campo ed ora a Giotto il grido  
Si che la fama di colui e oscura,"

and yet, though they have been pitilessly criticised, insufficient attention has been paid to their precise significance. The point selected by critics for the centre of their attack is the disappearance of Cimabue and all documentary or other unmistakable recognition of him in the annals of succeeding art. It may not have been observed that, so far as was possible to him, this fact had been already recognised by Dante, and that apart from it his words would lose half their meaning. The fickleness of fame is his theme, and he exemplifies it by pointing to the artist who had led the earlier generation, but whose memory has been eclipsed by his successor. If in Dante's lifetime the fame of Cimabue was thus darkened, it need not surprise us that Ghiberti, nearly a century later, at a time when Giotto himself would be looked upon as antiquated, cares little for him, and speaks of him merely as a follower of the

Greek manner of painting. We may add that Ghiberti makes no mention of any other predecessor of Giotto's, whether at Florence or elsewhere, and regards the revival of art as due solely to the genius of Cimabue's apprentice.

But the question raised by modern criticism is, in truth, of much greater dimensions than we can rightly perceive while we connect it with an issue such as the standing or existence of a single artist, an issue of a kind apt to lend itself to arguments that might almost be called personal. The problem connected with Cimabue owes its importance to the fact that, according to the final solution of it, stands or falls the entire conception, hitherto current, of the history of the revival of painting. There were four principal centres of artistic activity in Italy during the thirteenth century—Pisa, Rome, Florence and Siena. And it has till lately been regarded as an acknowledged fact that, whereas the earliest seat of genuinely artistic activity was Pisa—sculpture having been brought to a very high pitch of excellence there before the date of Giotto's birth—painting was first developed and perfected at Florence. But within the last few years critics have recognised that our knowledge of the early history of art is based principally upon the statements of Florentine writers, and the word "Florentinism" has been invented as a means of expressing, in abridged form, the pardonable patriotism which may, it is suggested, have led them to press conclusions in favour of their native city. The word may be accepted with gratitude on

account of its easy rendering of an idea which undoubtedly represents a truth that it is important to bear in mind. Yet it is not wholly a blessing when such an idea as this is too easily expressible. A word may even become a nuisance if it be used as a substitute for thought, or as a means of dismissing a series of difficult questions without an examination of them separately according to their merits. The patriotism and pride of the Florentines are matters beyond dispute, and it is indisputable that jealousy of their rivals would have led them, as much in art as in any other branch of life, to exalt their own and disparage the achievements of others, when the question of pre-eminence was at stake. But to suppose, on this account, that, because a claim to pre-eminence is advanced, that claim can fairly be assumed to lack foundation, is nothing less than nonsensical. Frankly admitting that the Florentines were only less notorious for narrow patriotism and its inherent vices than the members of other Italian cities, we have still to ask whether in the matter of their service to the art of painting they had or had not a subject on which they might pride themselves justifiably.

This question is one to which the career of Giotto, traced merely, as in the following pages, by his few surviving works, and his unique reputation, not only in his own, but in all the chief cities of Italy, provides in itself no doubtful answer. But a further question arises. Giotto's pre-eminence, and through Giotto the pre-eminence of Florence, being conceded, it is still conceivable that he was, as it were, a seed sown at random,

and owed his transcendent stature to inspiration and teaching not drawn from the native source.

If the Pisan school of sculpture be for the moment set aside, with due recognition of the quickening influence it exercised upon art all over Italy, there remain but two cities outside Florence to which a painter could have turned for instruction at the end of the thirteenth century—Siena and Rome; and all three schools, whatever their respective merits, agreed in drawing both their ideas and their methods from the traditional lore preserved by the Greek artists of Byzantium.\* In the absence, therefore, of any history of the revival in Rome or Siena, any counter-claim on their part as against the assertions of "Florentinism," criticism, before it can revise and justly estimate the respective contributions of each school, has the delicate task of determining—in respect of the few works of this early time that are preserved in tolerable condition—whether the Byzantine conception, their common characteristic, has been modified by the mind of a Roman, Sienese or Florentine artist, and also—for without this the first determination is valueless—the exact date to within a decade when the modification took place.

The reader will learn without surprise that with a problem of this difficulty before them, and none but the most meagre evidence to be their guide, different

\* The Romans had also before them, and attempted in some sort to copy, the mosaic work of the early native school. But in their acknowledged masterpiece—the mosaics of S. Maria in Trastevere—the compositions are pure Byzantine.



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critics reach wholly different conclusions. An important altar-piece at Siena bears an inscription with the date 1220, a date which, if it had any relation to the picture above it, would give Siena a marked precedence over her rivals. But our standard English authorities believe that the date has been partly effaced, that the picture itself dates from 1270, and owes a certain natural animation which may be remarked in it to subsequent repainting in the early fourteenth century. A later critic has contended that the whole work has been repainted and is now past recognition, but that the date is the only authentic part of it. This is an example typical of the kind and degree of divergence which is common among professional critics in reference to these primitive works, and it will, therefore, be obvious that any attempt to enter here into a detailed discussion would be wholly out of place, and that we cannot hope to do more than support in general terms the conception we have formed of the qualities and merits of the three schools and their relation to the revival and to Giotto.

And first in regard to Rome. A document, dated June 8, 1272, when Giotto was six years old, shows that Cimabue, a Florentine painter, was at that time in Rome. There are critics who affect to doubt whether this can be the Cimabue of Dantesque reputation ; but they argue that, if it is indeed Dante's Cimabue, he probably owed his artistic training to the Roman school. This is the kind of argument that destroys a case, and it is fair to recollect that much of the prominence, which the Roman

school now enjoys, has been bestowed upon it by critics to whom an argument of this kind seems reasonable. We cannot meet it better than by considering shortly what qualities are to be found in a work completed twenty years after Cimabue's visit, regarded as one of the chief glories of the Roman school, and believed by its advocates to be the work of Pietro Cavallini, its leading member and in their view the true teacher of Giotto. This is a series of mosaics in the church of S. Maria in Trastevere, comprising seven scenes', in which the life and death of the Virgin and the usual subjects relating to the infancy of Christ are represented. If we are right in supposing that the allegories of the Lower Church at Assisi were painted by Giotto in 1296, and the ciborium of St. Peter's in the same or the following year,\* it is clear that an interval of seven years, at most, elapsed between the execution of these mosaics and the time when the Roman school lost favour even in its native city, when the most important commissions issuing from the Papal Court were entrusted to a Florentine artist. There is nothing in the appearance of these mosaics in Santa Maria in Trastevere to make this superseding of the Roman workmen a matter for the least surprise. It is true that their composition is described, even by so discerning a critic as Mr. Roger Fry, as "in every way comparable to that of Giotto's frescoes." Unfortunately, however, the merit of the designs does not belong to the artists who executed them ; for their approximation to the traditional Byzantine treatment—in which distribu-

\* Some authorities place it earlier.

tion and design were perhaps the noblest features—is so close as to make inadmissible any claim for originality in that respect. Moreover, the spirit of the revival, it is hardly necessary to state, did not find expression primarily in a new perfection of design : its emphasis was laid upon a clear and faithful rendering of natural appearances, above all upon the expression of human passion ; the necessity for an orderly and scientific arrangement of its material was, for the time being, comparatively overlooked. As to the series of mosaics in Trastevere, it would be hard to suggest a drearier undertaking than the search in it for any touch of nature, any evidence that the artist felt keenly the deeper meaning of the subjects he portrayed. He has missed the priestly dignity and grandeur of the Byzantine representations, and substitutes for it a flabby, nerveless conception of the figure, a uniform mournfulness of expression in the face.\* Nothing is more inconceivable than that the author of works like these should have taken the leading part in a spiritual revival. Yet they have always been regarded as representative of the Roman work when at its best, and, in that light, betray that the school, as till lately has been supposed, was essentially a school of decorators, lacking precisely in that emotional and imaginative comprehension which marks the true artist, and without which a revival of art would have been impossible. Such being the condition of the Roman school in the year 1290, when Giotto was twenty-four

\* The author has made this series the subject of a short separate study, which he hopes soon to publish.

years of age,\* and perhaps engaged already upon the series of scenes from the *Life of S. Francis* in the Upper Church of Assisi, it must be manifest that his debt to the Romans cannot have been of serious extent. That he made an early visit to the capital, was interested both in its ancient and its contemporary art and architecture, assimilated any ideas of which the native school might boast—a task which would probably not have occupied him long—all this there is no reason to doubt, but his inspiration must have been drawn from another source.

Can it, then, have been drawn from the rival city of Siena? In the year 1255,+ eleven years before Giotto, was born the Sienese painter, Duccio, whom many now regard as an artist of equal, if not of greater power than Giotto himself. The famous *Madonna Buccllai*, long taken for Cimabue's masterpiece, is now by a majority of critics claimed for Duccio; and whether this work is Duccio's or not, his reputation in the year 1285 was of so high an order as to obtain him the commission for an altar-piece in the great Dominican church of Florence. The archives of the convent place so much past doubt. Moreover, the *Madonna Rucclal* is not the only great work which, traditionally Florentine, is claimed by recent critics for Siena. Mr. Langton Douglas has expressed a conviction that even the

\* According to Vasari's chronology he would be fourteen only. But Antonio Pucci, a contemporary writer, states that Giotto was seventy years old when he died (1337).

† Considered by Mr. Langton Douglas the probable date of Duccio's birth.

## EARLY FLORENTINE SCHOOL 13

*Madonna with S. Francis* of the Lower Church at Assisi is of Sieneſe workmanship. This confusion or uncertainty is, of course, in great part explained by the close relation of both ſchools to the ſingle Byzantine ſource, but it ſhows indirectly how high a level of excellence was reached by the foremoſt artiſts of each. It is remarkable, however, that neither Duccio nor any other Sieneſe painter has ever been thought to have influenced Giotto. And the reaſon of this is not far to ſeek. Though certain Florentine and certain Sieneſe works of the early period may be hard to diſtinguiſh, becauſe the predominant vein on both ſides is the Byzantine, yet the two ſchools are repreſentative from the firſt of two divergent artiſtic methods, and, in ſpite of conſtant inter-relation one with another, develop upon wholly different lines. The art of linear deſign has a certain power of expreſſion which is independent of its repreſentative function ; and the Byzantine painters, though unable to render the appearance of the human figure or of its ſurroundings with any approach to verisimilitude, had recognised this, and devoted themſelves to the perfecting of a method which, though baſed indeed on a conceſſion to the natural forms of things, ſought expreſſion for ideas or for emotions in the modulation of contour and the harmonious relation of parts, without regard to laws of ſpace or gravitation, or other factors that determine the appearance of real objects. The Sieneſe, though they ſo far identified themſelves with the main current of the revival as to give increaſing attention to the repreſentative function of line, were

peculiarly fascinated by this quality, which they discovered in the Byzantine work, of expression without representation. They were a passionate and idealistic people, and their idealism was of the familiar kind which chafes at the restrictions that the facts of life impose upon it, and would fain soar without hindrance to the haven of its desire. It is characteristic of such aspiration, while indulging the mind in dreams of an illusory Paradise, to leave the whole man no less earth-bound than before. He contrasts his heaven and his earth, and his singleness of vision is gone. The common life of man revolts him, and he searches in it and treasures only its occasional reminiscences of the world of his dreams. The limitations of his nature are mirrored in its artistic expression : it craves to express itself; and can never attain to self-forgetfulness. It chooses forms that are marred by preciousness, one-sidedness, and affectation.

It is important to dwell on this tendency to self-consciousness and extravagance in Sienese work because the great qualities of Florentine art can best be recognised in opposition to it. We have suggested that the Sienese, in seizing upon subtle methods of expression by design, considered, we might say, in abstraction from the material conditions of the forms represented, showed—together, indeed, with delicate sensibility of the very finest order—a lack of mental balance, a readiness to be content with an intense realisation of a single aspect of truth, and to accept this as an embodiment of the **whole**.

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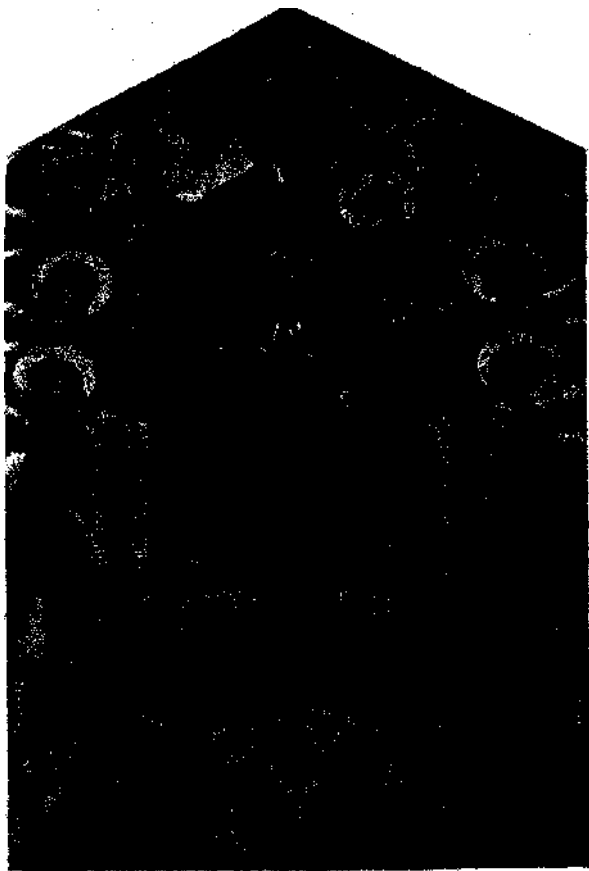
One of the principal objects of the pages that follow is to show how Giotto, though essentially an idealist, was governed by a totally different conception of art and of human life, and of the relation that exists between them. And the question now before us is, whether that conception, being drawn neither from Siena nor from Rome, belonged to him merely as an individual, or was an inheritance which he shared with other members of his native city and drew from its traditions. Florence differs from other centres of artistic activity in Italy in having produced men of genius in diverse walks of life. We need not here do more than mention the poets Dante and Petrarch, and the historian Villani, who with Boccaccio were all Giotto's contemporaries. But we may add that not only in literature, but in science also, Florence obtained early a marked precedence. This universality of talent—unless we choose to regard it as causeless and haphazard—must be taken as the sign of an habitually inclusive and penetrating attitude of mind. Regarding the mind of Florence, for the moment, as an organic unity, we can see that it was of the kind to recognise, as by nature, how the different streams of human activity proceed from a single source, to keep in constant touch with the source itself, and so to lend to all its children, by whichever way they went, a sense of the community of knowledge, an instinctive belief that the aim of all aspiration was, like its origin, one. Thus, in painting, the purpose of the great Florentines is first indeed, as an essential of fine art, the expression of

human passion; but the expression of it not as an abstraction or as a phase, but in its recognised relation to the continuous life and formed character of man and to all the conditions they presuppose. Whereas the general tendency of Sienese art was to aim at expressing passion in its essence, and to disregard all parts of life in which passion, in whatever form, was not the principal factor, it was characteristic of the Florentine attitude to view it as part of a whole, and to recognise that its determining features—the very qualities with which its artistic value was bound up—could only be appreciated, and in any true sense represented or expressed, by a comprehensive method, which should not refuse to dwell on any part or aspect of human life, but, starting with a conviction of the mutual interdependence of all, should aim at raising the whole to the level of the highest element contained in it.

This mental bias towards a large and inclusive vision—the very tendency which enabled Florence, as already indicated, to produce men of genius in many diverse forms—expressed itself, on the one side, in painting by a frank and spontaneous acceptance of certain qualities apparent in figures and all objects, but which might yet be supposed irrelevant to the representation of passion—the central purpose of their art. As examples of the qualities referred to, it will be sufficient to name solidity and weight. In a crudeJy executed yet very impressive Madonna, painted at Siena as early as 1260 by the Florentine artist, Coppo di Marcovaldo, this characteristic of the Florentine style is already







*Photo, Alinari]*

*[Florence. Accademia*

**VIRGIN AND CHILD ENTHRONED**  
*(Cimabue)*

*Between pages 16 & 17*



*Photo, Alinari]*

*[Florence, Accademia]*

VIRGIN AND CHILD ENTHRONED

*Between pages 16 & 17*



## EARLY FLORENTINE SCHOOL 17

clearly distinguishable. In his desire to do justice to the mass of the figure, the painter has given it a square and bulky appearance; but in spite of this fault the work has great power, because of the comfort and repose that belong to the attitude of the seated Virgin. Coppo has instinctively realised a fact to which Florentine artists in later generations continued faithful, that the external or material determinations are the chief, in the last resort, perhaps the only, vehicle for the expression of the spirit and the life. The stately grandeur of his Madonna is due, in great measure, to his careful distribution of her weight. The well-known altar-pieces of Cimabue and Giotto, that hang side by side in the Accademia at Florence, show the development of the same ideas and methods. Giotto's rendering of the subject, generally "supposed to place Cimabue's at a serious disadvantage, is marred by the ungainliness characteristic of transitional work. A strong revolt is apparent in it against many of the Byzantine traditions, which the earlier artist has accepted unquestioningly; and largely because of its originality, it misses the harmonious completeness, which gives enduring value to the more primitive work. But the true Florentine "gravity" is prominent in both, too much so in this somewhat clumsy effort of Giotto's early years, in the Cimabue most clearly traceable in the perfect poise of the infant Saviour and the security of support which he receives from his mother's arm.

Mr. Berenson, in his interesting essay on the Florentine painters of the Renaissance, propounded the ingenious

theory, that the essential purpose of painting, as an art, was to obtain from a flat surface the effect of three-dimensional space, and so create the impression that the figures or other objects depicted were tangibly real. Giotto, according to his view, was the first painter in Italy worthy the name, because he was the first to solve the problem, which this purpose involved. Mr. Berenson can hardly be thought to have reached the differentiation of painting as an art; for the effect which he regards as the essential of painting is equally obtainable from a good photograph ; but it may readily be allowed—and this indeed is the very point we have been endeavouring to enforce—that in Florence at least, whatever the ultimate aim and ideal of the painter, he instinctively regarded the reproduction of material appearances as the ladder by which he was to attain to it. This apparently materialistic method has been remarked on all hands in Giotto, but it was defined already in the work of Florentine artists who preceded him, and was a natural outcome of the vigorous clear-headed realism belonging to the Florentine character.

Giotto was, in fact, a true son of Florence, worthy in the power and scope of his genius as well as in the comprehensive nature of his idealism to be the fellow citizen, as he was indeed the friend, of Dante; sharing with his great Florentine successors qualities that can also be traced in his Florentine predecessors. His purpose was essentially spiritual, but in that sense only that involves no opposition to material; he perceived that the most exalted experiences in life, the sublimest

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revelations of art were based upon the more delicate adjustment or deeper understanding of common things. If this be true, if the qualities most characteristic of Giotto's art connect themselves in a peculiar degree with the genius of his native place, it is unreasonable not to suppose that his early life was passed there, and his training in art entrusted to a Florentine master. There is good reason to believe that this master's name was Cimabue.

## CHAPTER II

### GIOTTO'S FIRST WORKS IN ASSISI

IN the preceding chapter we endeavoured to show that Giotto's relation to Florence was vital and organic; and that, if he is rightly to be called the father of Italian painting, it was not by chance that Florence was the city from which painting in Italy first drew its life. But sufficient has been said already to suggest that a revival of art was taking place simultaneously in many parts, that the revival, therefore, was independent in its origin of the different characteristics of separate cities. It is not necessary to look far in order to discover its efficient cause in a great spiritual awakening which had affected the whole mass of the people, and of which we are at once reminded in the first great work of Giotto that now survives—the *Life of S. Francis*, told in twenty-eight scenes in fresco in the Upper Church at Assisi. S. Francis, as his name suggests, was partly of French origin, and if the power of the Renaissance was primarily due to the enthusiasm and devotion evoked by the example of his passionate life, that passion itself, with the vivid perceptions, the spirit of keen enjoyment that accompanied it, was a gift which, not only through



## FIRST WORKS IN ASSISI

the influence of S. Francis, but by more normal processes of human interchange, came to the Italian people from their neighbours of the North. The development of sculpture at Pisa is particularly instructive in this regard. Nicola Pisano, the first great artist of Italy, is believed to have been of Apulian origin, and thus by birth the member of a school whose work was founded on imitation of the style of the Roman antique. Yet the great pulpit of the Baptistery at Pisa, which dates from the year 1260, is clearly the work of a man whose artistic aim is at variance with the material he is employing, and here and there a figure in it testifies to a changed conception. Nicola's second pulpit, executed at Siena six years later, shows the change developed to an extent almost incredible. The ruling spirit is classic no longer. The short, massive, intractable type, characteristic of the Baptistery pulpit, has been replaced by figures at once more graceful and infinitely more susceptible. In the work of Nicola's son Giovanni the same process is carried a further step; the type becomes more slender, and borders at times upon emaciation : the cord of life is drawn to its utmost capacity, till the whole instrument quivers and responds to the faintest breath that passes over it. The death of S. Francis had occurred in 1226, thirty-four years before the execution of the Pisan pulpit, and, though the main-spring of the change must be sought in the new ideals of life, the new power of living exemplified by him, there can be no doubt that both artists drew immediate inspiration from the work of French sculptors. Thus,

directly and indirectly, by the deeper channel as well as by the more superficial, the reviving stream may be traced to a Northern source; in a land where classicism was effete, the Renaissance was heralded by an influx of the ideas and methods known as Gothic.

Giovanni Pisano was Giotto's senior by about sixteen years, and throughout his early life must have been the leader of artistic activity in Italy. It would be hard to overrate the importance of the influences, of which he might be taken as representative, in their effect upon Giotto's art. Yet, to speak of Giotto as "formed upon Giovanni's style" is to give a misleading impression of the relation between the two artists.\* Their conception of the human figure, their principles of composition, differ fundamentally; what they share, their naturalism, their love of homely incident, and the power to combine it truly with the loftiest associations, belonged essentially to the spirit of the revival, and may be traced to the character and teaching of S. Francis himself.

Giotto's *Life of S. Francis*, which we are now about to examine in detail, bears witness in itself to the great stimulus offered by the Franciscan movement to artistic effort. It forms part of the decoration of an enormous church, the whole interior of which is adorned with continuous fresco.† Art, to the followers of S. Francis,

\* This is Mr. Berenson's account of Giotto's training.

† A great part of the decoration of the Upper Church belongs to the period immediately preceding Giotto. It has till lately been believed to have been the work of Florentine artists; but recent critics have referred it to the Roman school; the author, though

was not only, and perhaps not primarily, a means of decoration, it was also regarded as a means of instruction. The Franciscan churches, which sprang up during the thirteenth century in all parts of Italy, were considered incomplete until their walls pictured in clear narrative the main events in the lives of S. Francis and of Christ. It will seem strange that the period in which art thus frankly accepted a didactic purpose was marked in painting by a breadth and grandeur of expression such as has never since been surpassed. Yet it is indubitable that, in spite of their continuous advance in technical method, the purpose of the foremost artists of the time was concentrated less upon their technique than upon their subject-matter, and it is only by sympathetic consideration of the subjects of their works that the character or quality of the artists who produced them can be approached or understood. This conviction has determined the author's treatment throughout the present work. Giotto's strength and greatness as an artist were the inseparable outcome of a religious earnestness of purpose, which, if inessential to art in the abstract, must be taken as the starting-point in the estimation of art such as his.

In approaching Giotto's *Life of S. Francis* it is important to remember that in his time, already, the true personality of the saint had been considerably obscured. Dissensions in the Franciscan Order had

**dissenting from them, thought it best to leave the question of the authorship of this earlier work untouched, as an adequate treatment of it would involve a separate treatise.**

led to the suppression of all the more intimate and personal records of his life, and the only account sanctioned by the Church was that which had been compiled by S. Bonaventura, a former general of the Order. In the style of its language this Life has, throughout, the savour of a prize copy of Latin prose—the balance and sound of the sentence is always felt to be of greater interest to the writer than a true characterisation of his hero; in spirit, it amounts to nothing more than a piece of conventional hagiography. Yet, as there can be little doubt that Giotto had the Life before him as he worked, it is necessary to take the text as a starting-point for the study of his frescoes; the account of each subject is therefore preceded by a translation of the passage in Bonaventura which describes the event portrayed.

r. S. FKANTIS HONOURED BY THE SIMPLETON.

"A certain man of Assisi, a simpleton as is believed, but taught by God, whenever he met Francis going through the town, would take off his cloak and lay the garment at his feet, asserting that Francis would one day be worthy of all reverence ; for that he was soon to do great things, for which the highest honour was due to him from the whole community of the faithful."

This fresco has received a special meed of praise from Messrs. Crowe and Cavalcaselle, and is considered by them to be of later date than those which immediately follow it, deserving to be ranked with the last five compositions of the series. But its superior merit

seems hardly to extend beyond the balance effected by setting two citizens on the right, and two on the left, of the central action, a disposition rendered very natural by the nature of the subject to be represented. Heavy repainting has, of course, made the draperies intolerably clumsy, and spoiled the effect of the picture; of the original value of the figures, therefore, little idea can be formed. But sufficient evidence remains in the buildings to connect the fresco, in time as in place, with those that immediately follow it; a glance at these will show that the artist has not as yet realised, even in its elements, the principle of the convergence of horizontal lines in perspective; all the buildings, though clearly intended to run parallel to the foreground of the picture, show their right wall to the spectator, producing a certain discomfort in him as he fronts the picture, and an uneasy sense that he is meant to look at it from the side. The same confusion occurs, in forms as crude, in other early frescoes of the series, notably in the third and fourth, but efforts are made to correct it, and, as the series proceeds, the errors in perspective become subtler and less apparent.

In spite, however, of their clumsiness, the buildings here are of more than usual interest in the light they throw on Giotto's early notions of the proper pictorial treatment of architecture. The Byzantine forms have been discarded, and the strange cardboard edifices that take their place represent the painter's impressions and recollections of the actual buildings about him. Numerous realistic touches may be noted; thus, it was common

for buildings in whose fabric the Gothic arch was made use of, to retain the heavier round arch in the tower; the supported overhanging eaves, and clothes hung out to dry from the windows, still find their parallel all over Italy. The same may be said of the open formation of the building on the right, although in existing houses this is generally confined to an upper storey. The projection of this last, as seen in the fresco, is certainly surprising and almost dangerous, but it is worth noting that Giotto in this early work shows a predilection for projecting roofs, perhaps in the hope that they may give a sense of depth to the picture and thus set the figures better in relief. Finally, the temple in the centre is undoubtedly a recollection of that which is still to be seen in the principal piazza at Assisi, showing, however, how little Giotto thought it necessary to make an accurate study of his original, and how great must have been at this time his disregard for the forms of classic architecture—five slim, instead of six massy pillars, a band of mosaic above them, and, worst of all, a rose window in the entablature.

## 2. S. FRANCIS GIVES HIS CLOAK TO A POOR KNIGHT.

"And when, after recovery of his bodily strength, he had made ready decent raiment for himself after his wont, he met a certain soldier, who, though of noble birth, was poor and ill-clad; touched with pity and pious feeling at his poverty, he took off his own dress and put it on him, that he might at one time fulfil a two-fold office of piety,

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in covering a noble soldier's shame and relieving a poor man's need."

The landscape, with its two churches and its tower, is as complicated as any that occurs in an authentic work of Giotto's, and calls for special notice. The town is certainly meant to suggest Assisi, though, of course, no attempt is made to give the forms of actual buildings. The little church and colony outside the walls are a characteristic touch. The larger building on the left remains a mystery, particularly in its spire, as nothing of the kind existed at Assisi in Giotto's time, except, indeed, the Church of S. Francis itself, whose campanile was once crowned, as Vasari says, by a lofty spire. In spite of the obvious anachronism involved, and the inversion of the true relative positions of the convent and the town, this is probably what Giotto meant to represent. The view is borne out by the fact that the two were originally separated by a deep gorge, which in the intervening centuries has been, in successive stages, deliberately filled up. The figures, in their present condition, are again heavy and unsatisfactory, and singularly deficient in "tactile values." This applies, above all, to the horse, who suffers further by the disappearance of his tail under the frame. The poor soldier, in his deep red, looks at least as warm as Francis : in the allegory of Poverty a more deserving beggar may be seen.

## 3. THE DREAM OF THE PALACE.

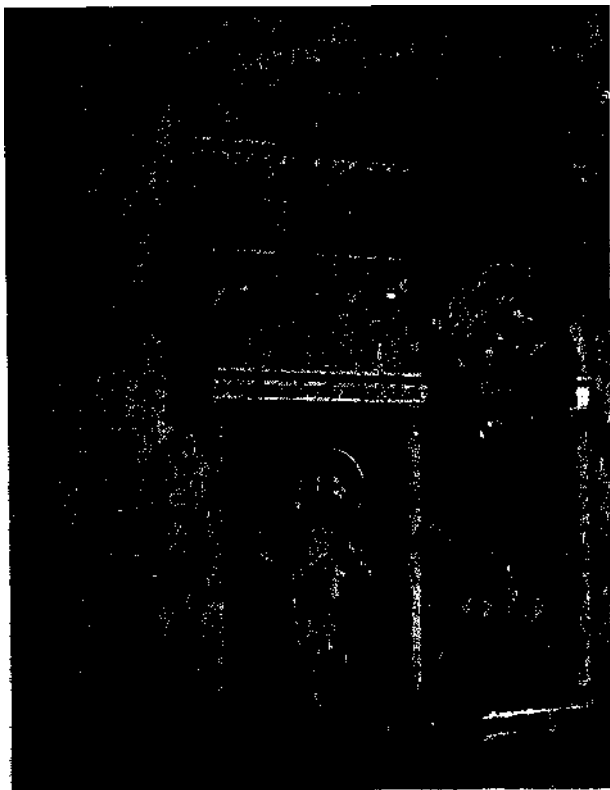
" But on the following night, when he had given himself to sleep, there was shown to him by God's grace a great and comely palace, with warlike arms marked with the sign of the Cross of Christ, whereby he might be warned that the pity, which he had shown to a poor soldier for love of the highest king, was to gain an incomparable reward. And when he asked whence they came and whose they were, he received in answer assurance from on high that all would belong to him and to his soldiers."

The treatment of perspective in the architecture is again instructive; to the fault noted in the first fresco a second is added here ; this appears in the two upper storeys of the dream palace, which look as if they were falling backwards. The main error of older artists had been the reverse—to show the entire roof of the buildings, representing them, in consequence, as leaning dangerously forwards. Giotto's mistake here—nowhere else so obviously committed—is therefore of peculiar interest, as it suggests that, while actually engaged upon the series, he was devoting his mind to problems of perspective, and, in the absence of theoretical knowledge of the subject, was advancing by experiment to better representation in practice.

The fresco testifies very clearly to the practical bias of the painter's mind. The dream palace is almost overwhelming in its solidity and size, and seems to press upon the very bed-posts. Yet Francis sleeps,







S. FRANCIS AT S. DAMIANO

[Assist. Upper Church

To face p. 29

as he must, and with averted face. In fear, then, lest the meaning be missed, Giotto sends a heavenly messenger (in this case Christ himself) to apprise Francis of its presence, and a curtain, which might interrupt his vision if he were to wake, is drawn carefully aside.

#### 4. S. FRANCIS AT S. DAMIANO

" He had gone out one day to meditate in the fields, and was sauntering close to the church of San Damiano, which was in danger of falling by reason of its excessive age. Moved by the Spirit he entered the church to pray, and falling before the image of the Crucified, he was filled while praying with no small consolation of spirit; and when with tearful eyes he was gazing upon the Cross of the Lord, he heard with his bodily ears a voice, which descended from the very Cross upon him, three times saying, 'Francis, go and repair My house, which, thou seest, is ruined totally.' "

This is, perhaps, the most valuable fresco in the series for the light it throws on Giotto's attitude to realism. The crucifix behind the altar might almost be called a copy of that with which the miracle is actually associated (now preserved in the Cappella S. Giorgio at Santa Chiara). The altar itself finds a close counterpart in the crypt of the ruined chapel of S. Masseo, outside Assisi, where the author saw the heavy stone slab, which serves for table, in use as a carpenter's bench.\*

\* Possibly during the restoration of the chapel: for it is now in use again.

The small curved apse is a common characteristic of Umbrian chapels of the period; the oval patch of blue—like a hedge-sparrow's *egg*—above the crucifix, is its damaged vaulting. It is probable therefore that, though there is a certain appearance of classicism in the architecture, this does not provide an adequate clue to the understanding of the ideas which were uppermost in the painter's mind, and that the introduction of pillars is not so much a sign of classical influence as an expedient for allowing him more easily to show S. Francis inside the chapel. The angle at which the chapel is presented to the spectator should further be noted as characteristic of Giotto's early work; his elementary notions of perspective here actually aid him, enabling him to show Francis kneeling naturally in front of the crucifix, though this, in its turn, directly fronts the spectator.

In spite, or rather because, of its ruined condition, this fresco is not without beauty, particularly in the figure of Francis, whose garment, once blue, shows now the lines of the original drawing. His long slender fingers, which all through the series are only paralleled by the toes of Francis in the next fresco, support the tradition, accepted hitherto, that Giotto learned from his master Byzantine methods of execution.

#### 5. S. FRANCIS RENOUNCES HIS WORLDLY GOODS.

" After stripping him of money, his father in the flesh bethought him next to bring this child of grace before the

## FIRST WORKS IN ASSIST

bishop of the city, that in his hand he might renounce all claims upon his father, and give back all he had. The true lover of poverty showed himself prompt to do so; and coming before the bishop, neither asks for delay nor hesitates in anything, nor looks for words nor makes them ; but forthwith laid down all his garments and returned them to his father. And then was the man of God found to have under his delicate raiment a rough hair shirt upon his flesh. Thereafter, drunk with a wonderful fervour of spirit, he threw aside even the covering of his thighs,\* and stripped himself wholly before all, saying to his father, 'Till now I have called thee on earth my father, but hereafter I can say securely " Our Father who art in heaven," and with Him I have laid up all my treasure and set all the surety of my hope.' The bishop, when he saw it, marvelled at such exceeding fervour of God in man, and arose forthwith and gathered him into his arms with weeping, good and pious man that he was, covering him with his own cloak and bidding his attendants give him something wherewith to clothe his limbs."

This fresco has never failed of its appeal, and might be called a stock example of that dramatic power for which Giotto is rightly famous. It is noteworthy that no attempt is made to suggest violent feeling or action, except in the person of Bernardone himself. Even the children, who, in Giotto's later composition at Santa Croce, are with difficulty prevented from stoning Francis, are quiet in this, as if they felt the impressiveness of the scene, though their raised skirts show that

\* In Giottesque English, "drawers." They occupy, as will be observed, a prominent position in the fresco.

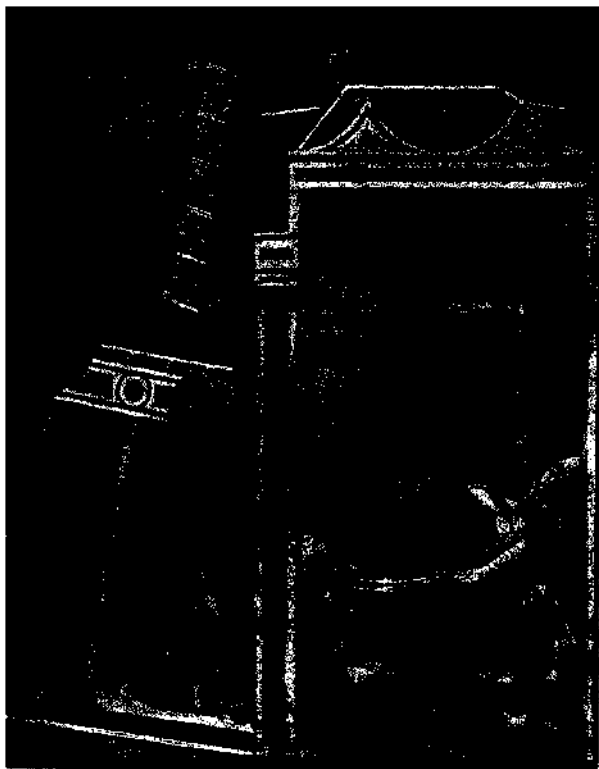
stones are ready. The meditative attitude of the bishop, and the peacefulness of his averted face, form a passage of much beauty. The figure of Francis has suffered greatly from restoration; but it deserves to be compared with its fellow on the left wall of the nave of the Lower Church, still visible without great trouble on a sunny morning; the result will be a fresh realisation of the immense advance, which even this rude figure involved, in the delineation of the human body.

The buildings here are a problem, both as to what they represent, and as to their intended relation to one another in space. The scene was definitely localised by tradition in the Piazza S. Maria Maggiore, but the old Vescovado no longer exists, so it is impossible to say how far the architecture contains reminiscences of the actual buildings.

#### 6. THE POPE'S DREAM.

"For he told how in a dream he saw that the basilica of the Lateran was in imminent danger of falling, but that a little poor man, mean and despised, set his own back beneath it and prevented its collapse."

Study of this painting should certainly begin by a comparison of it with the same subject as treated in the nave of the lower church. The frescoes there have never received the attention they deserve, partly because they are fragmentary, and partly because the prevailing darkness hides them from those who do not wait till their eyes become accustomed to it. In beauty of



*Photo, Anderson]*

## THE IOPE'S DREAM

*[Assisi. Upper Church*

*To face p. 32*





colouring—where colour still remains—they are comparable to the finest frescoes in the building; and there can be little doubt that they represent the best workmanship which, at the date when they were executed money could procure.\* It may, therefore, be assumed that the Pope in the lower church fresco, with his general insipidity of expression, and his clumsy pose, half sitting and half lying, represents the best effort that the time could produce to draw a sleeping figure; the idea of introducing the falling church itself is discarded, and the attitude of Francis, clearly intended to be realistic, as we see by the bent neck and straining knee, fails wholly of effect. The comparison is valuable because it takes all appearance of primitiveness out of Giotto's work, and obliges us to note the immense advance which it implies. This fresco is indeed one of the most powerful of the series. The ease and security suggested in the delicate curves of S. Francis' figure, and enforced by opposition to the upright at his side, is convincing and remarkable. The design for the roof of the Pope's chamber is calculated to accentuate the sense of rocking motion in the imperilled tower.

#### 7. THE APPROVAL OF THE ORDER.

This fresco is referred by different authors to different events in the life of S. Francis. It is generally called *The Approval of the Order*, and falls naturally into

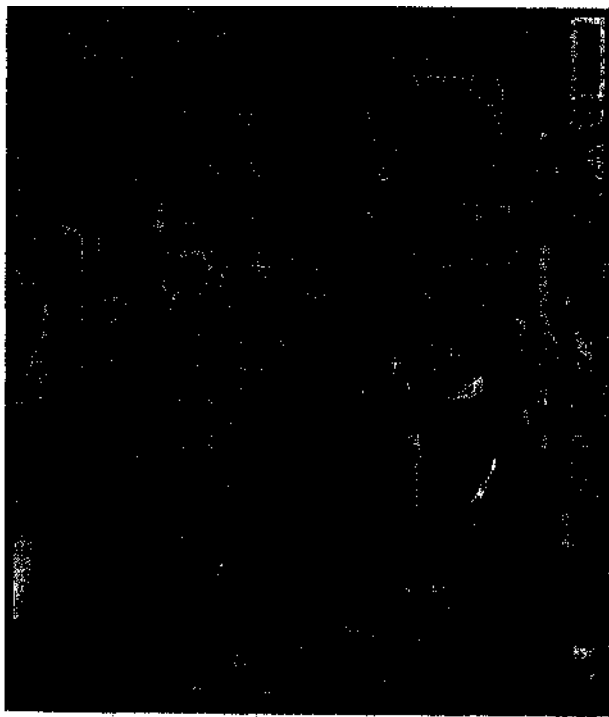
\* They seem to belong to the early thirteenth century, and are even supposed to have been completed before 1233.

its place, if we so consider it. But recent critics incline to regard it as the *Confirmation of the Rule*, by Honorius in 1221, on the ground that this later appearance of Francis before the Pope was a more significant event. It is in favour of this view, that the Pope is handing Francis a scroll; for he obtained no bull from Innocent. But Bonaventura nowhere describes the *Confirmation of the Rule*, and regards the *Approval of the Order* as a direct result of the *Vision of the falling' church*. His words are as follows. "He approved the rule,\* gave an order for the preaching of penitence, and had little crowns (*i.e.*, tonsures) made for all the lay brothers, who had accompanied the servant of God, that they might freely preach God's word."

A certain advance in the treatment of perspective will be noted here, partly due no doubt to the comparative simplicity of the problem before the artist. Mr. Fry suggests that the architectural accessories were derived by Giotto from the Roman school of the Cosmati, Giotto's only known visit to Rome took place several years later; but it is admitted on all hands that Roman artists took some part in the decoration of the upper church, and it may have been there that Giotto met them; or it may be that he had paid a visit to Rome in his days of apprenticeship, and had actually seen at the Vatican a council chamber decorated by the Cosmati.

The design is of considerable beauty, and deliberately

\* There was not, at this time, speaking strictly, any "Rule" at all.



*Photo, Anderson*

# THE APPROVAL OF THE ORDER

*[ Asisi. Upper Church*

*To face p. 34*



## FIRST WORKS IN ASSISI

framed to fix attention upon the supplication of Francis. The raised hands of the three foremost brothers lead the eye to his face. The apprehensive severity of the cardinals offers a fine contrast, and lends some leniency to the bending figure of the Pope.

### 8. S. FRANCIS IN THE FIERY CHARIOT.

" And while the devoted man of God was spending the night after his wont in prayer to God, in a hut in the priest's garden, and was absent in the flesh from his children, behold, about midnight, when some of the brothers were asleep and others persisting in prayer, a fiery chariot of marvellous brightness entered by the door of the house, and made its way hither and thither three times about the dwelling ; above it rested a shining globe, which had the appearance of the sun, and made the night like day. The watchers were astounded, the sleepers at once aroused and terrified."

The predominance, in the series, of visions or supernatural appearances must have put Giotto's ingenuity severely to the test. He solves the problem they offer, by presenting the natural and the visionary in precisely similar terms. His practical mind refuses here to rob the chariot even of its gravity ; he gives its wheels a strong, if temporary, support, and there are traces also of a foothold for the horses. In the *Presses of Santa Croce*\* a very different and far less effective rendering is given of the scene, though Bonaventura is

\* School of Giotto. Now in the Accademia at Florence.

there more closely followed. An interior is represented, as in strictness it should be, and S. Francis with the fiery globe is seen in a horseless, unsupported chariot; so given, however, the scene is ludicrous, and fails to carry conviction of its truth. Giotto's departure from his text is clearly deliberate, and the value of the change he has made, as well as the grandeur of his conception, can best be understood by comparing it with the feebler representation. His idea would seem to have been derived from Bonaventura's comparison of S. Francis with Elijah.

#### 9. S. FRANCIS AND THE THRONES.

" For while he was in the company of the man of God and together with him was praying with fervent spirit in a deserted church, he became in ecstasy, and saw among many seats in heaven one more honourable than the rest, adorned with precious stones and shining with every splendour. He wondered in himself at the brightness of that lofty throne, and began with anxious thought to inquire who was to be received into it; meantime he heard a voice saying to him, ' This seat belonged to one of the fallen, and is now in keeping for humble Francis.' "

This is an even more exacting subject than the last. Giotto has contented himself with a statement of the bare fact in the plainest possible terms. The row of chairs remains an item which it is extremely difficult to be reconciled to, but the floating figure of Christ goes far towards redeeming the picture, connecting with its various curves the scattered elements of the composition

and correcting its harshness and angularity by their harmony and softness. The kneeling figures are also not without beauty ; and with this fresco begins a representation of S. Francis which is maintained in striking identity through all the various conditions of the eight that follow it. It is not merely that the same features are reproduced : a certain indescribable quality is maintained in the gesture and general bearing, suggesting the gentleness and humility of S. Francis, together with a sense of the power and decision of which they were in fact the outcome. This recognisable unity in the succeeding works is one evidence among others that the frescoes have suffered less than is sometimes now supposed.

#### 10. THE DEMONS DRIVEN FROM AREZZO.

" It chanced that S. Francis came once to Arezzo at a time when the whole city was so shaken with intestine war as to be in danger of instant ruin. He was entertained in the outskirts of the city, and saw above it devils dancing in triumph and kindling its disordered citizens to mutual slaughter. Whereupon he sent brother Sylvester, a man of dovelike simplicity, before him as a herald, to put to flight the seditious powers of the air, saying, 'Go before the gate of the city, and on behalf of omnipotent God command the demons in virtue of obedience that they depart with all speed.' "

The town and church here will probably be thought at first to be creations of pure fancy, and the magnificent effect of the spire, in heightening Sylvester's attitude

of defiance, a sufficient justification of the solitary position of the church. But the town itself, with its numerous towers and stuccoed houses, is by no means devoid of actual reminiscences, and the position of the church agrees with a fact in regard to the old Duomo of Arezzo which readers of Vasari will doubtless be acquainted with, viz., that it was outside the town.

The principal group, with the relation suggested in it between the act of prayer and its efficacy, is perhaps more powerful in conception than anything that has yet left Giotto's hand.

#### II. S. FRANCIS BEFORE THE SULTAN.

"If you shrink from renouncing the law of Mahomet in favour of the faith of Christ, command a very great fire to be kindled, and I, with your priests, will enter the fire, that even so you may learn which faith, not undeservedly, is to be held more holy and more sure,' To whom the Soldan, 'I do not believe that any one of my priests would be willing to expose himself to fire in order to defend his faith, or to undergo any kind of torture.' For he saw that one of his elders, a true man and long approved, as soon as he heard this speech, fled straightway from his presence."

This picture could only fail to be impressive upon one who retained a vivid impression of Giotto's still finer rendering of the subject at Santa Croce, which even the barbarous mishandling of the frescoes there has been unable to spoil. The attitude of Francis is indeed nobler here, and more in accordance with what we



know of the man, and the retreating Magi admirable in the simplicity and subtlety of the curves by which their discomfiture is expressed. The picture suffers chiefly from the crudity of its architectural accessories, and the difficulty, partly thereby occasioned, of adequately realising the intended spatial relations of the group. As in the preceding fresco, Giotto makes a deliberate attempt to set the buildings at an angle to one another, and it is his failure to do so which spoils the first effect of the picture. Francis and the friar are to be conceived as standing slightly in the background, while the Sultan is somewhat fiercely bidding his Magi prove their power: it is in direct contrast with his imperious gesture that their consternation becomes most apparent. Francis holds his left hand upon his heart—as he makes his appeal to faith—and, with his right, points almost lovingly to the fire, his brother.

The attendant soldier—extreme right—has, or seems to have, three legs, a piece of gross misrepresentation on the part of a restorer.

#### 12. S. FRANCIS IN ECSTASY.

" 'There ' (in the woods) 'as he was praying by night, with his hands outstretched in the form of the cross, his whole body was seen to be raised from the earth and surrounded with a glowing cloud, that so the wonderful enlightening within his soul might be testified by wonderful purification about his body ; there he made answer to the judge, there he made supplication to the father, there held converse with a friend,"

Here, as in the *Appearance at Aries*, Giotto shrinks from setting the arms strictly in the form of the cross, probably, in this instance, because the repetition they suggest of the curved base of the clouds helps, as it were, to raise Francis from the ground, by better conveying that sense of his aspiration and fervour, which was no doubt the actual basis of the legend, and could alone make its definite presentation tolerable. The figure of Christ, appearing behind the rainbow—as Byzantine tradition demanded—is skilfully contrived with a view to enhancing the same effect.

The woods are feebly given, and the turreted fortress seems quite out of place; possibly, however, it is intended for the city gate, and a line across the background, where the blue gives place to a dirty grey, may once have been the top of the wall. It would seem that Assisi was surrounded with forest-land in early times, and thus that, in Giotto's mind, to place S. Francis outside the wall is almost equivalent to placing him "in the woods."

### 13. THE PHAIESEPK.

"He caused a manger to be prepared, hay to be brought, and an ox and an ass to be led to the spot. The brothers were summoned, the people arrived, the wood re-echoed with their voices, and that venerable night was made splendid with the multitude and brilliance of their lights, solemn with the volume and harmony of their praise. Overflowing with piety, the man of God took his stand by the manger, his tears falling, and his face flooded with joy. The solemn rites of the Mass were celebrated above it,

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while Francis, priest of Christ, chanted the holy Gospel. Afterwards he preached to the people standing round about the nativity of the poor king, whom he called 'the boy of Bethlehem,' when he wished to speak of him, for the great tenderness of his love."

The naturalism here is so obvious as to need little comment, and is carried out, as Mr. Fry has observed, even in the minute details of the foreground objects. It is worth noticing that it is these objects which, in spite of Giotto's increasing perception of the truths of perspective, present the most insurmountable difficulties. Though naturalistic, the picture makes no such claim to literal accuracy as that of S. Francis before the crucifix. The original celebration is associated by tradition with a tiny chapel no larger than S. Damiano itself,\* and thus in its surroundings was far more nearly akin to the event commemorated than would appear from Giotto's representation. But for this, Bonaventura<sup>1</sup>'s stately sentences may be held responsible; and for the rest, we may regard the fresco as a reminiscence of what Giotto must actually have seen enacted in Franciscan churches. Rather therefore than in a side chapel, as Mr. Fry suggests, the scene should probably be conceived as taking place behind the screen which parted nave and choir. Something of the kind—though probably not a solid partition such as Giotto here represents—was actually standing, in his day, in the

\* The lower chapel in the hermitage at Greccio. It must be added that the upper chapel is divided by a screen surmounted by a crucifix, on the principle seen in the fresco.

upper church at Assisi, as relics of woodwork in the frescoes on either side of the altar still testify, and above this a crucifix is known to have hung.\* The tenderness and devotion of the figures bending above the manger are remarkable, the singing friars perhaps less satisfactory; the artists of Italy never ceased attempting to represent the act of singing, but seldom do more than open the mouth of the performer and rob his features of expression. It is true that Mr. Fry "can almost tell what note each is singing, so great is Giotto's command of facial expression." Lord Lindsay, on the other hand, finds that "three of the monks in the background, yawning, are excellent."

#### 14. THE MIRACLE OF THE SPRING.

"The weather was sultry, and the peasant, as he followed the servant of God, was ascending the mountainous tracts, when, wearied with travel on a rougher and longer road than he looked for, and failing through an excessive burning thirst, he began to cry out vehemently, and to say that unless he should drink a little, he must straightway breathe his last. Without delay, the man of God leapt from his ass, and with knees fixed to earth, and eyes raised to heaven, never ceased to pray until he perceived that he was heard. When his prayer was finished, he said to the man, 'Hasten to the rock, and there thou shalt find living water, which in pity Christ hath this hour brought forth from the stone for thee to drink.' "

\* Being indeed the famous work of Giunta Pisano, now lost, in which the founder of the church, brother Elias, was represented at the foot of the cross.

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This fresco has never failed to excite the fullest admiration, since first the peculiarly realistic attitude of the man who stoops to drink arrested Vasarfs wayward fancy, and the eye certainly rests on this and the following fresco—in spite of their elementary rendering of natural forms—with a new sense of satisfaction and repose. The cause is largely to be found in the relief experienced here in the absence of those crude architectural accessories which have defaced the preceding numbers ; for we are thus enabled to realise undistracted Giotto's unique power of profound expression in simple terms, and to foresee the development of those qualities which reach their grandest expression in the great series of the Arena Chapel at Padua. Trees are, of course, of special significance in this fresco, its woody summit being a distinguishing feature of Monte Alverno, where the scene occurred.

It is, perhaps, worth noting further that if the seventh fresco be accepted as a representation of *The Approval of the Order*, this is the first instance in which the order of the frescoes has failed to agree with a page for page following of Bona Ventura's life. If we continue turning the pages, the next scene that appears is the death of the knight of Celano; the scene before us occurs only in what is called *The Lesser Legend*, and the *Preaching to the Birds*, though a part of the main life, is recounted later. It might not be unreasonable, therefore, to suppose that these works were introduced into the series as an afterthought, though it seems more probable their position was decided by the

fact that each has a background of pure landscape. It will be remembered that they occupy together the east end of the church, one on either side of the main doors.

#### 15. THE SERMON TO THE BIRDS.

" Now when he was drawing near to Bevagna, he came to a place in which a great multitude of birds of different kinds had assembled. And when the Saint of God had seen them, he ran eagerly to the place, and, as though they were partakers in reason, saluted them. And they all awaited him, and turned themselves towards him, in such wise that those that were in the bushes bowed their heads, as he drew near to them, and stretched out to him, against their wont; and so he came to them, and anxiously warned them all that they should listen to the word of God, saying to them, ' Birds, my brothers, you ought to praise your Creator much, who clothed you in plumes, and gave you feathers for flying, who granted to you the purity of the air, and without anxiety of yours directs you.' "

This composition, again, should be carefully compared with the earlier rendering of the same subject, to be seen in the nave of the lower church. They are identical in idea, the difference between them depending chiefly upon Giotto's new power of representing natural forms. The earlier painter shows the same desire to express the tenderness of S. Francis and the trustfulness of the birds, but to do so he has been obliged to exaggerate the pose, and makes the outstretched hands of Francis cover the limits of his

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feathered congregation. He sets the brother erect by contrast, in the same way as Giotto, but gives him no expression of surprise. Indeed, the raising of his hand by Giotto might be regarded, superficially, as a somewhat commonplace touch ; it is the unintelligent reiteration of motives of this kind by the Giotteschi that causes the vulgarity often prominent in their work; in Giotto they are justified, because they are never allowed to interfere with his rendering of the principal theme. The bending figure of S. Francis in this fresco is one of the loveliest things in the church, and it may be remarked that the painter has instinctively thrown the background trees into sympathy with S. Francis, bending over him, as he over the birds.

### 16. DEATH OF THE KNIGHT OF CELAXO.

"' Brother host, I have come into thy house that I may eat. Accede now swiftly to my warnings, for thou shalt not eat here, but elsewhere. Therefore confess now thy sins. The Lord shall to-day make return to thee, for the devotion with which thou hast received his poor.' . . . At length they came in to table, and as the others were beginning to eat, their host suddenly gave up the ghost, carried away by instant death, in accordance with the word of the man of God."

Architectural backgrounds make their depressing appearance once more, and we must thank Giotto's connection with the Roman school for the hideous balcony which obscures the significance of the picture.

The treatment of the crowd is thoroughly characteristic of Giotto, and should be compared with Paduan representations : only a few figures come into prominence, the painter not wishing to confuse his composition, or to press his inventive powers too hardly for various attitudes of suitable expression. The idea of numbers is conveyed by a block of heads, and greater freedom thus secured in the disposition of the principal actors. The group of three women immediately above the knight are beautiful in the reserve and continence with which their grief is expressed. They show a gentle, sorrowful surprise, and, in the outstretched arms, a sense even of the irrevocableness of the departed spirit. This reserve, we must remark, is Giotto's rule, the *Pieta* at Padua being, perhaps, the only picture in which grief, as he represents it, loses its restraint. The drawn, distorted features, so often associated with his name, are almost invariably traceable to that fresco as a source, critics now, like pupils then, being only too apt to be struck by his occasional violence more than by his normal moderation. The woman here, for example, who kneels and digs her nails into her cheeks will probably be thought the most Giottesque. Giottesque she is, but little more; and we are familiar with her only because of the constant recurrence to her unpleasant gesture by the inferior painters of Giotto's school. The man with red cloak in the centre of the composition deserves remark ; but for the relief afforded by his averted face, the universal concentration on the features of the dying knight would become too tense and pain-







*Photo, Anderson*

[Artist, *Upper Church*  
S. FRANCIS PREACHES BEFORE THE POPE

*To face p. 17*

ful; represented as in the act of turning to S. Francis, he yet by his gesture identifies himself with the common feeling.

17. S. FRANCIS PREACHES BEFORE THE POPE.

"Once, when about to preach before the Pope and Cardinals at the Lord of Ostia's suggestion, he had carefully composed a sermon and committed it to memory, but after taking his stand in the midst that he might set forth the words of edification, he so completely forgot everything as to be unable to utter so much as a syllable. This he told them in words of truth and humility, and then, giving himself to prayer for the grace of the Holy Spirit, he began straightway to overflow with words so potent, and with such mighty virtue to bend the minds of those great prelates to remorse, that it was clearly manifest that not he was speaking, but the Spirit of the Lord."

The Gothic interior which Giotto here represents has naturally attracted considerable attention ; not only is the building the most pleasing in design of any that occurs in this series, but the perspective is treated with unusual skill, though even here it is not easy to determine conclusively whether the chapel was intended to be round or square. It should be noticed, further, that Giotto was not subject to chance in the architectural or other detail introduced by him into his pictures, nor to the influence of one or another of his contemporaries. The Pope sits here under a Gothic roof, because he is listening to a sermon, in fact, because he is in church—

for though Gothic was in no way confined to churches in Giotto's time, it was yet in close connection with the great religious revival of the thirteenth century that the style was introduced into Italy. A glance at the Pope's council chamber—as seen in No. 7 of the series—will show that the choice of architecture is determined by conscious purpose.

The windows of Giotto's chapel are of interest, being identical in design with those of the upper church itself, and suggesting that the painter was assisted in his perspective by the model which was before him while he worked. The fresco is one that has suffered grievously from repaint; the raised hand of S. Francis has been completely spoiled, and the draperies, as a whole, are more than usually clumsy. But, in spite of mishaps, the picture retains its power. The Pope listens with a frightful intentness, and the cardinals are admirable for the diversity of feeling they convey. The nearest to Francis seems to be touched most keenly with Bonaventura's "compunctio"; on either side of the Pope we have a heavier type, who either gape at the miracle, or sit stolidly in the face of it; on the far right, a beautiful figure is roused, seemingly, not only to interest, but to sympathy also.

#### 18. THE APPEARANCE AT ARLES.

"For while that excellent preacher Antony, who is now the glorious confessor of Christ, was preaching to the brothers at the chapter of Aries, upon the motto on the

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cross,' Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews,' a brother of proved integrity, whose name was Monaldus, looked behind him by divine warning towards the door of the chapel, and with his bodily eyes saw the blessed Francis raised in the air, and blessing the brothers with arms outstretched as if upon the cross."

It is hard not to find, at first, a deliberate contrast suggested, in this fresco and the last, between the preaching powers of Antony and Francis, so great is the lassitude here, and the intentness there so rigorous. One of the brothers seems actually to have fallen asleep, and the heaviness and immobility of Antony's figure add to the general impression. But the picture has been repainted brutally, as is seen sufficiently in the features of the central monk on the bench at the right hand side. The sense of general drowsiness is probably therefore an illusion, and an attentive study—particularly of the four brothers on the left—will suggest that the key to the picture is probably to be found in the subject of S. Antony's sermon; grief and sorrow for the passion of Christ were the real motives of Giotto's expression, greatly obscured as they now are: and the whole feeling of the picture was so conceived as to explain and harmonise with the apparition of S. Francis. Giotto follows Bonaventura's description far more closely in this early work than in the fresco at Santa Croce; but his rendering is profounder than his text. The brother who sees S. Francis does not betray the vision by any gesture of surprise, and the presence of Francis is thus felt not as a supernatural portent, but as the inner

thought of all, externalised, as it were, and made visible by sympathy to the spirit of one.

19. S. FRANCIS RECEIVING THE STIGMATA.

"On a certain morning, about the time of the feast of the exaltation of the Holy Cross, while he was praying on the mountain side, he saw a Seraph, having six wings flaming and brilliant, descend from the sublime expanse of heaven. And when, in swiftest flight, he had reached a place in the air near to the man of God, there appeared between his wings the image of a man crucified, with hands and feet stretched out in the form of the cross, and fastened to the cross. Two wings were raised above his head, two covered his whole body, and two were outstretched to fly. Seeing this, he was utterly astounded, and joy mingled with anguish rushed to his heart,"

The fresco has suffered too terribly to be of value, except as showing the general arrangement given by Giotto in his first treatment of this great subject. The S. Francis here has lost all character, his tonsured crown, converted by the restorer into a seal-skin skull-cap, being one of the most dismal misrepresentations in the series. In the fresco at Santa Croce, greater historical accuracy is reached by the substitution of a cave for the Saint's hut on the slopes of Alverno, the ravine which here separates Francis from the chapel being omitted. Its purpose is to express symbolically the solitude of S. Francis, and thus justify the introduction of brother Leo, a very comforting presence; his face

shows the lines of the original drawing, and betrays by the tenderness of its expression how great a loss has been sustained in the effacement of the rest.

#### 20. DEATH OF S. FRANCIS.

"At length, when all mysteries were fulfilled upon him, his most holy spirit was delivered from the flesh, and absorbed into the depths of the divine glory, and the blessed man fell asleep in the Lord. But one of the brothers and of his disciples saw that blessed soul, in the likeness of a star of surpassing brilliance, borne aloft upon a white cloud over many waters, and by a straight path carried up to heaven."

Suspicion has of late been thrown by Mr. Berenson on the authorship of the last nine frescoes ; but he has not, so far as I am aware, himself expressed the grounds of his distrust, deputing the task to Mr. Perkins ("Giotto," G. Bell and Sons) and Miss Lina Duff Gordon (Dent's *Mediaeval Towns*, "Assisi"). The question is indeed highly complex, and the mere attempt to decide it arbitrarily would be a great presumption, especially when the most celebrated of the earlier critics and the most devoted to Giotto, find in these concluding works the first unmistakable traces of his hand. It is impossible, however, not to sympathise with Mr. Berenson, at least in his rejection of the last three frescoes, in which he is followed by Mr. Roger Fry. The modelling of the figures is quite uncharacteristic of Giotto and, what is more, has a definite character of its own, Mr. Berenson

believes that he has found similar character in an altarpiece at the Uffizi, which represents S. Cecilia with side-scenes from her life.\* The same style is repeated to a certain extent, it is true, in the craning necks of the nuns of S. Damiano, but otherwise that fresco, and still less the other five now under consideration, present no striking similarity to the work of this unknown artist. It cannot, however, be denied that in these six works the interest flags, and that they seem less definitely marked than the earlier numbers by directness and dramatic force. Thus in the *Vision of Augustine*, not only is the architecture unnecessarily elaborate and prominent but it further lacks originality, the bishop's bedroom being a close copy of the Pope's council-chamber: nor have the two monks in the foreground a clear significance, almost usurping, as they do, the place of the principal figure. Again, the preceding composition, unmistakably similar as it is to Giotto's work at Santa Croce, is spoiled here by the wanton introduction of the crowd, for which even tradition affords no warrant. The *Conversion of Hieronymus* contains a further trace of inferior thought in the action of a soldier on the right, who seems to be addressing himself to spectators of the picture and directing their attention to the miracle—a trick which it would be hard to parallel in any extant work of Giotto's. The soldier on the left in the same fresco who points with his staff to the hat of Hieronymus is almost equally unsatisfactory. Even the next fresco

\* This appears in the official catalogue under the name of Cimabue.



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—of *S. Francis mounted by S. Clare*—seems far from meriting the universal and often somewhat childish praise that has been lavished upon it. Not only is the gaudy church facade singularly ill-drawn, and out of keeping with the spirit of the scene, but, what is more, it contradicts the representation of *S. Damiano*, as given by Giotto far more realistically in the fourth fresco of the series. "Charming" or "dove-like" are the attributes generally accorded to the nuns, words not applicable to women as Giotto generally paints them. The next fresco which once represented the *Canonisation* is now so damaged that little can be said of it; enough however remains to suggest that the mass of figures which the artist was called on to represent crippled his imagination and overtaxed his powers of design. Lastly, *Gregory's Vision* contrasts ill with the similar subject as seen in No. 6 of the series. The seated figures of the attendants are clumsy, and their number is increased to four for no apparent reason, unless it be to fill an awkward gap in the composition, a reason which would be worse than none at all.

These arguments, however, are, in every case, not more than tentative, and even taken in their sum will have little weight with those whose conception of Giotto's manner differs from that of the present author. Moreover, in the case of four frescoes at least—those closely connected with the ceremonies of the Death and Canonisation of *S. Francis*—it is more than likely that external influences may have been brought to bear upon the painter sufficient to modify the treatment that

would else have been natural to him. The citizens of Assisi, as well as the monks of the convent, would have a peculiar personal interest in these representations, and would desire that every scene should be given with the utmost possible magnificence. This would explain much that has been objected to above, and the best solution of all difficulties would perhaps be found in supposing that the designs are Giotto's, but that, as less interested in them than in his more spontaneous work, he deputed their execution to assistants in a more than usual degree. It seems best therefore to append Bonaventura's account of the events pictured in the succeeding frescoes, leaving readers to decide finally, according to their own taste and insight, to what extent Giotto is to be held responsible for their beauties or their faults.

The fresco of the *Death of S. Francis*—except for the intervention here of a crowd between the body of the saint and his ascending spirit—is remarkably similar to that of the same subject in Santa Croce. The agreement appears in at least one important point of detail, the brother who sees Francis being in both cases in the same position, and of the same type, bearded and of middle age; as though Giotto, when first called on to conceive the scene, had imagined this episode so clearly that on returning to the same subject he inevitably repeated it. The coincidence would certainly be remarkable if the pictures were by different hands.

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## 21. VISIONS OF AUGUSTINE AND THE BISHOP OF ASSISI.

" The servant of the brothers, Augustine, a man both holy and just, was lying at that time in his last hour and had long lost power of speech; but on a sudden he cried out in the hearing of those who stood beside him, ' Wait for me, father, wait: behold, straightway I come with thee.' And when the brothers questioned and marvelled much to whom he spoke so boldly, he replied : ' Do you not see our Father, Francis, who goes to heaven.' And straightway his holy soul departed from the flesh and followed the most holy Father."

" The Bishop of Assisi had gone on a pilgrimage to the oratory of S. Michael, on Mount Garganus, and to him the blessed Francis appeared on the night of his departure, and said, ' Behold, I leave the world, and go to heaven.' "

The fresco should be contrasted with Giotto's presentation of the same combination of subjects at Santa Croce; the space there available was far better suited to the requirements of the composition; but it should be observed that the increased technical power has been used to intensify the simplicity and directness of the treatment. The vision of Augustine, as presented here, seems to be taking place in a room, where we are left to surmise that he was on his death bed, for reasons hardly stated. The picture is very narrowly connected with the life of the

picture with the preceding—especially so far as the bishop is concerned—seems forced and unnatural.\*

## 22. THE CONVERSION OF HIERONYMUS.

"And so the citizens of Assisi were introduced in multitudes to behold those sacred stigmata with their eyes and kiss them with their lips. But one of them, who was a soldier, learned and prudent, Hieronymus by name, and a man assuredly both distinguished and renowned, had conceived doubt touching this kind of sacred marks, and was incredulous like Thomas : in presence of the brothers, therefore, and of the other citizens, he moved the nails with fervour and boldness above the rest, and with his own hands touched the hands of the saint and his feet and his side,"

The scene took place (as Bonaventura certifies) at the Portiuncula ; but the picture undoubtedly represents the interior of the upper church itself. The background is unfortunately effaced, but the cross-beam and crucifix are signs hardly mistakable, and it is not unlikely that the angel and Madonna were also taken from the life. A rainbow-like arc behind the angel was, possibly, once the vaulting of the choir. It may be noted that, though at Santa Croce the conversion of Hieronymus is combined with another subject, he wears in both frescoes a mantle identical both in form and

\* S. Francis does not appear in this fresco : the bishop and Augustine are supposed to see his ascension as represented in the fresco that precedes.

colour, a second coincidence in further corroboration of the authorship generally accepted.

23. THE LAST MEETING OF S. FRANCIS AND  
S. CLARE.

" And as the people, in their rejoicing, passed by the church of S. Damiano, in which that noble virgin Clare, who is now glorious in heaven, was living then with virgins in confinement, they tarried for a little while and offered the sacred body, marked with heavenly pearls, to be seen and to be kissed by those sacred virgins."

If in the last three frescoes Giotto's presence has been felt to be on the wane, that impression must surely gain force before this fresco and the two that follow it. The mere fact that its charm and beauty are perpetually singled out for unique praise is enough to render its authenticity a matter of suspicion. Admiration of Giotto is in general one of the most arduous duties to which the conscientious Italian tourist feels himself to be bound, and wherever his praise flows spontaneously, let the critic beware: even the critics themselves have greatly confused the subject by persistently attributing to Giotto works which, according to their various criteria, they judge to be of the highest excellence, without sufficiently inquiring whether such excellence was Giotto's distinguishing characteristic, as testified by works of which the authorship is beyond dispute. The close connection of this with Giotto's work is, of course,

unquestionable; a mere detail such as the child in the tree, whose attitude occurs again at Padua, would suffice to establish this ; possibly also the " visualisation of the scene," to use Mr. Fry's expression, is definitely his; but it seems unlikely that except in supervision and advice he played any further part. The " mysterious unanalysable charm " of the fresco connects itself with a sentimentality of appeal such as Giotto never makes.

The fresco of the " Canonisation " is so terribly effaced that Bonaventura's account of the event can be of little service. The following is his account of the subject of the twenty-fifth fresco:

" For the Lord Pope Gregory IX. of blessed memory, of whom the holy man had foretold in prophecy, that he would be raised to the Apostolic dignity, hesitated to enrol the standard bearer of the Cross in the catalogue of Saints for a certain scruple of doubt in his heart touching the wound in the side. But on a certain night—as our blessed high priest himself would recount with tears—the blessed Francis appeared to him in sleep, and simulating a certain severity of feature rebuked him for the hesitation of his heart: then raised his right arm, disclosed the wound, and asked him for a phial to receive the stream of blood that was flowing from his side."

## CHAPTER III

### THE ALLEGORIES

THE Allegories deserve, for many reasons, to be studied with peculiar attention. In the first place, they are the only frescoes of Giotto from which an idea can now be formed of the original quality of his painting. Next, with the possible exception of certain works—perhaps in tempera—that have perished,\* they seem to represent the whole of Giotto's activity in the lower church. Finally, their subjects are of the greatest interest, not only for their own sake but also for the light they throw on the attitude of mind in which the painter approached his work.

Vasari records that Giotto was called to Assisi by Fra

\* It may be noted that Baldinucci (Ed. Manni. vol. i. p. 116) refers to Giotto the painting of certain curious devices "*nelle facciate e dalle bande*" of the high altar. The phrase is curious, and is identical with that employed by Vasari in attributing the "*Stories of our Lady*" to Giovanni da Milano. These scenes, as Crowe and Cavalcaselleremarked, are not "*on the faces and at the sides*" of the high altar. Baldinucci's independent evidence suggests that paintings did occupy the position, whatever it was, that this curious phrase describes, and that these paintings were by Giotto.

Giovanni di Muro della M area, who was elected General of the Franciscan Order in 1296. In the absence of evidence to the contrary, it is reasonable to suppose that his statement rests on a foundation of truth : that it is incompatible with other statements of the same writer need not excite surprise. Vasari knows of only one visit of Giotto to Assisi, but no student of his paintings there has ever doubted that they belong to at least two separate periods.\* Clearly the series in the upper church was executed before the artist was thirty years of age. The Allegories, no less clearly, are the work of a maturer mind and a more practised hand ; and as in style they show marked resemblance to the Ciborium of St. Peter's, painted about the year 1298, they may fairly be assumed to be the work which Fra Giovanni summoned Giotto to undertake. The vaulting above the high altar had undoubtedly been painted already at the time of the decoration of the nave. A commission to replace the old work, whatever it may have been, by new, would hardly have been given except to a painter whose reputation justified the sacrifice. That Giotto's already did so may best be judged by the manner of reception accorded to him at Rome in the years immediately following.

No better idea could be given of the first impression which the Allegories produce than is conveyed by Mr. Roger Fry's description :

**\* It is true Crowe and Cavalcaselle wrote: \*• Whether Giotto more than once visited Assisi is difficult to say "; but the statement is unrelated to their account of his works there.**



" The physical sensation of pleasure," he says, " when one first looks up at these works is hardly to be obtained elsewhere: . . before one has even made out the separate figures of the compositions, one is overcome with purely sensuous satisfaction at the sight of so marvellous a surface. Upon the dusky blue \* of the vault float on all sides figures robed in golden rose and greenish umbrous white, while pale pink towers t shoot up towards the centre : the ravishing beauty of the colour is intimately associated with the tenderness of the tone contrasts, the atmospheric envelopment. In looking at these one realises that fresco in the hands of an artist like Giotto can yield a surface more entrancing, more elusively beautiful, than any other medium painters have discovered,"

It is well to bear in mind that the Allegories necessarily suffer in a peculiar degree when reproduced ; and for two reasons, over and above the obvious loss of colour. The first is that their forms are adapted to the curves of the hollow vaulting, and that these are lost in a photograph and are replaced by lines so far from representing them that, in comparison, they may fairly be called straight. The second, that all four subjects are intended to be seen together, and the composition of each determined with the utmost care in relation to the other three. This consideration is of the greatest importance, and as it connects itself closely

\* Except in very good light the background is dark dull red : when the light catches it, it is seen to be gold.

f In reality there is only one of these, but the effect is of more than one.

with the conditions under which the painter went to work, seems to take precedence of all that may require to be said about the subject-matter of the frescoes.

Giotto's Allegories at Assisi are, perhaps, the most celebrated of his works; but they are very differently estimated by different writers, and the reason probably is that the totality of these conditions, and their competing claims upon the artist, are not always held in view. Giotto was not asked merely to give historical expression to certain abstract ideas—Poverty or Obedience—he was asked also to decorate the vaulted roof of a church. His problem was not to determine simply what might be the best concrete representation of Chastity; it took more complex form: how should Chastity be represented in harmonious relation to Poverty and to Obedience, and all these in spaces ill adapted to the requirements of historical treatment? Above all, how must the whole be arranged, without violating its due subordination to the architecture, so as naturally to sink, when need be, into a delightful pattern upon the roof, always impressive in the degree in which attention was concentrated upon it, but still felt always as intensifying the spirit of the church itself?

That the Allegories, considered as a single work, are worthy of the solemn place they occupy, that they harmonise with and enforce the religious impressiveness of the building they adorn, will not be denied by any who has seen them. Before attempting to appreciate Giotto's treatment of the subjects in their detail, or to estimate what sacrifice of expression in

particulars was necessary for the maintenance of harmony in the whole, we do well to note that the whole has the true qualities of religious art, and makes immediate appeal to the emotions of reverence and wonder.

Poverty, Chastity, Obedience, and the glorious reward bestowed upon the saint in whom these virtues were perfectly united, are the theme which Giotto was asked to represent. Of the first, the traditional Marriage of Francis and Poverty has been taken as a type, and the scene in which he represents it is among the most famous of his works. But it has not been Giotto's aim to imagine and picture the event as it might actually have occurred. He is obliged, as we have seen, to compose under limitations of the severest kind, and the imaginative realism of the frescoes in the upper church has here no place. He designs his subject by setting together or opposing various ideas or actions naturally associated with the main event.

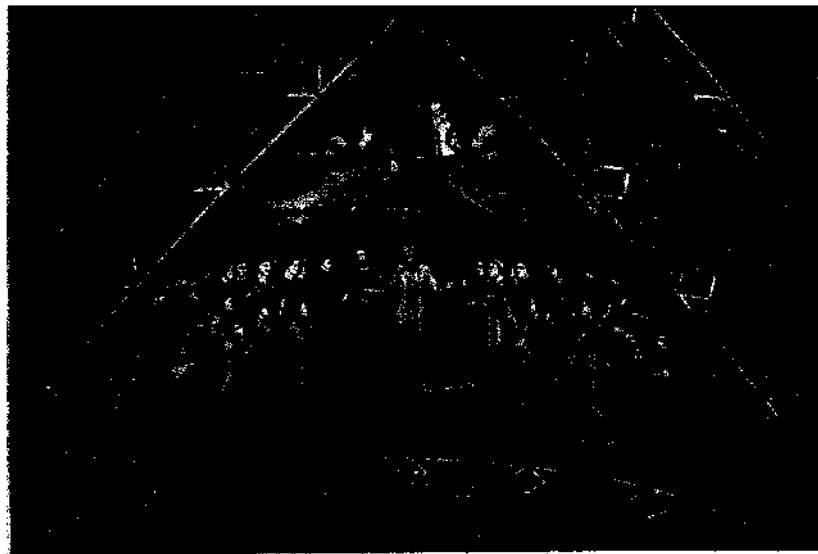
No better account could be given of the central motive than may be found in the forty-fifth letter of *Fors Clavigera*. Ruskin enjoyed a unique privilege in the lower church at Assisi, and was allowed to study the Allegories from a scaffold erected over the high altar. His description has a peculiar value :

"You may very likely know," he says, "the chief symbolism of the picture: that Poverty is being married to St. Francis, and that Christ marries them, while her bare feet are entangled in thorns, but behind her head is a thicket of rose and lily. It is less likely you should be acquainted with the further details of the group. The

thorns are of the acacia which, according to tradition, was used to weave Christ's crown. The roses are in two clusters, palest red and deep crimson; the one on her right, the other on her left; above her head, pure white on the golden ground, rise the Annunciation Lilies. She is not crowned with them; they are behind her; she is crowned only with her own hair, wreathed in a tress with which she had bound her short bridal veil. For dress, she has her smock only: and *that* torn, and torn again, and patched, diligently; except just at the shoulders, and a little below the throat, where Giotto has torn it too late for her to mend; and the fair flesh is seen through, so white that one cannot tell where the rents are, except when quite close. For girdle, she has the Franciscan's cord; but that also is white, as if spun of silk; her whole figure, like a statue of snow, seen against the shade of her purple wings: for she is already one of the angels. A crowd of them, on each side, attend her: two, her sisters—Spes, Karitas—are her bridesmaids also. Charity, dressed in red, is crowned with white roses, which burst, as they open, into flames, and she gives the bride a heart. Hope, in green, only points upwards; and while Charity has the golden nimbus round her head circular (infinite) like that of Christ and the eternal angels, she, like Poverty her sister, has her glory set within the lines that limit the cell of the bee." \*

Christ and Poverty stand upon a ledge of rock raised slightly above the rest: the group of angels, who attend on either side, are devised by Giotto to connect the composition with that of *S. Francis in*

\* I have taken the liberty of slightly condensing the passage.



*Photo, Alinari]*

THE MARRIAGE OF S. FRANCIS AND POVERTY

*[Assisi. Lower Church*

*To face p. 64*



*Glory*, which faces it. Below Poverty's feet are a little dog, who worries and snarls, and two boys who insult her, one thrusting with a stick, one throwing stones. On the left, a youth takes off his own cloak to clothe a beggar—an action associated with the early life of S. Francis—and an angel takes his arm, to lead him into the presence of Christ. On the right, a second angel makes appeal to three figures, whose action and expression clearly betray their nature. The first, a conceited youth, with a falcon upon his left hand, replies by a gesture intended to be insulting, and sometimes supposed to be indecent; he points to the angel with clenched right hand, setting the thumb of it between the first and second fingers. The second figure seems intended to enforce by repetition the significance of the third, who, grasping a money-bag tightly in both hands, shows further, by the sourness of his features, how the very idea of charity disgusts him. Two angels, robed in azure to atone for the loss of sky, float in the air above the rest, and connect the picture with its companions on either side. A figure, symbolic, but far from suggestive, of the Godhead, stoops from heaven to receive offerings peculiarly sacred to the Franciscans, the first typifying the true practice of their founder, the second the profession which was substituted for it by his followers.

The greatness of Giotto's achievement cannot, as has been said, be judged except by those who are prepared to appreciate the artistic limitations which governed his work. No one would have been better qualified than he

to represent this subject historically, to paint S. Francis and his companion on the solitary hillside, which, according to tradition, was the scene of the mystic marriage. Such a treatment was not to be thought of here. The more the picture is studied, and the various limiting conditions of the work realised and understood, the more marvellous appears the skill and instinct of the painter, who has known and given the precise degree of expression and characterisation in details which was required by his subject and compatible with its subordination to the larger theme.

The so-called *Allegory of Chastity* next demands attention. Giotto here made use of the traditional conception of that virtue as a maiden guarded in a tower, thus solving the problem presented to the designer by the apex of the arch; and by imagining her receiving ministry from angels floating in the air, he secured the connection of this subject with the last. On the ground below, but still within her fortifications, are figures of Cleanliness and Bravery, who lean over the ramparts to take part in the scene which is enacted before them. This represents the process by which men leave the world, and are made worthy of the monastic life. On the left, S. Francis, attended by two angels, welcomes, with great tenderness, three figures who eagerly advance to meet him. Most distant is a nun of the order of the Clarissas, whose partly-hidden face is full of beauty and aspiration. Next a friar, far less expressive in feature, but in action firm and noble; S. Francis takes his hand. Nearest, an older man—for





*[Assist. Lozuer Church.*

PART OF THE ALLEGORY OF CHASTITY

*To face p. 66*



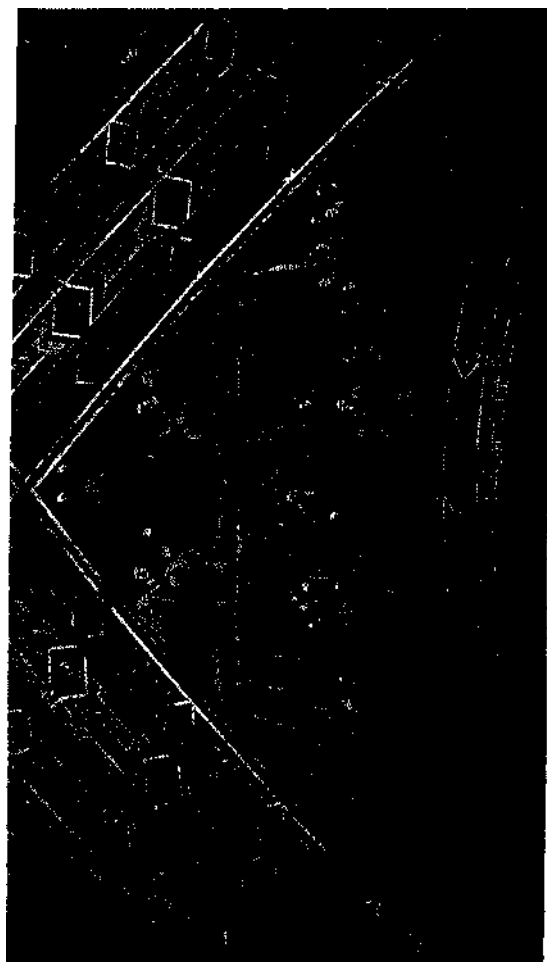
that very reason not Dante as has sometimes been supposed—represents the "third order" of S. Francis: most reserved of the three, and fully intelligible only when seen in relation to the curves of the angle from which he climbs, the beauty of his rhythmic motion and of the passionate earnestness of feature, to which Giotto makes it subservient, will be partly realised even in the fore-shortened fragment here reproduced. Behind the angels two warriors of Penitence, armed with scourges, offer a grim contrast to their gentle mien; and the youth, whom a second pair of angels baptizes with intent devotion near by, has not escaped their corrections. Cleanliness and Bravery stoop to offer him their gifts, but he has no strength to attend them. Two angels more wait beyond, with the same intentness, to clothe him after the rite; but behind them a second pair of warriors,\* still holding scourges, show that the days of penance are not over, though they await the penitent with kindlier aspect, and an angel stands in their company. To the right, allegorical figures, holding the symbols of the passion, and Penitence herself with a flail, drive certain squalid imps—the world, the flesh, death, and the devil—into the abyss. Giotto follows mediaeval fashion in characterising these by helpless, grinning deformity. Most interesting is the "flesh" represented by a naked cupid, winged and crowned with roses, but blind and with the talons of a bird: a quiver hangs at his side,

\* "Of these," says Father Angeli, "one wears a kingly, the other an imperial crown. I believe them to be the Emperor Henry and Boleslaus, the chaste king of Polonia, who united marriage and virginity." *Collis Paradisi Amoenitas.*

and the band supporting it is adorned with human hearts. Giotto has been criticised here for the crudity of his conception, and his subject itself dismissed as monkish and inhuman; but it was probably not of his choosing, and even if it were, we should do better to admire the fertility of invention which has enabled him to give living interest to one of the most abstract of themes, to keep the various episodes in a complex subject in due subordination to the main idea, and to accommodate his design so perfectly to the space allotted to it as to turn its very perplexities into triumphs.

Facing *Chastity* is the *Allegory of Obedience*. Undoubtedly Giotto's chief difficulty here was to connect his subject with its fellows. Poverty and Chastity seemed naturally to adapt themselves to the rocky hill-tops, which the curves of the vaulting must have contributed to suggest. Obedience is a virtue which it would be more natural to associate with the valley. But Giotto could not completely sacrifice his rocky foreground, allowing it, however, to pass almost immediately into a marble platform of the same colour. A further, and perhaps the chief, difficulty of the picture was to provide a suitable counterpiece to the tower of Chastity. How complete was Giotto's success may be inferred from Mr. Fry's description of the frescoes already quoted. His method was extremely bold: S. Francis himself forms the tower, standing upon the roof of the loggia where Obedience sits, immediately above her, and dressed like her in black. The angels,





that kneel on either side of him, are again in azure, and, with the angel groups below, complete the connecting balance of the design. This fresco was easier to unify than the *Chastity*', and the artist's sympathy is perhaps more perfectly maintained. That the attendant angels should be represented kneeling seems obvious only because it is inevitable. The foremost of them on either side restrains or presents figures typical of those who desire or resent obedience. The latter are imaged in the shape, but without the dignity, of a centaur, whose lower quarters more closely resemble those of a dog than of a horse. Reckless of the angel who seems intended to hold him back, this lawless intruder is checked only by the vision of Prudence herself. But Prudence, who sits on Obedience<sup>1</sup> right hand, is occupied like Humility, who is at her left, in bestowing her gifts upon the aged monk in the centre, who receives the yoke from Obedience, and with raised hands prepares to lay it himself upon his shoulders\* Prudence, twi-featured as at Padua, sits at a desk, her power of mind symbolised by instruments of mathematical science; the mirror in her left hand sheds its light upon the monk who kneels at her side. Humility is content with a lighted taper which she holds in her right hand. But both these virtues are independent, for their significance, of external and mechanical symbolism; and in particular the figure of Humility is to be noted, not only for its unusual beauty, but for the subtlety and perfection with which it presents the idea.

The treatment of the central group is still finer in

its power and concentration. A rather weighty Virtue, and distinguished by her square halo from the rest, Obedience imposes silence with her finger to her lip. There is a dreamy kindliness in her broad face, as she looks down upon the monk before her, and helps him to raise the yoke above his bending head. She has the geniality of a genuine dweller upon the earth, and the wings, which spring from her shoulders, while they testify to her aspirations, are not yet plumed for flight. But behind her, Christ upon the Cross, and above her, S. Francis lifted by the cord of submission into heaven, reveal the virtues latent in her yoke.

The fresco of *S. Francis in Glory*, occupying the place of honour and facing the nave of the church, offers a strong contrast to the other three subjects, to which none the less it is related with unerring instinct. The scene is in heaven, and no azure angels may float in the upper air : for the first time, therefore, Giotto introduces blue drapery in the angel companies below, very sparingly however, for fear of subduing the warmth and splendour of effect, which, in this picture, he is making his central aim. The rocky foregrounds of the previous frescoes undergo a subtle transformation and are replaced by glowing clouds. The formal principles of symmetry naturally claimed their most direct expression in a subject, which offered no scope to various invention. S. Francis sits in a marble throne in the centre, holding cross and book, and dressed in a golden robe\*

\* Described by Vasari as "The white tunic of a deacon," by Angeli as "the dalmatic of a deacon inwoven with flowers of gold."



which is divided into squares by bars of black. Rays of light stream from his person, and his brightness is thrown further into relief by the dark curtain with which his throne is draped. But the light of intelligence is wholly wanting; his eyes have a vacant stare, and his features and expression are those of a doll. Above him hangs a dull red banner, adorned with a cross and seven stars of gold, and in the apex of the arch the Holy Spirit is symbolised in the form of a dove. This picture tempts us to believe that the conventional glorification of S. Francis was a task before which even the imagination of Giotto failed. He could conceive the saint in his earthly surrounding with passionate intensity; but in proportion as it was necessary to represent him inactive, merely reaping his reward, his character seemed to disappear. Here, at least, his glory has passed completely into the angel choirs that dance and make music round his throne. These angels are not so conspicuous for beauty of feature or expression, as for the uniform grace of their varied posture; the artist has skilfully formed his pattern of the figures of their dance, and he does not allow the stateliness and dignity of their movement to obscure their sense of joy and triumph in the event they celebrate.

It was suggested above that *The Allegories* are probably to be assigned to a period immediately preceding Giotto's stay in Rome. Their peculiar characteristics have naturally been to a great extent obscured by the confusion that has obtained till lately, by which a series

of frescoes, in the right transept close by, has been regarded not only as Giotto's work but as belonging to the same period of his activity.\* It is therefore the more necessary to show wherein their resemblance to the Jttoman work consists. Let it first be noted that obvious parallels are not to be expected between a roof-decoration and an altar-piece. Giotto's art is architectural in scope: consciously or unconsciously he so completely relates his design to its wider setting, that even his treatment of the figure is variously modified to suit various needs. S. Francis, as depicted in the upper church, already closely resembles the broad and massy figures of the main series in the Paduan Arena, where the composition is determined by similar conditions. And in the *Ciborium* itself the slender angels, who hover above the martyred apostles, or fly with them to heaven, offer strong contrast to the angel attendants of the Virgin in the Predella. But to proceed to our comparison: undoubtedly the most obvious test—although some delicacy of handling is required in the application of it—is to be found in the treatment of the perspectives of the architecture. A comparison of Christ's throne in the *Ciborium* with that of the Virgin in the Academy *Altar-piece* undoubtedly betrays an immense advance. The steps before the Virgin's throne seem sloping; in those before the throne of Christ the effect of the horizontal has been almost perfectly obtained. But

\*The author has attempted to show that these are the work of Giovanni Gaddi (1369), an artist whose name cannot be connected with other existing works. V. *Monthly Review*, Oct. 1903 and Feb. 1904.

## THE ALLEGORIES

the problems in perspective which *The Allegories* present are unfortunately far more complex. None the less, it should be noted that in both the subjects where architecture plays an important part, the artist has been baffled by its difficulties. In the *Obedience*, the relation of the pillars of the wings of the loggia to the angel groups, in which they fall, and to the central portion of the loggia itself, defies the ingenuity of the most generous spectator. In the *Chastity*, the turrets on either side of the central tower are still more obviously wanting in relation to a single point of vision. At Padua Giotto was already beginning to guard against the appearance of this error in its more obvious forms. But at Rome we still find it committed in the treatment of the goal-posts on either side of the crucified S. Peter. That on the right of the saint is a hexagonal monument and therefore offers additional complications. But it may be observed that the right face of the hexagon is broader than the left; and the spectator must clearly be conceived as standing on that side to which the hexagon presents its broader face. Only one other example of an exterior occurs in the *Ciborium*, the circular prison in the background of *The Martyrdom of S. Paul*. Here Giotto has sacrificed equilibrium in his effort to secure rotundity. But if, in the treatment of exteriors, the two works may be considered of approximately equal merit, the throne of *S. Francis in Glory* seems to betray a distinct inferiority of handling: and here it is important to observe that the error noted in *The Virgin* of the

Accademia has been reversed, and that the step, instead of sloping towards the spectator, slopes now towards the occupant of the throne. No doubt the object is, in part, to give the appearance of a seat suspended in the air; but, if so, its upper portions show that the artist has not been able to complete the realisation of his idea. So far, then, as any argument can be drawn from the treatment of the architecture, *The Allegories* would appear the earlier work of the two. The treatment of the figures tends to corroborate this impression. The uneasy stiffness of the warriors in the *Chastity* is only slightly modified in the two soldiers in the foreground of *The Crucifixion of S. Peter*, and however worthy of admiration the monk, who kneels before Obedience, he finds at least his equal in the kneeling figure of Stefaneschi in *Christ Enthroned*; but the angel who faces the Cardinal in that picture, though closely resembling several of those who figure in the *Obedience*, for truth of posture, ease, and animation, finds no match among them all. That in both works Giotto inclines to a slenderer type of figure than is, in the main, characteristic of his style, does not, as has been suggested, imply necessarily any connection in time between the two. The more frequent occurrence of awkwardness in *The Allegories*, and of draperies that hide rather than explain the action, may be due in part to the peculiar difficulties involved in work upon the vaulting, and some errors may perhaps be referred to the inferior execution of assistants. But—to take an instance where we can rely on finding the work of the

## THE ALLEGORIES

master—the disproportionate size and inordinate clumsiness of Poverty's right hand can hardly have been deliberate. Ruskin narrates how he twice failed to draw it, and fell into one of his saddest moods in consequence. That it seems to express the artist's intention is only an additional tribute to his genius. But in the *Ciborium* at Rome, it cannot but be felt that the forms are as a whole more adequate to the expression ; in other words, that the sense of expressive power asserting itself in defiance of ignorance or error is already less apparent.

It may not be fanciful to point, in conclusion, to a coincidence which seems to connect two of the compositions and would be naturally explained if they were executed within a short space of time. A curious feature in *The Crucifixion of S. Peter* is a child who stands in a central position in the foreground, and in an attitude which, though clearly related to the design, seems to have little significance so far as the subject of the picture is concerned. In the foreground of the *Poverty* another child fulfils a similar aesthetic function in an attitude strikingly similar; and here again, though a charitable interpretation will allow that he is intended to be stoning the principal figure, the artist has failed wholly to relate him to his mark. Nevertheless, he adapts himself so admirably to the design, that the futility of his action may easily pass unnoticed, and it may not be unreasonable to suppose that he directly suggested his counterpart in *The Crucifixion of S. Peter*. No decisive evidence, however, seems

deducible from any or all of these considerations: and yet it remains as a general, but a decided, impression upon the mind, that whereas *The Allegories* contain no feature which the painter of the *Ciborium* might not already have produced, the *Ciborium* itself bears witness to a more consistent mastery.

## CHAPTER IV

### GIOTTO'S WORK IN ROME

GIOTTO'S activity in Rome is recorded in a document, which not only mentions two of his principal works there, but to one of them assigns a date. Printed by Baldinucci in his antiquated *Lives of the Painters*, it was drawn by him from the so-called *Martirologio* of the library of the Vatican. There an entry, relative to Jacopo Gaetani degli Stefaneschi, after enumerating his various titles and distinctions, told how in the year 1295 he was declared Canon of the sacred church of the Vatican by Boniface VIII.—an office which he retained as long as he lived—and deserved well of the church; for in the year 1298 he ordered the Navicella of S. Peter to be made in elegant mosaic by the hand of Giotto (*per mantes Iocti*) a very celebrated painter, and paid 2200 florins for the work, as noted in the ancient book of the Benefactors, folio 87, in these words: "Stefaneschi the cardinal is dead. . . . who conferred many benefits upon our church: for he ordered the painting of the Tribune, and spent 500 florins of gold upon the work. For the most holy altar of the church he presented a picture painted by the hand of Giotto, which cost 800 florins of gold. In the cloister (*in paradiso*) of

the same church he ordered a work in mosaic to be made by the hand of the same most notable painter, the story how Christ with his right hand supported the blessed Apostle Peter as he walked on the waves, and saved him from sinking; and for this work he paid 2200 florins, and many were his benefits besides, which it would be tedious to recount,<sup>1</sup>

Thus we learn, on indisputable evidence, a fact with regard to Giotto's life the importance of which could not be overestimated. Its bearings deserve a lengthy consideration. No other work in mosaic has been attributed to Giotto, and nothing is known as to his training or activity as a mosaist beyond what is comprised in the words already quoted. These words, however, not only testify to the unique reputation which Giotto enjoyed, when the work was undertaken—as may be inferred from the amount he received in payment for it—but to the lasting fame of the work itself: in later times the chief merit of a once prominent cardinal is that he commissioned it. In the closing years of the thirteenth century Rome possessed a native school of artists, who, after passing almost wholly into oblivion for six hundred years, are rising now to a distinction beyond their deserts. They had distinguished themselves, if at all, by their attempts to revive the principles of mosaic decoration for which Rome had been famous in the early centuries of the Christian era. But for the execution of a work directly connected by its subject with the most sacred associations of the principal church of the city, a foreign artist is called in; and in the



## GIOTTO'S WORK IN ROME

thrill which greets his achievement, the Roman people forget the very names of the artists who are their fellow citizens.

The enthusiasm which greeted the *Navicella* was strikingly long-lived. A record shows that it has been moved, improved, or restored, not less than six times. It need not be added that it now retains little trace of its original character. It has found a final resting-place in the vestibule of S. Peter's, over the main door, and as the name of Giotto clings to it still, it must not, for the sake of his reputation, be passed over in absolute silence. Not only, then, have the colouring cubes been replaced throughout, and the tones and harmonies adapted to sixteenth-century taste, not only have the forms been softened and their original significance destroyed or caricatured, but the greatest conceivable liberties have been taken with the composition itself. That the cardinal donor, Christ, St. Peter, and the ship with the apostles, were arranged by the artist approximately as now we see them is all that can be with any certainty affirmed. The figures of the winds and of four saints in the air are modern, and the fisherman, who angles in the left foreground from a rock, probably formed no part of the artist's original design. This fisherman, as quite unrelated to the subject of the picture, naturally gave special delight to Vasari. "Besides all this," he says, "there is a fisherman who is standing on a rock and fishing with a line, whose attitude is expressive of the extreme patience which is proper to that art, while his face betrays his hope and desire to catch something."

Even so thoughtful a critic as Mr. Roger Fry makes Giotto responsible for the idea, though he finds the intrusion of a *genre* motive surprising. If Giotto's, it would, in fact, be more than surprising; it would be wholly without parallel in all the range of his extant work, a freak, which, in the face of his otherwise unrelenting concentration, must appear all but inexplicable. It is of interest, therefore, to learn from Messrs. Crowe and Cavalcaselle \* that the fisherman was absent in the original drawing of the subject; and to observe in the famous repetition of the design by one of the later Giotteschi on the roof of the Spanish chapel at S. Maria Novella that the fisherman, as there introduced, not only shares his rock with a fish-basket, two small birds, and an owl, but, however ridiculous in conception, serves an obvious aesthetic purpose, filling the awkward lower angle of the vaulting, a difficulty with which, it must be remembered, Giotto at Rome had not been confronted.

In spite, however, of all the catastrophes that the mosaic has sustained, the main motive of the original design is still apparent, or rather has been disclosed to the discerning penetration of Mr. Fry. "Even the surprising intrusion of the fisherman," he says, "does not disturb our recognition of the mosaic's universal meaning, which puts so clearly the relation of the ship of the Church, drifting helplessly with its distraught crew, to the despairing Peter, who has here the character of an emissary and intermediary, and the

\* Vol. ii. p. 45, note.

## GIOTTO'S WORK IN ROME 81

impassive and unapproachable figure of Christ himself."

A work which never enjoyed an equal fame with the *NavhcellcL*) but the true value of which is now incomparably greater, is to be seen in the inner sacristy of S. Peter's. It is ill-hung, far above the level of the eye, and in a cross-light, which distracts the observer with reflections of the less valuable pictures that occupy the posts of honour; but it more than repays all the difficulty involved in the study of it. This is the work already referred to as presented by Cardinal Stefaneschi for use at the high altar. It has since been broken up, and hangs now in seven separate pieces, the reconstruction of which in their original form, though it is always spoken of as a simple matter, presents in reality a problem of which no final solution has been reached. The work is generally known as a *ciborium*, a cabinet, that is, to receive the vessels of the sacrament; but the fact that the principal subjects are now framed back to back has lately given rise to the theory that it was never more than an altar-piece, composed of panels painted on either side. The remaining fragments consist of six principal pieces in three pointed Gothic frames, and four predella pieces obviously intended to stand below them. Two predella pieces have been lost. It would certainly be strange that the predella panels should be painted on one side only, if those of the main altar-piece were painted on both; this difficulty, however, might no doubt be explained away, were it not that one of the main subjects represents S. Peter enthroned

and receiving from Cardinal Stefaneschi the work he commissioned Giotto to paint in the apostle's honour. Characteristically, Giotto has given a faithful rendering of the design of his work, showing not only how the panels were put together, but how the subjects were arranged.

Cardinal Stefaneschi kneels before the throne of the apostle, who, robed in his pontifical dress and with his left hand raising a massy key, gives his blessing with his right, and looks before him with the impassive gaze of religious concentration. S. Peter is represented as of more than human dimensions, and the ciborium, which the cardinal lifts above his head, barely reaches to the apostle's knee. Small as it is, the shape of the ciborium is quite clearly represented. It is an oblong casket, the longer sides of which are divided into three panels of equal size, each crowned with a Gothic gable, and raised slightly from the ground by a narrow base, which receives the predella subjects. The shorter sides appear to have been left plain. The more important face of the ciborium is presented, as natural, to the apostle. In the centre of it was the *Christ Enthroned* with the predella of *The Madonna and Child* below, on either side *The Martyrdoms of S. Peter and S. Paul*, surmounting predella scenes of standing apostles. All of these subjects are still preserved. The subjects which appear in the picture are those of the less important face : they are represented with extraordinary minuteness and precision. Central of course is the enthroned S. Peter, his religious severity apparent still, and before him a

minute Stefaneschi kneeling, and presenting a ciborium, now microscopic,—a mere dot of white. The panels on either side are filled by pairs of standing apostles, the originals of which are still to be seen framed back to back with *The Martyrdoms of S. Peter and S. Paid*. The predella panels below hold each five figures, in half-length, of prophets or saints; of these only one is now preserved. The evidence seems to show conclusively that the work in its original form was not a mere altar-piece, but a casket or ciborium ; possibly the fact that the subjects on the back are by far the more faded and injured, is to be explained by supposing that the panels on that side—facing the chancel—were fitted as doors.

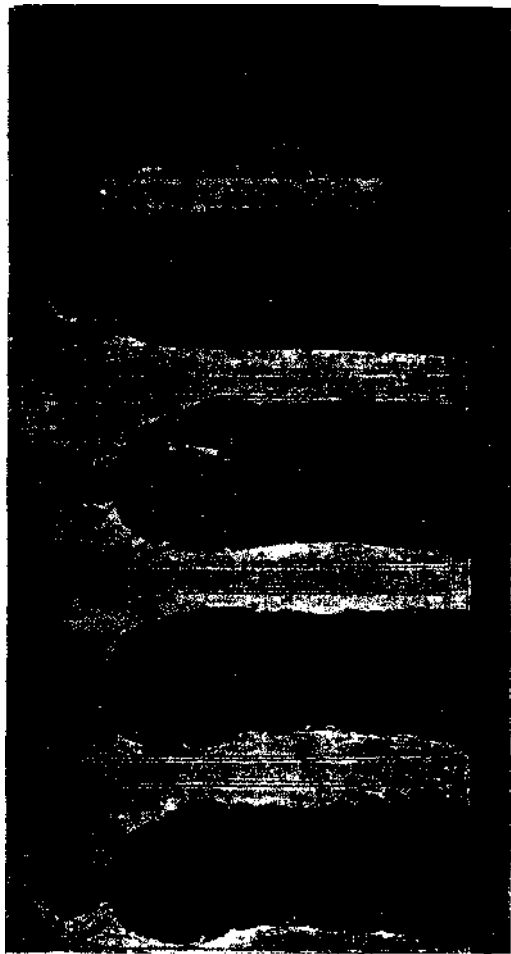
Fortunately the front, the side on which Giotto lavished his tenderest care, has not only never been repainted, but on the whole—in spite of injury from age and cleaning—retains its tone, and those delicate surface qualities which give colour to its magic, in a remarkable degree. That the parts have been separated is, however, a very great misfortune; for what must have been one of the most impressive features of the original work, the harmony and beauty of its colour scheme, has been thereby lost. It is no longer possible to gain the single effect at which Giotto was aiming, although it is easy to see, in studying the separate subjects, that each one of them is consciously treated as subsidiary, in relation to a more important whole. Yet it is by the grandeur and solemnity of its colouring, however fragmentarily realised, that the ciborium makes its most potent appeal. As in *The Allegories*, Giotto

was dealing here with a work where decoration, and consequently symmetrical treatment, was demanded; and this demand receives the closest attention in the disposition of the colour. The student could scarcely do better than take the predella scenes as an example : here the scale is narrowly confined, because of the subordinate position of the figures, as a mere appendage or support to the main design ; but a more perfect study in symmetrical arrangement, and in the variety, which all artistic symmetry involves, it would be difficult to discover.

The twelve apostles and two angels stand on either side of the enthroned Virgin and child. A narrow foreground of deep green, suggesting a floor of grass, supports the solemn row. The background of chased gold is divided into compartments, which each receive one figure. Central the Madonna—in a robe of deep indigo, related to that of Christ in the main subject above her—sits upon a low throne of greenish-grey, furnished with red cushions, and a red platform for the feet. The child is in pale orange. The angels on either side of her have drapery of a light rosy red, and dove-coloured wings. The apostles show an inner as well as an outer garment, and all along the row the subtlest variety and most delicate balance of colour are maintained. Red and green, in various shades and various qualities, are employed throughout, but the tints are almost all indescribable, and each shows melting transformations in the passage from light to shadow, to which words could no more do justice than to a melody.

But naturally it is not only in the colouring that the





photo, Anderson]

# APOSTLES

[The Ciborium

To face p. 85



majestic dignity of these predella pieces, any more than that of the Ciborium as a whole, consists. Their subordinate position has not hindered the realisation of a grand conception. Giotto seems to have felt that the general character of the work called for insistence chiefly upon those qualities in the Virgin which remove her from, rather than unite her with, the human mother. She has a brooding solemnity, which she shares with the angels and apostles about her, and has caught something of the awful sternness of the Christ above. Perhaps it is with deliberate desire to relieve the tensivity of religious emotion, that Giotto gives complete humanity to the child. He is just the little bunch that babies generally are, and like a true baby crams his fingers into his mouth. But the angels on either side of the throne quickly recall the mind from this homely touch. They are among the most stately of Giotto's creations, their gravity finding its culminating expression in the rocking of the dark censers, not seen, but felt.

The standing apostles can hardly fail to appear dull except to the most sympathetic of modern observers. It is not easy to appreciate or do justice to the artistic achievement, that this simple row of figures implies. They may at first sight seem more like pillars than like men; and here, perhaps, is the key to their greatness. It was always a failing, even of the best Roman mosaists, a failing partly produced by the unadaptive draperies they employed, that they were unable to give a noble rest, or dignified self-sufficiency, to their standing figures. They must either be represented walking in

unnecessary processson, or pointing with one hand, if not with both, to some central and superior figure. This failing degenerated at times into a trick that is almost ludicrous, and perhaps it is nowhere more foolish or more prominent than in the apse mosaic of S. Maria Maggiore, a work almost contemporary with this of Giotto's, and executed by a member of the school, of which it has lately become the fashion to call Giotto a pupil. The great qualities of Giotto's apostles will at once be realised, when they are set in comparison with the awkward and angular figures of the mosaic, and the cramped and unhappy restlessness of these latter contrasted with their easy graceful repose, the one seeking expression vainly in gesticulation, the other finding it in reserve.

The central composition of *Christ Enthroned* has already been compared with the *Virgin and Child Enthroned* of the Accademia. It shows the painter possessed of powers of which the earlier work barely revealed the promise. By subtle adaptation of the proportion of the various parts, of the angels to Christ, of Christ to the throne he occupies, of the throne itself to the cusped arch which limits the design, Giotto succeeds in combining the effect of a real scene with that of a more than human presence. In the portrayal of Christ, he summons the whole weight of Byzantine tradition to his aid, availing himself of the peculiar and mysterious religious expressiveness, which was attained by their hereditary art. But Cardinal Stefaneschi, kneeling in worship at Christ's feet and portrayed to the



*Photo, Anderson*

CHRIST ENTHRONED

*[The Ciborium*

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life with exquisite felicity, reveals how completely the Byzantine tradition has been naturalised. The imaginative creations of the past are as real to Giotto as the natural facts of the present, and, without offering violation to either, he sets them in due relation side by side.

The value of this massive figure of Christ, as a centre-piece to the front of the Ciborium, cannot be overlooked, and the effect of it is enhanced by the opposing character of the compositions to left and right, in which the masses are so disposed as to leave the central space comparatively free. They represent, on the right, the *Crucifixion of S. Peter*, on the left the *Decapitation of S. Paul*. Of these the crucifixion scene claims first attention, as having probably determined the design of both. Giotto is faithful to all the traditions of the subject, simply adapting them to the formal requirements of a decorative work. As in the upper church of Assisi, S. Peter is represented head downwards upon the cross, between two monuments, the turning-post for the chariot race in the Roman circus. The treatment of these pyramids is almost identical in the two paintings ; but here the resemblance between them stops. The scope of Giotto's design demanded regular arrangement, and so skilfully has he woven his pattern, that a few remarks upon it may be permitted from a purely aesthetic point of view.

Mr. Fry\* has already noted the admirable effect pro-

\* No one interested in Giotto will have failed to read the admirable series of articles by Mr. Fry, which were published in the early numbers of the *Monthly Review*.

duced by the tapering of the two pyramids and the consequent gradual broadening of the gold background; and remarks further upon the richness added to the design by the spreading wings and floating draperies of the angels in the air. The problem of the subject, he suggests, is given by the low horizontal of the transverse bar of the cross, in its relation to the adjacent horizontal of the spectators. This difficulty, however, Giotto avoids, not merely by the tapering vertical pyramids, but by so setting the foreground figures into harmony with them, that the outline of the group, far from suggesting a horizontal line, forms a catenary curve against the golden background, dropped from the summit of the towers and passing just below the apostle's head. The careful balance of the divergent lines emphasised in the draperies and bending figures of the foreground women, and assisted by the curious pose of the child, will also not be missed ; nor the value of the standing soldiers in the near foreground, left and right, in giving stability to the pyramids and bringing their vertical lines to earth.

But it would be wrong to give preponderating emphasis to this aspect of the subject, and perhaps it is a mistake to call even passing attention to artifices which, in the work of a great painter, are always subsidiary, and probably, for the most part, unconscious. The pattern would be valueless, unless it were the framework of something more than a pattern; it is noteworthy because it forms the setting for a noble realisation of a great subject. "What artistic possibilities can there

be," asks Mr. Berenson, "in the representation of a man crucified with his head to the ground?" We may allow that there is none to the school of which Mr. Berenson is the exponent. But to Giotto there is the possibility of bearing witness to the spiritual inspiration, the "life-communicating values" of patience, humility, and suffering. Of the angels who minister to S. Peter, one holds open a book, no doubt the Gospel promise, for his consolation; but the meaning of the picture finally depends upon the radiant expression of the triumphant apostle, who, in the cusp of the arch, ascends to heaven, winged like the angels who accompany him.

It was naturally a problem of the most perplexing kind to arrange the composition of the martyrdom of S. Paul in such a way as to unify it with that of S. Peter, to effect a proper balance between the two side pieces, and set them in sufficient contrast to the central subject. Giotto not only succeeds in doing so, but secures his object by two strokes of nature, which give added value to the design. The background is a rocky valley, dotted with trees, its outline roughly repeating the catenary curve mentioned as characteristic of the last design. Perched on the summit to the right, stands a circular building, which—if compared with the more ornate structure often admired in the last fresco of the upper church series at Assisi\*—will at once be admitted to represent the apostle's prison. On the left,

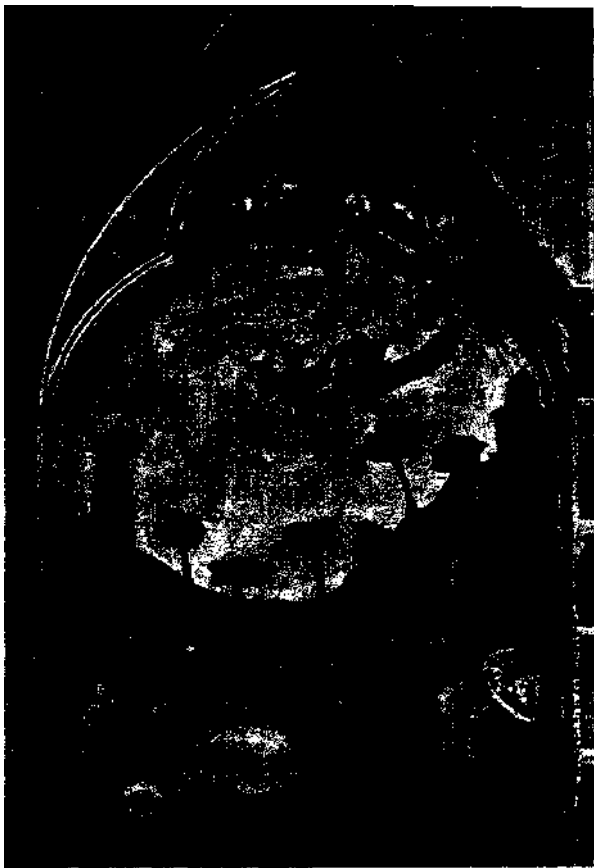
\* Representing the release of a prisoner at Rome, by the intercession of S. Francis,

the curve is continued in the figure of a woman who appears to be receiving a garment, which the ascending apostle has thrown down to her. It was the tradition that, as he went to his execution, S. Paul encountered and won the pity of a Roman matron, of whom he prayed the loan of her veil, promising to return it after his death.

This subject is naturally less effective as a whole than its companion; to complete the story, and introduce the crowning miracle of the return of the veil, Giotto has been obliged to picture the execution already over; and though he entirely refuses to dwell on the horrors of the event, the headless trunk itself naturally offered a most implacable material, which the strange, unearthly beauty of the haloed head, as it lies upon the ground, has only just redeemed from monstrosity. The clumsiness of the white horse in the foreground is likewise a misfortune. For the rest, the picture displays Giotto's various powers in a peculiar degree. It has all the naturalism and versatility of *The Crucifixion of S. Peter*, and an even greater tenderness. This is most remarkable in the figures of two women, who bend over the prostrate body,\* and in the pensive face of a man who stands, on their right, near by. The lightning descent of two angels, whose swift flight marks the intensity of their grief, contrasts well with the easy motion of those who, in the cusp of the arch, waft the victorious apostle through the sky.

\* A miracle in foreshortening, considering the date at which they were produced.





*Photo, Anderson]*

*[The*  
THE DECAPITATION OF S. PAUL

*Ciborium*

*To face p. 90*



## GIOTTO'S WORK IN ROME 91

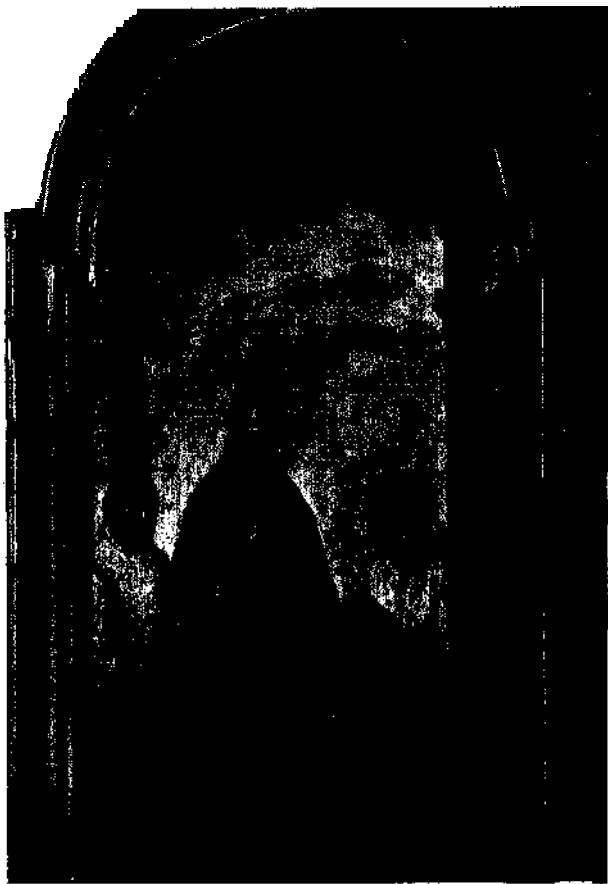
**The free** use of vermillion, both in this and in the crucifixion scene, deserves attention ; refusing to give a realistic picture of either event, Giotto probably employs this colour with conscious intention to suggest the violence and agony on which he does not wish to dwell.

It will be noted that the framework of each subject consists of strips of mosaic pattern, alternating with miniature figures of standing apostles and saints. These are represented, by a slight exaggeration of naturalistic bias, as intently and sympathetically watching the scene to which their real relation is that of ornamental accessories. In the apex of each pinnacle a medallion gives opportunity for the suggestion of Old Testament parallelism, so dear to the mediaeval mind. But the figures of *The Eternal*, over *Christ Enthroned*, of *Abraham sacrificing Isaac* over the *Crucified Peter*, and of *Moses with the Tablets of the Law* above *S. Paid*, show that in this respect the requirements of the period were not exacting.

The central composition at the back of the ciborium has been referred to already; all the subjects on that side are less elaborate than those of the front, and they have all suffered grievous injury. Students will admire the splendid gravity of the standing apostles, and the subdued harmonies of deep warm colouring, which contribute to their effect. But the more casual observer will prefer to devote his whole attention to the front, and will thereby save these precious relics from the peril which attends them each time they are wrenched open by a clumsy sacristan.

Of other works, which tradition, with Vasari for representative, attributed to Giotto in the capital, fragments only were extant even in Vasari's day. This was due, in chief, to the destruction of the old basilica of S. Peter's, to whose walls they were attached. Visitors to the Lateran, however, will still find on the back of the second pillar to the left, as they enter from the west end of the church, a piece of old fresco, framed and glazed, and accompanied by an inscription which describes it as the image of Pope Boniface VIII., announcing the year of jubilee. It was omitted by Vasari and earlier authorities from the list of Giotto's works. But there can be no doubt that it is his. It is the central portion of what was once a monumental historical painting, or series of paintings, and was situated in the vestibule of the church, until it suffered from destruction by fire, a fate which sooner or later overtakes all the treasures of the Italian people. The manner in which the subject was treated may be gathered from a drawing of it which is preserved in the Ambrosian Library at Milan.

The Pope and his attendant clerk and cardinal are there seen to be in a loggia, and a crowd, composed of figures on horse and on foot, is grouped below them, a treatment involving difficulties which, at this early period, none but Giotto would have dared to face. The fragment preserved gets less attention than it merits, the critics finding, in general, little to say of it except that it has been excessively repainted. Whatever may have been its sufferings in this respect, the picture is still beautiful in its colouring, and has by no



*Photo, Anderson]*

BONIFACE VIII.

*[ The Lateran*

*To face p. 92*



means lost its original character. The head of the cleric, on the Pope's left, seems affected in its bend, but it is not to be judged in isolation from the design of which it was a part. The life and individuality in the features and expression of the Pope and cardinal prove them true portraits; and in front of the original work the student will experience something of the effect which the best Venetian portraiture creates, namely, that he himself, and not the persons in the picture, is the object of the closer scrutiny.

NOTE.—To the same year, as the painting of Pope Boniface's portrait, or to the year following, is referred a work of great repute, the decoration of the chapel dedicated to the Magdalen in the palace of the Podesta, at Florence. A peculiar interest attached to this, because it was believed to contain a portrait of Dante. But critics are now undecided, whether the remains of frescoes that are still to be seen in the chapel can rightly be attributed to Giotto. The evidences, both internal and external, are extremely perplexing, and readers who are interested to examine the question should refer to the first volume of Milanesi's edition of Vasari's lives and the second volume of the new edition of Crowe and Cavalcaselle's history. The frescoes, beautiful as they are, are in so dilapidated a condition that to give them the minute study demanded by the problems they raise would hardly be in place here ; the more so, since the author has come to the conclusion, that, as they now exist, they show little trace of

Giotto's workmanship. In No. 399 of the *Quarterly Review* a theory was propounded in which he fully concurs : that the chapel was originally decorated by Giotto ; but that after severe injury, sustained in a fire which destroyed a great part of the palace in 1332, the frescoes were recast upon the original lines by one of his followers.



## CHAPTER V

### THE ARENA CHAPEL AT PADUA

THE mere attempt to examine in detail the frescoes of the Arena Chapel will probably seem at once unnecessary and presumptuous to those who know that a monograph of Ruskin's exists upon the subject, and are under the impression that it has been treated exhaustively by him. Ruskin's monograph naturally partakes of the genius and insight which characterise all his critical work, and no student of Giotto or of the Arena Chapel can afford to pass it by. But if taken as a guide to the frescoes, it labours under several severe disadvantages. In the first place, it neither is, nor professes to be, an account of the frescoes themselves, but of a series of woodcuts after the frescoes, issued by the Arundel Society. Not only is a considerable amount of space devoted to the woodcuts themselves, but it is evident that the woodcuts, and not the frescoes, were before the writer, and that, trusting to memory alone for his impressions of the pictures, he has not only fallen into occasional errors in detail, but failed more than once to appreciate or comprehend entire compositions. Secondly, Ruskin, when he wrote, was insufficiently acquainted with Giotto's work; he had not seen the frescoes at

Assisi; he was at Lord Lindsay's mercy for all he knew about Giotto, and therefore wrote of Giotto's masterpiece in a partly apologetic style, as though he were in the presence of work comparatively immature. And lastly, he is still fatally under the influence of his early Puritanic ideas ; he hesitates at one moment to present pictures of the Virgin to Protestant readers; more frequently he forgets the difference between his creed and Giotto's, and instead of interpreting or criticising the frescoes, delivers sermons upon them. Ruskin's work is, however, unique in kind, and a re-examination of the frescoes, such as it is incumbent upon us to undertake, offers no kind of parallel to his and claims no comparison with it.

An interesting and very early record of Giotto's work in Padua has been preserved in Benvenuto da Imola's commentary upon Dante, which dates from the fourteenth century. It is appended to the well-known passage in the *Purgatorio*, where Dante remarks upon the eclipse of Cimabue's reputation, and deserves to be quoted.

" And mark here, reader, that our Poet is right to commend Giotto, both by reason of his virtue, and of the city he belonged to, and the friends he had. For there are two other Florentine poets who make mention of this Giotto, I mean Petrarch and Boccaccio, who writes that so great was the excellence of wit and of art in this noble painter, that Nature brought forth nothing, but he so truly represented it that the eye of the onlookers was often deceived, taking the thing painted for real. Now it once

## THE ARENA CHAPEL AT PADUA 97

happened, that while Giotto, still fairly young, was painting at Padua a chapel in the place where was once the theatre or arena, Dante came to the place. And Giotto received him with honour and took him to his house. . . . This Giotto lived afterwards for a long time. For he died in 1336. And so mark that Giotto still holds the field, because there has not yet come another subtler than he; though for all that, he made great errors in his pictures at times, as I have heard from men of great understanding."

Scant as it is, the passage is of importance for the chronology of Giotto's life. The chapel of the Arena, built by Enrico Scrovegni, whose father Dante placed among the usurers in hell, was consecrated in 1305. A Paduan record testifies that Dante was staying at the city in 1306; and the date of Giotto's activity seems thus secured. Benvenuto further tells us that Giotto was, at the time, still fairly young, *adhuc satis juvenis*; but we hear from a contemporary Florentine writer, Antonio Pucci, in his *Cenfrfoqiio*, that Giotto was seventy when he died; and the question arises whether Benvenuto's expression is one that could possibly be applied to a man of forty? Not in accuracy; but the phrase itself is vague, and Benvenuto's knowledge of Giotto is vague also, and given, most of it, at second hand. Moreover, another phrase of the same writer partially corrects it: "This Giotto lived afterwards for a long time." The phrase is much more applicable to a man who lived to be seventy, than to one who died at sixty years of age.

Thus Giotto was forty years old, and in the prime of

his strength, when he came to Padua to paint the chapel of the Arena. His reputation must have been already at its height. From the shape of the chapel and the absolute simplicity of its architecture, it may fairly be inferred that the design was prepared with a view to the great series of paintings which its walls were to receive; this is in itself a clear indication of the esteem in which the artist was held: and it has not unnaturally been suggested—though history is here silent—that he designed the chapel himself. Except for a simple tribune and apse lighted by Gothic windows—parts of the building which Giotto did not decorate, but which received at a later time the inferior work of disciples—the chapel consists of a plain oblong rectangle, with six slim windows in its south wall, and one of somewhat greater pretensions in its facade. It is built of red brick. Roof and walls present an unbroken surface of fresco decoration, all the parts of which are so balanced and related that, when no attention is being paid to details or the separate subjects included in the composition, the effect of the whole is in itself sublime: best compared, perhaps, to that of Nature, when she is fair and kindly, on some May morning, when the heavens are large and clear, and yet earth's familiar objects seem less beneath, than a part of them.

It is interesting to note some of the more obvious devices by which this unity of effect is gained; and first to be considered is the design of the painting in its relation to the design of the chapel itself. At a later period in the history of Italian art, it was the fashion to

## THE ARENA CHAPEL AT PADUA 99

provide mural paintings with an elaborate framework or setting of architectural perspectives; and the practice was by no means unknown, though used more moderately, in the early fourteenth century. The scenes from the life of S. Francis at Assisi are set in an architectural framing of twisted pillars supporting a classic cornice, the perspective of which is carefully emphasised, though, of course, imperfectly understood. The effect of such devices is frequently unpleasing, but it would be hard to formulate a principle in condemnation of them; probably they are valuable only when they are consciously subordinated to the design of the actual fabric which they decorate, and are contrived in harmony with its leading characteristics. Some such conception seems to have governed Giotto's Paduan work. What might be called the predella piece to his design—including the well-known allegorical figures of the Virtues and Vices—is conceived in imitation of inlaid marbles of various colours, and the figures themselves, painted in dead colour, seem intended to suggest a sculptural ornament. Emphasis is further laid on the character of the vaulted roof by three bands of ornament which span it, decorated with busts of apostles or prophets. But except for simple devices such as these, not overstepping the boundary of delicate tribute to the sister art, no architectural effect is aimed at; the design accommodates itself easily to the features of the building and its irregularities, without attempting to emphasise the one or to conceal the other.

**The** roof decoration consists simply of broad spaces

of blue, in which shine stars of gold, Christ and the Virgin with eight of the greater prophets being enshrined in medallions among them. The entrance wall, or west end, is devoted entire to a majestic representation of *The Last Judgment*: the space above the triumphal arch shows *God the Father Enthroned*, with a choir of angels at either hand. The remaining spaces of wall receive the thirty-eight scenes in which the painter tells his principal story, beginning with the circumstances attending the miraculous promise and birth of the Virgin Mary, and concluding with the Ascension of Jesus Christ, and the Descent of the Holy Spirit. These scenes are arranged in three courses about the walls, running from left to right, and beginning on the south wall at the top. Fifteen give the life of the Virgin, and comprise the whole upper course, six scenes above the windows on the south wall, six on the north wall, and three on the wall leading into the chancel. Of the latter, two are claimed by the subject of *The Annunciation*, the angel kneeling on one side, the Virgin on the other, of the triumphal arch, an imposing position being naturally obtained in a chapel dedicated to the Virgin for the event in which her glory was foretold. Below, on the right, is *The Salutation*, which introduces the middle course of frescoes; on the left hand side of the arch, the corresponding position falls to the *Hiring of Judas*; a subtle balance may be observed in the composition of the two scenes, and the subject has in each case been considered in relation to the important place it occupies, *The Salutation*, set on the same side of the chapel as

## THE ARENA CHAPEL AT PADUA 101

*The Virtues* and the *Paradise* in *The Last Judgment*, anticipating the birth of Christ, the *Hiring of Judas* foreshadowing his death. The last-named fresco, forming the transition point between the middle and lowest course of frescoes, suggests the principle on which their subjects are arranged. The eleven of the middle course present the life and ministry of Christ, the eleven of the lowest his preparation for death and victory over it. The presence of windows on the south side of the chapel necessitated an irregular arrangement, and perhaps it is worth noting that the irregularity is frankly accepted: the five subjects of the south side are in each case faced by six on the north, where space is also found in the broad framework that separates the frescoes for small medallions, which suggest an Old Testament subject associated by allegory with the succeeding main event.

Undoubtedly the chief means by which the great series is held together, and enabled to serve a single decorative effect, must be sought in the uniform background of deep blue. This colour is peculiarly susceptible to the influences of time, and it is impossible to do more than conjecture what impression must have been produced when it was glowing fresh upon all the broad spaces of wall which Giotto allotted to it. The sky background is conventionally treated in uniform ungradated colour, and in all cases, where possible, the foreground is narrowed to admit a large sky surface. Except where interiors are represented, the main action is repeatedly designed in immediate relief against it,

and interiors themselves are treated with the utmost simplicity to allow a space of blue at one side, or at the least strips of blue at the edges, of every composition. This uniformity, immediately related as it is to the almost unbroken fields of the blue vaulting, seems to envelop the whole, like deep sea about an island, and by the breath of balance it affords, allows the utmost freedom in the treatment of the separate subjects and an apparent disregard of the more obvious laws of composition.

The series opens with

#### THE REJECTION OF JOACHIM'S OFFERING.

He and his wife are advanced in years, and on account of his childlessness he is considered unworthy to present an offering in the Temple. The first fresco shows him repulsed by the High Priest from the altar.

It should be observed at the outset that the value of Giotto's paintings cannot be appreciated duly till they are considered in a negative as well as in a positive aspect; until, that is, credit is given to the artist not only for what they include, but for what they omit also. Thus, in this case, according to tradition, "there being a great solemnity at Jerusalem, all the men of the city went to offer in the temple of God;" at Santa Croce a fresco of the subject may still be seen in which rows of worshippers, with their lambs, are drawn up to left and right like regiments on parade.\* Giotto restricts his

\* By Giovanni da Milano. One of the lunette frescoes of the Rinuccini chapel.



## THE ARENA CHAPEL AT PADUA 103

composition to four figures, almost completely hiding two of them. His architecture is symbolic merely, the Jewish temple being suggested by altar and reading-desk, in the Byzantine style. Above the rail of the altar appears the head of a young man, whose offering is accepted, and the priest blesses him as he kneels. Outside the rail, but still upon the step of the altar, stand a second priest and Joachim. Giotto's purpose is concentrated upon the representation of these two figures: laying hands on Joachim's right arm and shoulder, the priest, with a commanding gesture, thrusts him away, lowering his brows and gazing upon the offender with a fierce intensity of scorn and anger. Joachim neither refuses to withdraw nor hastens to do so; he shrinks together a little and clasps the rejected lamb, but turns his face full upon the overbearing priest, with mortification and resentment unconcealed.

The sky background is better preserved in this fresco than in most, and it is noteworthy that the low step, on which the main actors are standing, is sufficient to raise their feet above the horizon line.

### 2. JOACHIM RETIRES TO THE SHEEPFOLD.

Shame lay so heavy upon Joachim that he left his wife and went out to his shepherds in the country. Giotto represents the moment of his arrival. The mind accepts without hesitation his identity with the worshipper repulsed by the priest in the last fresco. But the reason is not that Giotto has given convincing expression to individual traits; when compared with

S. Joseph, Joachim is found to resemble him closely. Like all Giotto's Paduan characters, he represents not an individual, but a type; the same type as S. Joseph. The scale of the work excludes the possibility of minute realism. Giotto's truth to Nature is of the heroic kind : he has great truths to express, and must forego expression of the small. All the accessories of the picture are those of a child's Noah's ark. Giotto's early practice in drawing sheep has been of little service to him ; a bare hill, rising to an unnatural peak, half a dozen toy trees, and a low shepherd's hut too small to be serviceable, are primarily symbolic in their purpose, though admirably disposed, so as to emphasise and relieve the intensity of the central subject. The shepherds meet Joachim: they did not expect, and do not understand, his arrival. Their natural awkwardness is increased by their surprise, and his sorrow affects them only with a mixture of curiosity and uneasiness. Their dog offers timidly the welcome which they withhold. But Joachim, with arms folded and bowed head, is unconscious of the scene before him. He seems unaware that he has reached his journey's end; he still steps slowly forward, the impersonation of majestic grief.

### 3. THE ANNUNCIATION TO ANNA.

While Joachim was in the country, his wife Anna was visited by an angel, who hailed her mother of the Virgin of whom the Messiah was to be born.

It should not be forgotten that none of the frescoes



*Photo, Alinari]*

JOACHIM RETIRES TO THE SHEEPFOLD

*[Arcim. Chapel]*

*To face p. 104*



## THE ARENA CHAPEL AT PADUA 105

of the series may rightly be judged as a single composition; the fact that all belong to a large decorative system implies a complete suspension of the canons applicable to separate pictures; so long as nothing occurs to violate the general harmony, the artist is free to treat each subject according to its inherent demands; his purpose, as an artist, is accomplished if he tells his story effectively. S. Anna's room is represented, after Giotto's usual manner, as a little house or ark, complete in itself, the sky all round it, and one wall cut away that the interior may be visible. The roof is ornamented with gables, and on one side is a balcony reached by a flight of stairs, in the shadow of which the servant is seated, spinning. The colouring of this fresco is well preserved, and deserves special attention. The house is a delicate green outside, roofed with pale red tiles. Inside, the walls are deep green, to which a striped bed-cover and a red ottoman give pleasing relief. White bed-curtains, attached to rods which hang from the wainscoted ceiling, shine with a subdued lustre behind the kneeling saint, whose dress is of golden-brown. A few small objects on the walls, a pair of bellows, and a vase upon a corner bracket, catch the light, and emphasise the simplicity and neatness of the room. According to the more generally received version, the Annunciation to Anna took place out of doors. Giotto's rendering diverges here and elsewhere both from the *Protevangelion* and the *Gospel of S. Mary*, as well as from the seventeenth century MS. in the Harleian Library at the British

Museum, which Ruskin uses as an additional authority. We may suppose that the tradition was still incompletely determined in its details, and that he was guided by the account popular in his day. The angel makes his appearance at a small square window which he completely fills; Anna receives his message with perfect simplicity and naturalness, unsurprised. The maid, sitting outside, pursues her task with a wanton air of insolence. She has taken on herself to taunt her mistress for her childlessness. Her disdainful pose contrasts effectively with the peaceful figure of Anna, kneeling.

#### 4. THE SACRIFICE OF JOACHIM.

In this subject again, Giotto seems to have followed a floating, rather than a written, tradition. The fresco, however, sufficiently explains itself. Joachim, while absent among his shepherds, is visited by an angel in the form of a young man, who bids him offer propitiatory sacrifice. His sacrifice is accepted by God, and accompanied by signs portending a mysterious event. The lamb is consumed by the flames, but its skeleton remains entire upon the altar, and in the smoke of the sacrifice the figure of a child appears.

The value of the fresco—as with the majority of the Paduan subjects—appears, not when it is viewed as "a composition,\*" in which sense it is to be judged only in its relation to the design of the chapel as a whole, but when it is estimated according to its degree of vividness in the realisation of the theme. Giotto is hampered by

## THE ARENA CHAPEL AT PADUA 107

no conventions of pictorial propriety. He expresses Joachim's earnestness and breathless suspense by an attitude on which a lesser man would not have dared to venture. Joachim has dropped upon hands and knees like a child, and gazes with fixed intensity upon the angel, who gives his message with the calm and gracious dignity springing from his complete foreknowledge. Joachim's shepherd attendant stands behind him in a deeply reverential posture, aware, seemingly, of the divine acceptance of the offering, as typified, according to Byzantine custom, by the appearance of the hand of God in heaven. Giotto has been careful to connect the picture with the second in the series by similarity in the landscape background: the scenery is of the same kind, but a different locality has been chosen. The sheep are even less life-like than those in the second fresco.

### 5. JOACHIM'S VISION.

Joachim, visited in sleep by the angel, who had warned Anna of her conception, is bidden return home to his wife.

Though never treated by Giotto more nobly than in the second fresco, Joachim makes, at every appearance, a more intimate appeal to the sympathy of the onlooker. Here, sitting at the door of the low shepherd's hut, overcome by grief and weariness, he has folded his arms across his knees and allowed his head to sink upon them. The greatest pathos is expressed in his simple posture, and even before thought is given to

the angelic visitation, the sense of the relief and consolation that come with sleep is perfectly conveyed. Ruskin points out that the shepherds "are evidently under the influence of a certain degree of awe and expectation, as being conscious of some presence other than they can perceive."<sup>11</sup> Giotto's treatment of the shepherd type, in its suggestion of the awkwardness of sympathy springing from dull wits, deserves special remark. The shepherd of the last fresco offers a valuable contrast in this respect; if he does not understand the mysterious portent, at least he knows that the hour calls for devotion; his graceful and reverential bearing increases the effect of combined mystification and alertness, which the shepherds here convey.

#### 6. THE MEETING AT THE GOLDEN GATE.

Joachim followed by a shepherd, Anna by her maids, meet at the Golden Gate of Jerusalem.

The beauty and tenderness of action in the principal group is here so marked that the fresco can never fail to be impressive even to the most casual observer. The husband meets his wife with a full consciousness of the great destiny before her, knowing that the mother of the Messiah is to be committed to their care. "And Anna ran, and hanging about his neck said, 'Now I know that the Lord hath greatly blessed me.'<sup>12</sup> To choose the very moment of close embrace, to realise, with an instinct as delicate as it is secure, the feeling that draws Anna to welcome her husband with cherishing





*Photo, Alinari*

## THE MEETING AT THE GOLDEN GATE

*[Arcua Chapel]*

*To face p. 108*



## THE ARENA CHAPEL AT PADUA 109

fondness, pressing his face to hers with both hands upon his head, to endow the common human greeting with sacramental dignity and grace, all this is characteristic of Giotto, an achievement worthy of his genius. Nor less so is the careful attention to details and accessories. In her haste to meet her husband, Anna has thrown off her cloak, and this is seen carried by her foremost attendant. She and three more behind her display the peering curiosity typical of their class. The motive may seem obvious, but it is true to nature, and the artist is confident in the unassailable integrity of his central theme. Under the arch of the Golden Gate a maid is standing, with dark cloak half screening a moody, sullen face. This, surely, is the maid who previously taunted her mistress, and now is envious of her joy.

### 7. THE BIRTH OF THE VIRGIN.

The architecture and accessories are identical with those of the third fresco, except that S. Anna's bed has been drawn into the middle of the room and stands immediately below the little window, once bright with the appearance of the angel, but now darkened by a shutter. The principal attendants may also be recognised—partly by the colour of their gowns—as identical with those who followed S. Anna to the Golden Gate. But the hardness is gone out of their features, and is replaced by a tender watchfulness, only passing into commoner feeling in the face of one who, at the door of the room, receives from a maid outside a roll of linen,

perhaps new swaddling clothes for the child. S. Anna sits up in bed and stretches out her arms for the baby, which, in obedience to pictorial tradition, is represented a second time under the care of attendants in the foreground. The ordinary episode of the washing, however, is not chosen, though the basin—of classic form—is a conspicuous object, and one of the maids seems to be rolling or unrolling linen. Giotto prefers to picture the principal nurse wiping the baby's nose, and uses all his power to show the intentness and care she devotes to the operation, leaning the tiny back securely against her knee, and not forgetting to support the head with her hand.

#### 8. THE PRESENTATION OF THE VIRGIN.

In the *Gospel of S. Mary*, the Virgin is described as presenting herself, alone, to the High Priest while her parents "were putting off their clothes in which they had travelled," and, her age being three years, this is not unnaturally regarded as a miraculous sign. The initial interest of Giotto's rendering is, that he recognises such a miracle as unworthy of the event. Even if it were admitted that his Virgin is the result of a genuine effort to conceive the appearance of a child of three, the fact that she is 'definitely supported and presented by her mother shows that Giotto disdains to represent the miracle as commonly understood. As Ruskin suggests, it is possibly his desire to render her understanding of the purpose of the ceremony that has been fatal to his delineation of her as a child.

## THE ARENA CHAPEL AT PADUA 111

The architecture and various groups of attendant figures are all of interest here in the connections they set up between this fresco and earlier as well as later numbers in the series. It will be observed that the temple buildings—though frankly offered as symbols merely—are the same as those in the first fresco, but differently arranged and raised by steps above the ground for the special purpose of the present picture. The priest who previously repulsed Joachim does not now officiate, but stands close to the man he injured with a mournful expression on his splendid features. In the foreground opposite, two men, apart from the rest, converse with sullen faces, suggesting envy or suspicion. A servant behind Anna, whose foot is already upon the first step of the flight, and who carries a basket on bent back—a heavier weight than its bulk would naturally justify, so perhaps intended for the Virgin's baggage—conveys by his businesslike advance that the Virgin has come to stay ; similarly behind the priest stands a group of virgins already dedicated, being those in whose company Mary is to spend her years of service in the Temple. It will be unnecessary to insist on the extreme effectiveness in this fresco of the grouping of figures and architecture.

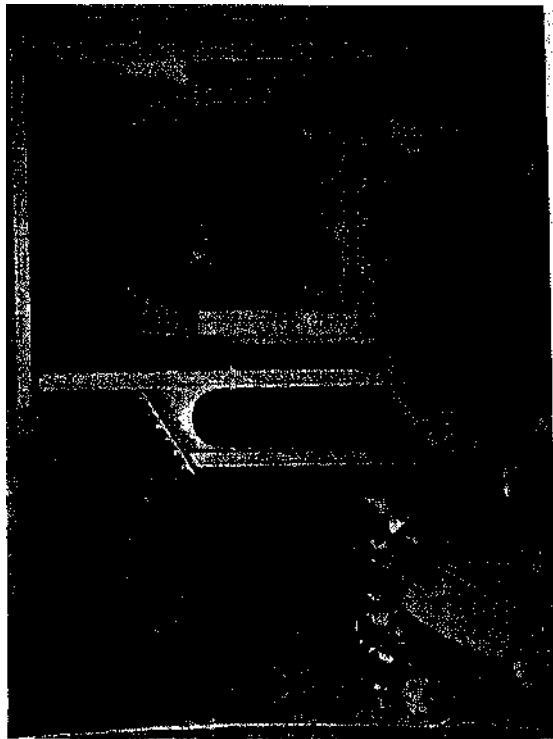
### 9. THE RODS ARE BROUGHT TO THE HIGH PRIEST.

The priests have been warned to seek a husband for the Virgin from among the men of the house of David; the suitor worthy of her will be made known by the budding of his rod upon the altar.

In this and the two following frescoes, culminating in the Virgin's betrothal, the Temple is represented in a new form ; the symbol here consists of the section of a church—on greatly reduced scale—taken just in front of the altar, showing the end of the nave, two low side aisles, and a small semicircular apse. The round arch is used throughout, as typical of the eastern style of architecture. The chief interest of this, as of the succeeding fresco, is in the anxiety and intentness with which both priests and suitors enter into the ceremony. Vigilance, not untinged with suspicion, appears in the features of the priest behind the altar, described by a high authority as one of the most admirable of Giotto's studies in expression. One rod has been already laid upon the altar; both priests have a hand upon it, while both fix their eyes upon the suitor who next comes forward; the greatest need for oversight is felt. Giotto makes little attempt to individualise the suitors : the faces of six only can be seen, but the presence of a greater number is conveyed, after the Byzantine manner, by a block of heads behind in rough perspective. Joseph contrasts strongly with the rest, his grey hair and beard giving them the appearance of boys. He stands in the rear, watching no less intently than the others, but wholly devoid of the impatient eagerness by which they seem to be animated.

#### 10. THE WATCHING OF THE RODS.

The intensity of expectation remarked in the last fresco reaches a still higher pitch in this. As formerly in the case of Joachim's sacrifice, so here



olo. Alinari]

TUE WATCHING OF THE RODS

Alrena Chapel

To four A. 112





Giotto testifies to the total preoccupation of his characters by throwing them into attitudes more expressive than picturesque. A "clumsy composition" is the result on one hand; on the other, a painting in which the emotional stress belonging to the situation is realised with wonderful power. S. Joseph's humility still keeps him far in the background. The solemnity of the moment is marked by two lamps which stand now on either side of the altar, while in the vaulting of the apse the hand of God appears—to symbolise the acceptance of S. Joseph's rod.

#### 11. THE BETROTHAL OF THE VIRGIN.

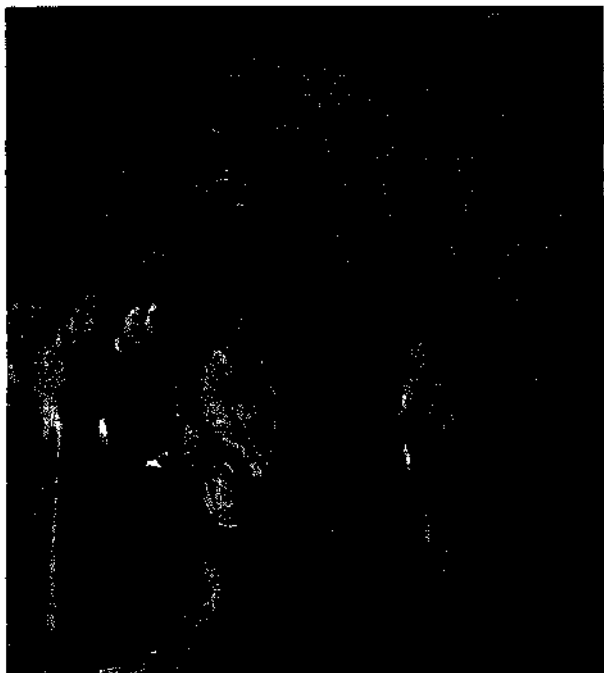
Giotto's conception of the Virgin's betrothal is of the greatest interest, in the testimony it gives to the crystal clearness of his mind, and to his great power of reserve. A German critic finds in this picture the sentimental atmosphere of an ordinary marriage, with a bridegroom who hardly dares to set eyes upon his bride. But S. Joseph, though he drew back before he knew where the choice would fall, now shows himself worthy to have been chosen, and, though all eyes are upon him, he stands before the Virgin in perfect self-possession. The priest who joins their hands looks upon him with a fatherly affection, and the same feeling—though here tinged slightly with "sentiment"—appears in the noble features of his companion behind. The rejected suitors are present at the betrothal, and it is characteristic of Giotto that their base, but natural, emotions of hatred, disgust, and scorn, are

faithfully rendered without any fear of intrusion upon the principal subject. The action he devised for two of them was invariably repeated by all succeeding artists. The first breaks his rod across his knee, the second advances stealthily to strike S. Joseph from behind: his attitude seems ineffective, until it is realised that his object is to conceal the intended assault; it is for this reason that he holds his cloak together, and keeps his raised hand near his face. The attitude of the Virgin is full of grace and dignity, and the treatment of her sweeping train only less beautiful than in the next fresco. It will be observed that she folds her left arm upon her waist with a calm purposeful serenity, and keeps her eyes upon the ground, not in maidenly timidity, but because the passing ceremony is not the chief matter of her thought.

#### 12. THE VIRGIN RETURNS HOME.

This fresco shows how, "the usual ceremonies of betrothing being over, the Virgin of the Lord, Mary, with seven other virgins of the same age, who had been weaned at the same time, and who had been appointed to attend her by the priest, returned to her parents<sup>1</sup> house in Galilee."

Ruskin regards this fresco as "of all the compositions in the Arena Chapel the most characteristic of the noble time in which it was done," and challenges comparison for it with the most famous works of classic art. "These comparisons,"<sup>1</sup> he says, "cannot be made carefully without a sense of profound reverence for the



*Photo, Alinari*

# THE VIRGIN RETURNS TO HER HOME

*[Arena Chapel]*

*To face p. 114*



## THE ARENA CHAPEL AT PADUA 115

natural spirit which could produce a design so majestic and yet remain content with one so simple." The painting unfortunately has suffered severe damage, parts of it, as, for example, the instruments of the trumpeters, having completely disappeared, and much of the rest being faded and dim; but, in spite of this—and no doubt because it has been less repainted than most—it gives in an almost unique degree the sense of delicacy and tenderness of handling, which, but for evidence such as is afforded by this fresco, might almost have been supposed to have been lacking in the original work. The three figures of musicians, and especially the viol player, are of the greatest beauty; and with regard to the design as a whole, not only its simplicity, but also its high seriousness, can hardly be sufficiently dwelt on. Giotto generally receives greatest tribute as a dramatic artist; but here in the very absence of action he seems to have found scope for passionate expression of the most exalted kind.

### 13 and 14. THE ANNUNCIATION.

Giotto's method of treatment is necessarily changed in these next two frescoes, which together represent the Annunciation, because their position in the chapel—one on either side of the arch that separates nave and choir—demands an effect of obvious symmetry. With the object of securing it, the strictest balance is maintained between the two parts of the design, identical architecture being employed in each, and

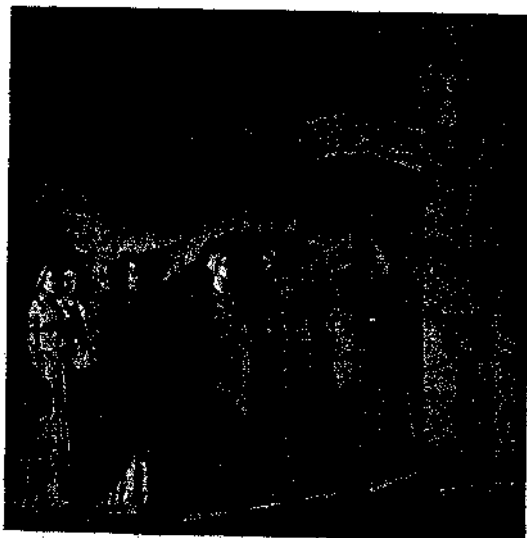
details even so minute as curtains and the rods to support them, being set in careful opposition.

But although his main purpose here is decorative, Giotto has not sacrificed the continuity of his story. He has taken pains to define the scene of action by using architecture of the same character as in the last fresco; and the Virgin, who till now has worn her hair loose upon her back, binds it, in her new dignity of matron, in plaits about her head.

#### 15. THE SALUTATION.

This, and the five subjects that follow it, have a peculiar interest, arising from the problem of their relation to frescoes representing the same subjects which form part of a series commonly attributed to Giotto in the transept of the Lower Church of S. Francis at Assisi. Critics have been unable to determine whether the frescoes at Assisi belong to an earlier or later period of Giotto's activity; they are more ornate, elaborate, and graceful than the work at Padua, but far less forcible, direct, and true. The obvious conclusion that they are the work of a disciple, though it has been at various times suggested, has not yet found acceptance, though supported by important traditional authorities. The compositions at Padua and Assisi are often referred to as closely similar, sometimes even as repetitions the one of the other, and certainly *The Salutation* is the subject in which such resemblance as exists is easiest to see. The





*Photo, Alinari*

THE SALUTATION  
(Giovanni Gaddi)

*L. Artist. Lower Church*

*To face p. 117*



## THE ARENA CHAPEL AT PADUA 117

only item in either picture, which would seem to have been directly derived from anything in the other, is the door and porch of Elizabeth's house, and the servant standing under it. But whereas to Giotto the porch and door are a sufficient symbol of the house—the real appearance of the building being a triviality, irrelevant to his true subject, the interchange of passionate human feeling—the later artist is hardly less interested in his architecture than in the figures who meet in front of it. Thus the point of similarity is slight, but differences multiply. The painting at Assisi provides much more nearly what the modern mind expects to see provided in a picture. The house is set in a little landscape dotted with trees, and the eye catches a glimpse of green bushes above the garden wall; the figures are tastefully dressed, and the artist has been careful to give graceful curves to their hanging draperies. All this is thoroughly attractive and picturesque, and it is no wonder that the frescoes meet with universal admiration. The meeting of Mary and Elizabeth is not less carefully composed; and though Mary's expression is disappointing and her figure a little stiff, the stooping figure of Elizabeth is full of tender feeling. To turn suddenly from this rendering to Giotto's is to experience a severe shock. All the engaging accessories are gone, and the effective isolation of the principal group has been sacrificed to exigences of space. Mary's servants, with their staid carriage and almost portly figures, stand close behind their mistress and partly hide her, and in the principal

group no attempt is made to secure obvious amenities of arrangement in dress or attitude. Elizabeth's bent back gives at first sight the impression of a rectilineal angle, and her robe hangs from her shoulders in an almost unbroken straight line to the ground. Her features are not beautiful, nor are Mary's, and the natural form of the face is quite imperfectly understood. These drawbacks—if they must be called drawbacks—leave the enduring qualities of the work untouched. The more it is studied, the more it will be felt that Giotto has realised in imagination the unique significance of Elizabeth's greeting and of its reception by Mary. Inseparable from the superficial awkwardness of Elizabeth's attitude is the passionate self-forgetfulness, which could ill be exchanged for better grace; and her features, harsh at first sight, reveal slowly a subdued tenderness, an earnest concentrated devotion. The treatment of Mary is hardly less deeply felt. Till now she has been characterised by a certain meditative aloofness, such as might well spring from vague consciousness of a high mission. Here the full realisation of her destiny seems to have ripened dignity to the deep love that is born of sorrowful experience.

## 16. THE NATIVITY.

There is little resemblance between the treatment of this subject here and that at Assisi, and the contrast between them may be suggested in few words. The composition at Assisi is marked in an unusual degree



*Photo, Alinari]*

## THE SALUTATION

*[Arena Chapel*

*To face p. 118*





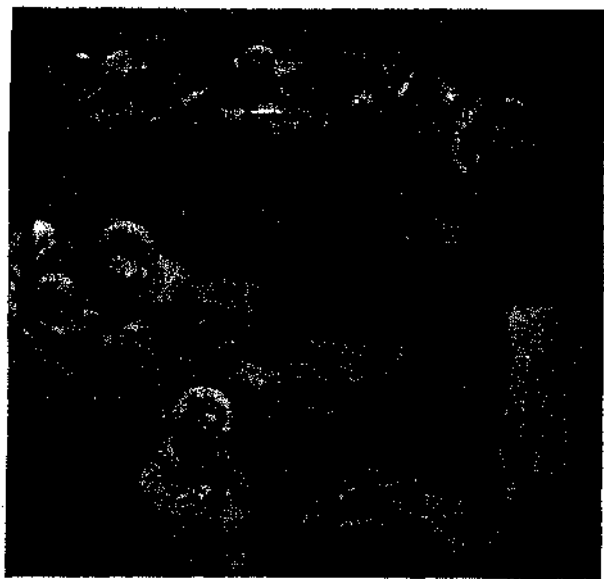


*Photo. Alinari*

# THE NATIVITY

*[Arena Chapel]*

*To face p. 129*

## THE ARENA CHAPEL AT PADUA 119

by the daintiness characteristic of the series there, a quality of which it would be hard to find a trace either in this or any other of Giotto's Paduan designs. The best that can be said of the central episode—the Virgin sitting up and nursing the child, in contemplation—is that it breathes the air of tender piety. The different treatment of the shepherds may be taken as a sufficient touchstone of the spirit of the two artists. They are placed at Assisi, as by Giotto, close to the foot of Mary's bed. But Giotto, perhaps feeling it sufficiently bold to have placed them there, treats them with all the restfulness he can command, shows little but their backs, and yet succeeds in imparting to them a sense of reverence and awe. At Assisi, the artist allows them to express surprise and curiosity in vivacious gesticulation.

Giotto is careful to insist here on the hilly nature of the Bethlehem country, and in doing so divides his sky background into two triangular spaces of approximately equal dimensions. To these he adds a third in Mary's robe—now spoiled, but originally of the same colour as the sky. The effect of this must have been of great beauty, and was probably not without its symbolic meaning. "There is an exquisite truth and sweetness," Ruskin says, "in the way the Virgin turns upon her couch, in order herself to assist in laying the child down : . . . the angels, all exulting, and, as it were, confused with joy, flutter and circle in the air like birds." Giotto allows no detail to escape him which may give homely peacefulness to the scene. It was required of

him by tradition to represent S. Joseph sitting in solitary meditation ; but he allows a corner of the Virgin's cloak to drop behind his head, seeming thus to connect him in sympathy with the event. The ass rubs his nose contentedly against the manger in which the child is to be laid.

17. THE ADORATION OF THE MAGI.\*

The awkward stiffness of the camels in this fresco has closed the eyes even of the greatest critics to the power and beauty of the principal group. Ruskin puts "the whole composition into the class—not itself an uninteresting one—of the slips and shortcomings of great masters." But it is impossible to agree with him. Notwithstanding certain obvious flaws, the design is one of the most impressive that Giotto ever produced. Its literal simplicity, the apparently unstudied treatment of the drapery, the refusal to search for grace of posture at the sacrifice of emotional truth, will not jar upon those who have sympathetically studied the subjects that precede. The essential features of the situation are given with an amazing concentration and fidelity. Here are true kings, known otherwise than by their crowns, and not least by their instinctive recognition of one greater than they. The child is still too young to be released from swaddling clothes (though later artists of course allowed it), and

\* The contrast between the representations of this subject at Padua and Assisi is striking ; but having treated it already in the *Monthly Review* (Oct. 1903), the author prefers here to leave Giotto's rendering in the isolation which really belongs to it.





*Photo, Alinari]*

THE ADORATION OF THE MAGI

*[Arena Chapel*

*To face p. 120*



his face is the least satisfactory part of the picture ; but Joseph and Mary express the feelings of which the child is unsusceptible. Faces more beautiful than theirs Giotto never drew ; that of the angel at their side is noble, but matched with theirs it is impassive and hard. The colouring of the fresco is, unfortunately, greatly rubbed and damaged ; but it is clear that Giotto deliberately strove to make it rich and glowing. The robes of the kings and their caskets are bordered with gold ; there is a gold pattern upon the footstool under Mary's feet; the kings' crowns and the eight haloed heads of the principal group complete the effect. The treatment of the background is particularly noteworthy. The solitary hill, with sweeping outline, gives noble support to the figures, and emphasises the imposing stateliness of the group : to secure this, and with it a larger space of sky, the foreground is so far reduced as to render the foothold of the camels problematic. The action of the foremost attendant, holding back his beast with a heavy hand, is one of the naturalistic touches that Giotto always delighted in. The foreshortening of his upturned face, as well as that of S. Joseph, were feats not yet attempted in the art of Italy, except by Giotto himself, but the achievement is in either case so perfect as to leave no sense of a difficulty overcome.

Yet to remark on technical details seems here hardly in place; for Giotto allows nothing to break the solemnity of the simple act of adoration, on which all thoughts and every eye are concentrated.

## 18. THE PRESENTATION IN THE TEMPLE.

Giotto's treatment of the subject offers a simple and instructive contrast to that of his successor at Assisi. There we find an affecting group of thirteen pious personages, perfectly composed with a view to securing an obvious balance, and set in a Gothic interior, which represents, perhaps, the most elaborate study in architecture that the fourteenth century produced. The attitudes of Mary and of the prophetess Anna are derived from Giotto's, but have not his living force. Nothing could be clearer to the unbiased mind than that the work at Assisi is a graceful, but nerveless, elaboration of Giotto's theme. Giotto contents himself with a bare symbol for his architecture, and a symbol not Gothic, but Byzantine in design. What he gives may be meagre, but at the least it shall be true. The natural action of the mother and child has often been remarked upon. It is not always seen that these apparent diversions are possible with Giotto because they are no real diversions : the simple human instinct may be dwelt on, because the statement of the more exalted truth is perfectly secure. The passionate gravity of both Anna and Simeon is the most remarkable feature in this fresco; an angel stoops from heaven to warn the latter of his approaching death. Small details and the flight of time are not forgotten: the child appears now in his short clothes, and the care with which S. Joseph supports and holds his doves is thoroughly characteristic of the artist.

## THE ARENA CHAPEL AT PADUA 123

### 19. THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT.

A comparison of this with the rendering at Assisi is attended by the usual result. The later artist reproduces Giotto's design without its backbone, and offers a few touches of the picturesque by way of compensation, though the result of these additions is to increase the unpleasant flimsiness of his work.

Illuskin's belief that Giotto here attempts to suggest that the journey took place by night is surely without foundation, and must have been based on a study of the Arundel Society's woodcut rather than of the original fresco: for the "scattered lights on the Madonna's robe," on which he partly relies for evidence, cannot be regarded as representative of the painter's intentions, the robe (as is the case in varying degrees with all blue draperies in the Arena Chapel) having completely lost its colour. However, the disposition of the folds (as drawn in preparation for the blue) appears for that very reason with rare distinctness and delicacy. The interest of the fresco naturally centres in the figures of the Virgin and Child; the rocky hill that rises just beyond seems to be slightly hollowed as if to enshrine them in its shadow. The child is secured by a band, which passes about his mother's neck; his arm rests gently upon it, and he draws up a little to his mother, who supports him with both hands, keeping her eyes intently on the road to be traversed: this, with the gesture of the guardian angel, gives the effect

of stern purpose in their flight; the pleasant easy motion of S. Joseph and his attendants shows that it is attended by little anxiety or haste. The only baggage apparent consists of drinking vessels, a provision against thirst in the desert.

#### 20. THE MASSACRE OF THE INNOCENTS.

The treatment of this scene at Assisi—a scene, as Ruskin says truly, which ought never to have been made the subject of painting at all—offers important corroboration to the theory he tentatively expresses, that Giotto has deliberately subdued the agonies of it. It is remarkable that in only one instance at Padua is the act of murder fully exposed to view, whereas the later artist, though largely dependent on Giotto for his ideas, displays the horrors of the event with an almost morbid brutality. A new episode is introduced into the later picture in the groups of seated mothers with their children dead upon their knees; and the various attitudes of despairing madness, in those whose children still live, are greatly elaborated. To say that Giotto had a nobler purpose is not to say that he gave it a perfect embodiment. He was greatly at a disadvantage on account of his inability to draw a naturally proportioned child. And his group of women, fine in the refusal to exaggerate gesture, suffers much from the universal disfigurement of feature intended to represent grief. For the rest it is only necessary to study the back of the soldier on the extreme right, to

## THE ARENA CHAPEL AT PADUA 125

be assured that it was not for lack of power that Giotto restricted the expression of violent action. The group of three men under Herod's balcony accords with this interpretation : one sadly averts his face, the other two seem in the act of leaving the scene, but still look back, the foremost clearly in a kind of fascination of horror, A building in the background seems to be representative of a Jewish synagogue.

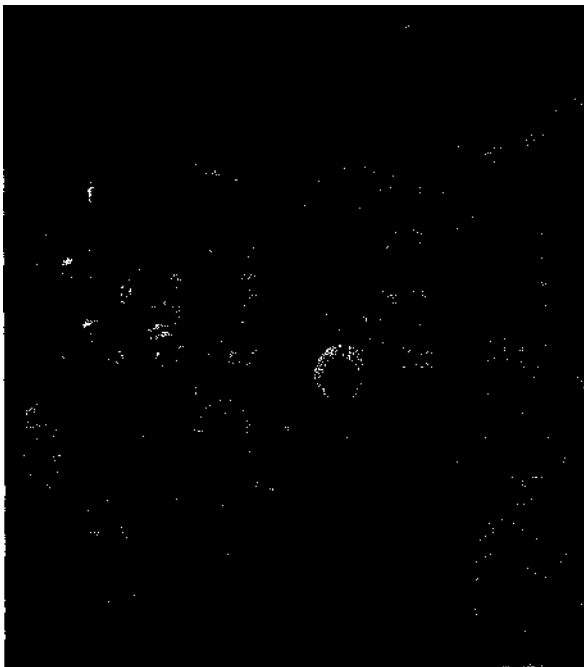
### 21. THE BOY CHRIST IN THE TEMPLE.

The terrible damage which this fresco has suffered from damp—its forms obscured, its colours blackened, the blues, where they remain, gone green—has effectually robbed it of the appreciation that is its due. Its grandeur will at once be realised, when it is set in comparison with the treatment of the same subject given at Assisi.

So little attention has been paid to Giotto's rendering, and its faded outlines are so difficult to decipher, especially in a small reproduction, that perhaps the reader will be patient under a discussion of unusual length. One critic dismisses the fresco, without looking at it, as "a purely symmetrical design."<sup>11</sup> Our interest in the fresco obviously begins with the observation that the painter has disregarded the requirements of accurate symmetry; and though he induces the eye to take Christ's figure as a centre-piece, has in reality placed it in a position far from central. The main action is thrown upon the left-hand side, and the whole composi-

tion adjusted so as to give the painter greater scope and freedom there. The grand realistic treatment of the architecture offers in itself evidence sufficient to prove that the somewhat meagre symbols, noted in earlier numbers of the series, were used by Giotto as the result of deliberate choice. Feeling that the massy, gloomy effect of a Byzantine interior is directly helpful to the idea—the immemorial wisdom of mankind to be pierced and illumined by a child—he sets himself at once to reproduce it; and in spite of ignorance of perspective and consequent difficulty and error, creates the impression he desires. One spirit belongs to the dark stately arches and to the solemn doctors who sit below. The figure of the child Christ is disappointing, and yet, like all Giotto's creations, becomes impressive as its intention is understood. It should be borne in mind that the effect of depth so striking in this interior—an effect wholly without parallel at this early date—involved the painter in problems of the severest kind, and that these culminate in the figure of Christ, because it is furthest in the background. He raises one hand in discussion with the doctor at his right, and rests the fingers of the other upon the front seam or opening of his tunic, just above the heart, a restful action, difficult to describe, but common enough among men of to-day. The expression of the face is distant, as of one more occupied with his subject than with his audience. The deep gravity of the doctors seems hardly to have been touched by the grievous injuries the fresco has sustained. The entrance of Joseph and Mary is unnoticed, except by one of them.





*Photo, Alinari]*

THE BOY CHRIST IN THE TEMPLE

*[Arena Chapel*

*To face p. 126*



## THE ARENA CHAPEL AT PADUA 127

Mary stretches out both arms to her son close above his neighbour's head, and he looks up over his shoulder at the intruder in a dignified surprise. The fine figure, with high bald forehead, seated at Christ's left hand, plays an important part in later frescoes.

### 22. THE BAPTISM OF CHRIST.

The artist seems to have been discouraged in this fresco by the inherent difficulties of the subject: the traditional representation required that the principal figure should be immersed and nude; and that both banks of the river should be seen. The perspective of a water surface would in itself have presented an insoluble problem, and there is little wonder that the picture has the effect of a makeshift and compromise. The feebleness of Christ's action is none the less surprising, and that of S. John is below Giotto's usual mark. Were he pouring water over the head from a vessel (as in some representations of this subject), his anxiety to save his cloak from splashing would have more purpose. The reverential posture of the angels, as they bend slightly forward, to avoid creasing the clothes they hold, is more characteristic of the artist. The introduction of the first person of the Trinity borders upon irreverence, as Ruskin observes; not intrinsically, however, but because of the peculiarly inadequate nature of the representation.

In the decorative framework separating this fresco

from the last a small medallion commemorates the *Circumcision*.

23. THE MARRIAGE AT CANA IN GALILEE.

Preceded, in the decorative framework, by *Moses striking the Rock*.

This is described by Crowe and Cavalcaselle as "comparatively coarse in arrangement, and probably altogether a school fresco." But however numerous the assistants who worked with Giotto in the chapel, that he should leave one subject entirely in their hands is most unlikely, that he should not himself provide the design for it still more so. If the arrangement is less pleasing than is usual in Giotto's work, a reason will be found in the exacting nature of the theme, and the number of characters that play an essential part in it. As in many of Giotto's works no single moment of time is chosen for representation; a sequence of events is brought together, the unity springing from close association of idea being rightly viewed as in better accord with the demands of artistic treatment. Thus it remains uncertain whether Christ, in the left foreground, gives his first or second command; for on the right, a servant filling the water-pots, and the ruler of the feast drinking and informed by a second servant of the miracle, are pictured side by side. Whether or no the raised hands of the Virgin and the bride have a definitely symbolic meaning, as Ruskin suggests, they well express the sense of awe and expectation that would

## THE ARENA CHAPEL AT PADUA 129

naturally attend the miracle ; and it was like Giotto, after giving realisation to the meaning of the miracle on its mystical side, to explain the necessity for it in the character of the ruler of the feast. The attitude of this rotund old toper, in act to toss off a glass, with his left hand on his hip, is surprising in its fidelity to nature : more surprising still the fact that it can be introduced without violation of the high seriousness in which this, like every subject in the chapel, is conceived.

### 24. THE RAISING OF LAZARUS.

Preceded by medallion representing the *Creation of Man*.

This is a very famous fresco, and is of peculiar interest to the student, because of the close resemblance which it bears to a representation of the same subject in the chapel dedicated to the Magdalen in the church of S. Francis at Assisi. Crowe and Cavalcaselle describe the painting at Assisi as " a spoiled copy " of the Paduan design; but later critics, and most notably Mr. Roger Fry, regard it as an earlier work of Giotto himself. At Padua, according to Mr. Fry, a greater perfection of style is attained, but " the conception has lost something of its former intensity. . . . There is none of the suspense of the struggle with death, the tension of a supreme effort of will, which marked the earlier version." \*

\* *Monthly Review*, Feb. 1901.

hereby raised; for to accept Mr. Fry's explanation is to accept a theory of Giotto's development, which must exercise a profound influence on our conception of his character as a man. A detailed examination of the frescoes may possibly avert the need of raising at this point the wider issue. An episode which occupies the right foreground may first attract attention. The stone slab, which acted as door to the tomb, is moved aside by a pair of boys. In the Paduan version, Giotto's realistic manner has fully impressed itself even upon so unimportant a detail. The action of both figures is calculated to do justice to the weight of the slab. At Assisi, half its bulk rests lightly on the left hand of one of the boys, and so little disconcerts him that he turns round with an easy grace to watch the miracle. The other boy—a blackamoor—offers no real help, nor is his position one which would give him the smallest purchase, even if he wished to offer it. His black hands and face make a curious contrast to the whiteness of the stone and of the grave clothes; he serves no other purpose. To introduce this episode at all was unnecessary: the spirit which prompted it was clearly the realistic spirit: is it likely, therefore, that the earlier treatment will be the treatment in which the realities of the action are neglected? Again, the action of the man with hands thrown back, second from Lazarus on the left, has, like all else in the fresco at Assisi, its counterpart at Padua. But there, though given to a figure almost hidden, it is startling in its obvious natural force: decorous and subdued at Assisi, it is not directly representative of

## THE ARENA CHAPEL AT PADUA 131

any state of mind. The same contrast appears throughout: the version at Assisi, far from being the intenser of the two, represents in every particular a mollification of familiar ideas. A figure in Giotto's background boldly testifies to the truth of Martha's warning that "by this time he stinketh"; the artist at Assisi will not leave the idea, but he appears to treat it with regret. As to the central motive of the picture, I cannot feel, as Mr. Fry does, that the version at Assisi is greater in its "intensity of emotion, its concentration of spiritual energy." He remarks on "the rigid back, the intent gaze of Christ, the nervous power expressed in the action of the left hand."<sup>1</sup> I cannot myself feel this rigidity, and the face seems to me to have a vacant air, very weak about the mouth, and unredeemed by any power of expression in the eye; nor do eye and hand give the impression that they act in concert. Lazarus, according to Mr. Fry, has "a perplexed and fascinated expression, as of one gradually mesmerised back to life"; this again does not appear to me. The eyes are ringed, and have a fixed stare, it is true, but the face, as a whole, has singularly little relation to the character and circumstances, as will at once be felt when it is compared with that of Giotto's Lazarus at Padua. Here not only is the ghostly pallor of death most forcibly represented, but the features retain the emaciation of previous suffering: moreover, they are the features of a sensitive and thoughtful man, one, in short, whom it would be possible to imagine a close friend of Christ. Christ himself, except in the *Crucifixion* and *Ascension*, is nowhere

treated by Giotto more nobly than here. The calm space of forehead, the firm decision of the mouth, are beyond the reach of the artist who painted at Assisi. The natural confidence expressed in the whole attitude, and particularly the noble poise of the head, convey a real sense of wonder-working power.

The " composition " at Padua is, as Mr. Fry observes, far finer; that at Assisi is nevertheless much the more regular of the two : it is, in fact, such a composition as would naturally be produced by an artist who felt it his first duty to equalise the masses on either side of a central point. It is sufficient to glance at any two consecutive frescoes in the *Life of S. Francis* in the Upper Church, to be convinced that Giotto, even in earlier life, had seen the limits of this unreal restriction. The composition at Padua owes a great pail of its power to the unbalanced sweep of hill, towering behind the group that surrounds Lazarus (the side of it hollowed to receive his sepulchre), and the distinction given by contrast to the figure of Christ in its clear relief against the sky.

No tradition nor any early authority attributes the fresco at Assisi to Giotto : it seems to be the work of a follower more closely in touch with the master than the author of the series in the transept, but equally unable to command the grip and force, which gives real life to Giotto's work, when at its best; tending, therefore, though in a less degree, to find compensation for loss of life in aesthetic effects of the more obvious kind.



Λ



*Photo, Alinan\*

THE RAISING OF LAZARUS

*Λ*Arena

Chap<sup>d</sup>



## THE ARENA CHAPEL AT PADUA 133

### 25. THE ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM.

The medallion in the frame possibly represents *The Anointing of Jehu* (2 Kings ix. 13).

This fresco has suffered very severe injury, several heads in the background behind Christ having almost wholly disappeared, and others among the crowd in the foreground being spoiled. Christ's onward progress is so well given, that it is difficult for the spectator not to feel apprehensive for the safety of those who welcome him. The subject is, in fact, one that taxed heavily the narrow limits of pictorial treatment which Giotto had at his command. To give Christ an escort not unworthy of a king, to secure to him his proper isolation, to suggest the city which was his goal, as well as the ovations of the populace, all this he could effect only by making a bold sacrifice of more obvious natural facts, and requiring the onlooker to trouble himself with them as little. The actual falsity of the representation may be judged by computing the apparent distance of the city gate—it could not be supposed less than twenty yards—and next observing that this distance is amply covered by a crowd numbering eleven persons only. Giotto's ingenuous naturalism reaches a climax in the attitudes of the foremost figures. Among details of the fresco, the head and forefoot of the ass's foal are very delightful, and are apt to be missed, unless looked for carefully. The city gate is identical in form with that which is afterwards used

in the painting of *Christ bearing his Cross*, a simple expedient, whereby great pathos is added to both subjects,

26. EXPULSION OF THE MONEY-CHANGERS FROM THE  
OUTER COURT OF THE TEMPLE.

In the framework a fiend, speared by an angel, perhaps suggests *The Fall of Lucifer*.

There can be no doubt that Giotto intended here to give a realistic picture of the confusion and hubbub caused by the action of Christ. The child with a dove is perhaps a little too secure of safety under S. Peter's robe; but the second child, clinging in terror to the foremost apostle, and sheltered tenderly by him, testifies to the artist's intention very clearly. The inverted tables and the flight of ram on one side, cow and calf on the other, corroborate this view. The action of the money-changers themselves may seem at first sight ineffective; stouter opposition, or a more complete discomfiture, might seem more natural; yet their attitude of deprecatory submission is in reality calculated to emphasise the meaning of Christ's action in the fullest degree. On the extreme right, a projecting feature in the architecture calls attention to the presence of three Pharisees in close consultation. These reappear in the next fresco of *The Hiring of Judas*. The gospels give no open warrant for this connection, but it was thoroughly characteristic of Giotto to make it.

## THE ARENA CHAPEL AT PADUA 135

### 27. THE HIEING OF JUDAS.

It is uncertain whether Giotto intended here to give Judas the nimbus of an apostle. A line of division runs through the plaster close above his head, and the dark circular mass, which has now the appearance of a damaged halo, may not have formed a part of the original work. Judas is seen prompted by a devil in the form of a shapeless shadow, with talons for hands, and for leg a stick. He already grasps the purse in his left hand, and it is clear that Giotto conceives him merely as a dastardly instrument in the hands of the priests; one of them, with hands slightly raised, impresses upon him the last injunctions. Of the other two, who are in converse, the first eyes him with a stern and piercing look, the second openly expresses contempt, not only in his features, but by the action of the inverted thumb. The porch under which the priests are standing shows that the scene is in the close neighbourhood of the Temple.

### 28. THE LAST SUPPER.

Ruskin justly remarks that the passionate agitation which has been associated with this scene through the genius of Leonardo, does not in truth belong to it, and that Giotto's is the faithful rendering, dwelling, as it does, on the gradually increasing sorrow in which Christ's statement was received. It is a noble simplicity which allows the artist to set well-nigh half his figures with

their backs to the spectator; and it is characteristic of him that those with their backs turned are by no means the least expressive. The problem involved in S. John's posture—his head resting on Christ's bosom—has been dealt with less happily than most; it will not, in fact, bear close consideration. In spite, however, of this flaw, and the lack of obvious interest in the design, its perfectly literal treatment, and the general gravity of features and expression, seem to admit the onlooker, as perhaps he is admitted in no other fresco, to the presence of the apostles and their master.

#### 29. THE WASHING OF THE FEET.

The reflective submission, which pervades this scene, is hardly broken by the tinge of severity and deprecation passing over S. Peter's face, and harmonises nobly with the half-unconscious dreamy action, by which the disciples, whose turn is yet to come, prepare themselves for the washing. S. Andrew, buckling his sandal after it, is among the noblest figures in the chapel. The architectural setting is identical with that seen in the last fresco; but there a table filled the room : that Giotto can banish it here without scruple shows the artistic quality of his realism. The ornamentation of the roof—consisting of a pair of eagles, one of which, immediately over Christ, stoops as if to rend its prey—cannot be without symbolic meaning, and introduces the next scene of the betrayal.

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### 30. THE KISS OF JUDAS.

This fresco has been very much damaged, and it is not to be judged in details of feature and expression. Judas, for example, gives here the impression of a man with a thick, sensual face, clean shaven, quite unlike the Judas who appeared in *The Hiring*. But, however much obscured by the clumsiness of restorers, the general purpose of the fresco still makes itself felt. No landscape background was allowed, a substitute being found for it in the turbulent bands of excited men, whose presence is betrayed by ranks of helmeted heads, and weapons waved wildly in the air. The same agitation is aimed at in the few figures that receive individual treatment in the foreground. Judas, not content to kiss his master, stretches his arms to embrace him, giving thereby a certain tensity to the folds of the mantle that envelops him to the feet. Giotto increases the sense of violence and stress, by giving similar action to three others of the chief characters, to a soldier who clutches at the mantle of one outside the picture (probably the young man who fled naked away), to S. Peter, who is in the act of cutting off Malchus' ear, and to one of the priests, who sees the act, and stretches out his hand to call attention to it. Of Christ himself only the head is seen, its calm dignity emphasised by the appearance of two hands that rise behind it above the confused mass of the crowd, wielding a club and spear.

## 31. CHBIST BEFORE CAIAPHAS.

Intent, as always, to mark the continuity of the action, Giotto here reintroduces several minor characters that appeared in the last fresco; in particular, the soldier whose hand is raised to strike may be easily recognised as identical with the next behind Judas in the betrayal. It is improbable that the face of Christ now adequately represents Giotto's original conception ; but that weariness and dejection belonged to it in some degree from the first seems deducible from the treatment of the figure as a whole. The contrast between this and the brutal hardness of the soldiers would hardly be bearable in a composition that stood by itself. The action given to Caiaphas is seen again in the chapel in the allegorical figure of Wrath; in neither case is it very effective ; \* far more so here is the insolent toss of the high priests head. The torch and barred shutters, as Ruskin observes, conspicuously indicate its being now dead of night, an effect enhanced by the deep gloom of the ceiling. But neither here nor anywhere does it occur to Giotto to represent fire as a source of light: he treats flame colour conventionally, making it a deep dull red, so that even in its original condition the outline of the burning torch would have shown dark against the pale mauve of the wall.

**\* A friend has suggested to me that its purpose here is, at least in part, to reveal the breast-plate, the high priest choosing thus to emphasise the dignity of his office.**







*Photo. [linari]*

PILATE AND THE PRIESTS

*[Arena Chapel]*

*To face p. 139*

## THE ARENA CHAPEL AT PADUA 139

### 32. THE SCOURGING OF CHRIST.

This scene gives an important example of Giotto's desire to secure accurate suggestion of fact in his architectural setting: on careful inspection it will be found to represent, not an interior, as at first sight appears, but a courtyard, or quadrangle, open to the sky, and flanked by a passage, with roof supported on four slender pillars. In the background on the right, an open door leads, no doubt, into Pilate's Judgment Hall. "Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe, and Pilate saith unto them, 'Behold the man.'"

The heads of Pilate and of the priests, reproduced from this fresco, are interesting partly because of the pronounced and powerful delineation of the Roman and Jewish types, partly because, the distinction of type secured, no attempt, or little, is made to add individual traits. The vindictive animosity of the Jews contrasts finely with the detached remonstrance that appears in Pilate's face. The Roman eagles will be noted in the ornamentation of his robe.

### 33. CHRIST BEARING HIS CROSS.

"Giotto is not free from the reproach of embodying the somewhat trivial idea of weariness in the Saviour because of the great weight of His Cross," say Crowe and Cavalcaselle. Ruskin earlier had written: "This design is one of great nobleness and solemnity in the

isolation of the principal figure, and removal of all motives of interest depending on accessories. . . . All appeal for sympathy through physical suffering is disdained. Christ is not represented as borne down by the weight of the Cross, nor as urged forward by the impatience of the executioners." The student of Giotto finds himself harassed at every turn by contrary utterances of this kind from high authorities. Giotto's work is, in fact, too thoughtful to be easily summed up, and the probability is that two critics, who flatly contradict one another about it, are both recognising a part of the truth, and mistaking it for the whole. The inaccuracies of Ruskin's statement here are obvious. The Virgin, her features petrified by grief, is savagely thrust back by a soldier; in front of her walks an insolent, burly man with hammer in his hand; a staff and arm outstretched immediately behind Christ are ready to urge him forward; and of the two thieves, who head the procession (judged by their bare feet and tattered dress), one turns back with fist clenched to strike. It is therefore ridiculous to say, literally, that all motives of interest depending on accessories are removed. Christ's weariness, too, is unmistakable. Yet to insist upon connecting his weariness solely and directly with the material weight of the Cross, argues a more unpardonable blindness.\* Ruskin, in spite of obvious errors, seizes the deeper truth. "The thing to be shown—the unspeakable mystery—is the simple fact,

\* The action of figures handling heavy objects in frescoes 8 and 29 should be contrasted.

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the bearing of the Cross by the Redeemer." He errs only in supposing that, because the great thing is shown, Giotto can neglect the things that are less. It is because the central motive is conceived with passionate intensity, because the artist has striven faithfully to render the exalted ideas which he associates with it, that the minor incidents, the suggestions of cruelty, pain, and horror, though he is too manly to suppress them, fall into their proper place and fade away.

### 34. THE CRUCIFIXION.

This fresco has suffered so severely that it is wholly impossible now to judge what effect it may originally have created. The foreground figures are more spoiled by retouching than any in the chapel, and the body of Christ has lost the delicate gradations of tone by which its form was defined. The wooden stiffness of the Magdalen's arm cannot fail to attract attention; she wipes the feet of Christ with a lock of hair, not springing from her head, and of a different colour from the ringlets upon her back. The comparison between this representation and that in the Lower Church at Assisi (one of the series believed by the author to be the work of a disciple) involves almost inextricable complications. The *Crucifixion* at Assisi is comparatively well preserved, and the subject of Christ upon the Cross was one that painters were so often called upon to undertake, and one Giotto's rendering of which had gained so wide a reputation, that it is not surprising to find a member of the

school, however famous, frankly borrowing his conception, and even giving the form an outline barely to be distinguished from his. Yet it is difficult to understand how the fresco has come to be placed, as placed it has been by the authority of learned critics, among Giotto's greatest masterpieces ; still less, how its " composition " should have been singled out for special praise. The Janus-like group to the right of the Cross has nothing to recommend it, and is distracting in effect. The company of priests beyond turn their backs upon the scene in a way which destroys their connection with it. The three figures in single file upon the left, whose attitudes, derived directly from Giotto, express grief in a *crescendo* give undue prominence to a phase of emotion not vitally related to the central theme. Without doubt, the painting is more carefully and more pleasantly balanced in the distribution of masses than Giotto's at Padua, and particularly of the masses in the foreground ; a greater sense of space is also secured. Giotto's foreground, in its present condition, is clumsy in effect, and its purpose (confined strictly to traditional and historical associations) so different from that which appears at Assisi, that comparison is impracticable. But the upper parts of the two paintings present the same idea, and their distribution is almost identical. Here it will at once be observed that in the treatment of the flying angels Giotto's superior power asserts itself beyond dispute. Compare first the corner pairs ; at Assisi they turn their backs with an effect that is childish ; at Padua they stoop majestically

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towards the centre. The pair below them are not less noble; at Assisi, the attempt to give poise and movement is futile as before, and both have a grievous gesture, derived from Giotto's *Pieth* at Padua, but not of a kind to bear symmetrical presentation. The ultimate test is reached in the angel, who, at Christ's right hand, holds a vessel to receive the blood from his side. In Giotto's work, he fulfils his task with face averted, and this thought is repeated by the disciple; in both, the features are distorted through the artists' inability to give a right rendering of grief; but the angel at Assisi holds the sacred vessel in one hand, in order that he may be able with the other to emphasise the expression of his feeling. This is a vulgar falsity, to which Giotto's work presents no parallel.

The head of Christ in the Paduan *Crucifixion* is well preserved, and of very great beauty.

### 35. THE ENTOMBMENT, OR PIETA.

"In the *Pieta*," say Crowe and Cavalcaselle, "Giotto not only produced one of the finest arrangements in the chapel, but one almost equal to the best composition that he ever created": and again, "a composition, the balance and distribution of which are perfect." This is high praise, but it leaves the question of the artistic quality of the work—in the full sense of these words—wholly untouched. This balanced distribution is worthless except as means to an end, unless through it the painting conveys an impression worthy of its theme.

Giotto felt himself bound in this fresco to show the grief of Christ's friends and followers at its height—and in a moment of extremest tensivity. Perhaps the task is one which passes the limits of the painter's art: it certainly presented to Giotto a problem which he was unable fully to solve. The agitation of gesture in certain figures, the inexpressive disfigurement of feature in others, draw attention away from those passages in the picture that are truest and most deeply felt: and these again can hardly now be appreciated, because of their immediate relation to the undraped figure, which Giotto did not understand how to treat. This applies above all to the action of Mary, the great tenderness of which is disguised by the faulty drawing of Christ's shoulders, as they rest upon her knee. Two seated figures, who support the head and body, their backs turned to the spectator, are perhaps the most expressive, but Joseph of Arimathea and Nathaniel (?), who stand in a contained and silent sorrow at the feet, are also very noble. Ten angels in the air, hardly inferior to those of the *Crucifixion* in the grandeur of their flight, express a frenzy of despair in varied attitudes, not conceived throughout with Giotto's usual delicacy of understanding.

This fresco is preceded, in the decorative framework, by *Jonah swallowed by the Whale*.

### 36. THE RESURRECTION.

Preceded by medallion representing a lioness guarding her cubs at the mouth of a cave.







Photo, Alinari]

## THE RESURRECTION

[Arena Chapel

To face p. 145

## THE ARENA CHAPEL AT PADUA 145

This fresco, like *The Raising of Lazarus*, bears a close resemblance to one of the paintings in the Maddalena Cappella at Assisi, the decoration of which modern critics tend more and more to regard as an early work of Giotto; and, again, as in his comparison of the two *Lazarus* frescoes, Mr. Fry, while emphasising the superiority of the scene as treated at Padua, finds in the version at Assisi the "intensity of the first inspiration." "The movement of the Christ is modified at Padua," says Mr. Fry, "so as to tone down the impression of flight: the leg is not brought so far forward, the body is less bent away, the action of the hand is more authoritative and less deprecatory, and the same effect is given by the condescending and pitiful inclination of the head." But is the impression of flight, which Mr. Fry derives from the fresco at Assisi, evidence of the artist's inspiration at all? Does not the very notion of Christ fleeing from the Magdalen testify to an almost monstrous perversity? Mr. Fry himself seems to think so: "almost too vividly does he seem to be edging round the corner of the rock to escape the Magdalen's outstretched hands." The conception at Padua is, of course, wholly different; in his left hand Christ carries the Resurrection banner, inscribed *Victor mortis*, which pictorial tradition associated with this scene; in his whole posture, there is the air of quiet conquest, devoid of elation because victory was never doubted; and as victor he makes a slow and stately progress, from which the Magdalen's petition may not divert him: he turns partly round to answer her, but without stopping on his way, and though

there is the fullest sympathy in his expression, there is neither shrinking nor hesitation in the outstretched arm. The only vegetation in the last fresco was a tree stripped of its leaves, but now, as Christ walks, the plants spring to life under his feet. The meaning of Giotto's conception was lost upon his follower, and his attempt to repeat it at Assisi is hardly less than a caricature. He brings the right leg not forward, but across; and so, even if he meant to convey flight, he has not succeeded, but has placed the figure in a position which makes forward movement impossible. A spur of rock is brought into the foreground in front of Christ: he is not therefore edging round it, but shrinking into it. The face is pitifully weak. To enter into further details of comparison will not be necessary; but it is interesting to note that the rocky background closely agrees in spirit with that used in the *Lazarus* at Assisi : the artist devotes much attention to it, and introduces a ravine to separate Christ from the tomb. Giotto, as before, sets his principal figure in relief against the sky.

The presence of the sleeping soldiers in the Paduan design, though they give it an added value, as Mr. Fry points out, cannot be taken as an argument in either direction. In the Paduan series, where the life of Christ is the centre of interest, they add an important link to the chain of events. But they do not belong in a similar degree to the life of the Magdalen, and were rightly omitted by the artist who painted her chapel at Assisi.



*Photo, Anderson]*

**THE RESURRECTION**  
*(School of Giotto)*

*{Assisi. Lower Church*

*To face p. 146*







THE ASCENSION

*[Arena Chapel]*

*To face p. 147*



## THE ARENA CHAPEL AT PADUA 147

### 37. THE ASCENSION.

Preceded in the decorative framework by *Elijah in the Chariot of Fire*.

The figure of Christ Ascending is perhaps the noblest and most beautiful of all Giotto's creations.\* Even critics whose primary interest in painting is with its representation of material appearances, admit that the impression of upward movement is wonderfully conveyed, and look to the fresco as a masterpiece on that account alone. It is more important to call attention to the calm and radiant buoyancy of spirit, without which the effect they prize would be of little value. To left and right of Christ rise with him the Old Testament saints and patriarchs, whom he has redeemed from bondage by the descent into hell. The treatment of these groups is very interesting. The intensity of their joyous aspiration not only appears in their action and their features, but is given also by the repetition of one gesture throughout; and their close pressure, the very shortness of the arms, contribute, with a peculiar pathos, to the same effect: in welcoming their deliverer, they testify indirectly to the weight of bondage from which they have been set free. The patriarchs in the upper row on the left seem to be conducted by angels; but the figures of women in the lower row,

\* His gesture seems to have a symbolical meaning, being clearly in accordance with the Catholic tradition, which regards the risen Christ as intercessor—the "high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedek,"

though winged, have an expectancy on their faces which can only be human. It is needless to dilate on the value of the opposition offered by their serried ranks and dwarf proportions to the majestic and solitary figure of Christ.

The foreground figures are less engaging and have been damaged; but here again Giotto counts upon unison in action to produce a spiritual effect, and enforces it by contrast in the figure of Mary, who, alone undazed by the brightness of the light, is in direct communion with Christ as he ascends, the disciples being reverential in the face of a mystery beyond their understanding. Ruskin aptly remarks that much of the fresco's power "depends on the continuity of line obtained by the half-floating figures of the two warning angels."

### 38. THE DESCENT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

Preceded by *Moses receiving the Tables of the Law*.

The arrangement of this fresco is curiously similar to that of the *Last Supper*: in both cases our first impression is apt to be, that a ring of seated figures is all that the artist has represented; and perhaps it is only when the two paintings are compared with one another that the expressiveness of each can be fully realised by the modern observer. The peace and quietness, which are generally spoken of as the chief characteristics of this scene, will then be found to be foreign, at least to the artist's intentions; the one company sat hushed in

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an unbroken sorrowful solemnity, the other is roused to agitation by amazement and joy.

The Gothic arch is here used conspicuously, and for the first time in the Paduan series,\* to symbolise the Christian Church.

### THE LAST JUDGMENT.

The accompanying reproduction of the Virgin and her attendant angels is better calculated to impress the reader with a sense of the majestic grandeur, in which this colossal fresco is conceived, than any map in miniature of the entire design. The very figures seem transformed, their proportions ampler and more stately, and their dignity increased by the large rhythmic sweep of their splendid draperies. The same qualities are abundantly evident in the composition as a whole. It is treated according to the traditional pattern, Christ seated in the centre in a glory, with legions of warrior-angels floating behind and above him in the air, and the twelve apostles in thrones upon a dais to the left and right; below them, on the one side, flames descending from the judgment seat, and the wicked tossed to their destruction and tortured by the arch-fiend himself; on the other, the righteous in close ranks, conducted by angels, with Mary at their head, moving upwards, in adoration, towards the throne. Immediately below Christ is seen his Cross, the transverse beam supported

\* Except, in subdued form, for the domestic architecture of the Virgin's house.

by two angels, the lower end in the arms of a little child. Close by, three angels receive from Enrico Scrovegni a model of the chapel he has founded, and in the immediate foreground souls are seen rising from their graves in the form of naked infants. The fresco has suffered severely, only sufficient vestige remaining of the group of patriarchs on the left, to show that it included some of the noblest figures in the chapel. Its effect, as a whole, is seriously impaired by the want of relation which necessarily obtains between the spaces representing hell and heaven, and this, with the damages already alluded to, is apt to leave, at the present time, a general impression of patchiness, most lamentably at variance with the artist's original purpose. There is little doubt that Giotto devoted great attention to securing amplitude and depth of space—an effect not dreamed of till his day—and that to some extent, as even now appears, he succeeded in his attempt.

The fresco, which occupies the space above the triumphal arch, loses a great part of its effect through the effacement of the central figure, which probably represented the first person of the Trinity. But the disposition of the angelic choirs is as impressive as it is original. Close to the throne on either hand is an attendant angel, one pressing forward to receive a command, while the other stands and waits with a serene immobility, Miltonic in its grandeur. Behind, at the distance claimed by deference to Heaven's ruler, stand on each side thirteen angels in balanced groups, forming a

## THE ARENA CHAPEL AT PADUA 151

pattern less intricate, yet treated similarly to that seen in the *S. Francis in Glory* of the Lower Church at Assisi ; but the effect here is more sublime. Though some of the angels bear instruments of music, their attention is concentrated upon the throne. It is not generally supposed that this fresco is directly connected in subject with the story set forth on the walls below. Crowe and Cavalcaselle speak of it as *The Saviour in Glory, Guarded by Angels*, and, viewing it merely as a decorative work, bestow high praise upon it. But it would be unlike Giotto to fill a space which, in Ruskin's phrase, " leads the whole system of the decoration of the chapel," with a mere design unrelated to the general theme. It is impossible not to believe that this is a preliminary scene in heaven, that it is Gabriel who, on the right of the throne, inclines to listen to the divine bidding, and that the message delivered to him is that of which the fulfilment is shown in the paintings on the walls. This explains the awe and expectant interest which appear in the faces and bearing of the angel choirs.

The angles of the lunette are occupied by two pairs of cherubs, who stand behind and apart from the angels, blowing short trumpets and double pipes.

### THE VIRTUES AND VICES.

These, which are probably the most celebrated of Giotto's works, are sculpturesque in manner, and, as suggested already, treated as a kind of predella piece to the main design. The Virtues, seven in number, are

on the same side of the chapel as *The Paradise*, and in most cases turn towards it. The corresponding Vices, on the other side of the chapel, look to hell. The figures are all in dead colour, and Giotto has been at pains to give them an appearance of relief: in every case the background consists of a rectangular framework, and this is imagined as enclosing a slab of marble, not always of the same colour, but generally suggesting a smooth stone of dull purple hue. The paler figures stand out against this effectively, and the subtle curvature of their outline is emphasised by its relation to the vertical sides of the frame.

#### PRUDENCE AND FOLLY.

The order, in which the figures are arranged, seems to have been determined by Giotto with characteristic thoughtfulness. If, as all critics have supposed, their relation to the fresco of *The Last Judgment* is purposeful, it is natural to look to the far end of the chapel for the beginning of the series : and this is undoubtedly found there in the figures of Prudence and Folly. Ruskin complains that Giotto, like all designers, lays insufficient stress on the quality of foresight in prudence. This, as will be seen, is probably a hasty verdict: and the very fact that Prudence is taken first of the Virtues and as their foundation, involves the recognition in her of the discerning quality of mind, which anticipates and provides against the occasions that put character to the test, and foresees the consequences of virtue and of vice.

## THE ARENA CHAPEL AT PADUA 153

Giotto represents her seated at a desk, with measuring compasses in her right hand, and a book open before her upon a stand. But, unoccupied with either of these, she is intently gazing into a convex mirror which she holds up in her left hand. The object of the symbol, clearly, is to suggest the comprehensive vision, which can focus a large experience upon all that comes before it; and the twofold nature of this experience is further insisted upon in the satyr-face which, with curious effect, is substituted for the back of the head. All the accessories, including even the decorative metal work of the chair in which Prudence is seated, are of the severest description, and the right lines of her desk, with its plain rectangular panelling, are almost the most prominent part of the design. The meaning of this is quickly realised from the contrast offered by the figure of Folly, which aptly introduces the series of sequent vices. With a cap of feathers upon his head, bells upon the belt which rings his protruding stomach, and a coat terminating in the shape of a cock's tail, he is dominated by a self-confidence as senseless as it is supreme, and, in an idiot's elation, expects to subdue the world with a club he has not yet learned to hold. A comparison of this figure with the culmination of the Vices, in Despair, shows the true intention of the deliberate and almost rigid continence which governed the conception of Prudence, not finally understood until seen in connection with the soaring form of Hope.

## FORTITUDE AND INCONSTANCY.

Allegorical representation—the personification of abstract qualities in human or other typical form—becomes artistic, in the true sense of the word, according to the degree in which the quality to be expressed is not suggested or hinted at merely, but appears as the immediate effect of the design, and proclaims itself as inherent in and essential to the form as represented. Accessories and accoutrements may be of value in guiding the mind to the central idea, and may often awaken associations of the most far-reaching kind, but if the realisation of the central idea itself is incomplete, no combination of accessories, however ingenious, can produce a genuine work of art. The equipment of Giotto's *Fortitude* could hardly be made more suggestive than he has made it. A lion-skin is tied by the paws about her waist and shoulders, and the jaw rests as helmet upon her head; her tower-like shield presents a lion rampant to the foe whose arrows and javelins it has already shattered; heavily coated with steel and leather, she stands on the watch, with weapon prepared to strike. Yet fortitude is not the effect conveyed: the face is of a brutal type, and the form so large and coarse as to command horror rather than respect. This seems the figure of one for whom danger can have no meaning, rather than of one who estimates it at its true worth. Yet Giotto's intention becomes clearer after consideration of the vice he







*Photo, Alinari]*

TEMPERANCE

*[Arena Chapel*

*To face p. 155*

## THE ARENA CHAPEL AT PADUA 155

opposes to Fortitude, which is not Fear or Cowardice, but Inconstancy. He pictures her in the attempt to balance herself upon a wheel that rolls down a slope paved with smooth marble; a part of her dress is caught up by the wind into the likeness of a second wheel behind her head; she throws one arm up, the other down, in a futile effort to gain the equilibrium; her limbs are limp, and the expression of her face vacant. This is clearly the image of one who is at the mercy of every breath of circumstance, whereas Fortitude stands rooted to earth with a rock-like resolution.

### TEMPERANCE AND WRATH.

Giotto is not content to follow the custom of his time and suggest a Temperance opposed only to Gluttony, bearing a pitcher of water in her hand: his conception, as Ruskin points out, is far nearer to the Greek *aruHppoaavn*, moderator of all the passions. He uses a delicate and complex symbolism to enforce this idea. A bit in the mouth of Temperance is attached by a cord to her ears, and connects again with a plate upon her forehead. This points clearly to the "soft answer" that "turneth away wrath." She further holds a sheathed sword in her left hand, and with the right deliberately secures it in the scabbard with a leathern strap. These are interesting and original ideas, and they are used in noble subordination to a wider and subtler rendering of the virtue in its essence. The gentle inclination of the figure, her slow measured action, her upright sword, the

ordered and beautiful disposition of her dress, combine to give the impression of perfect restraint. Perhaps Giotto intended, in representing the vice opposed to Temperance, to dwell upon its futility and ineffectiveness. These are certainly salient qualities in his figure of Wrath. With head thrown back and swollen face, she tears the raiment from her breast, her disordered hair falling in a snake-like coil behind her.

#### JUSTICE AND INJUSTICE.

In Justice a transition is effected to the more distinctively celestial virtues, and this is marked not only by the angels who execute her bidding, but also by the elaborate Gothic throne in which she sits.\* As with Injustice, the treatment is more elaborate than that of the other allegorical figures, and the virtue is clearly considered more in its effect upon the community than in its appearance in the individual. Being raised only a few feet above the floor of the chapel, the allegorical figures have suffered in several cases from wantonly inflicted injury. The band by which Despair hangs herself, the face of Envy and the claws which are her substitute for nails, have been wilfully effaced, and the same is true of the heads of two small figures on either side of Justice. But a still more surprising liberty has been taken with this fresco, in the addition of certain details, meant no doubt to explain the artistes purpose, but, in fact, sadly obscuring

\* Cf. fresco of Pentecost.





*Photo, Alinari]*

JUSTICE

*[Arena Chapel]*

*Between pages 156 & 157*



*Photo, Alinari*

INJUSTICE

*[Arena Chapel*

*Between pages 156 & 157*





## THE ARENA CHAPEL AT PADUA 157

it. Giotto clearly intended to represent Justice herself weighing the right and wrong, and assigning reward and punishment: the trays are poised in her hands, but she is herself the balance; her face has a distant look, because she is estimating the relation of the weights. The right and wrong stand level, but she understands the difference between them none the less. The representation of the idea would be far less forcible, if it were supposed that the cross-bar, and strings or chains by which it is connected with the trays in the hands of Justice, formed part of the original design. These present, further, the appearance of later additions, and involve certain obvious absurdities of a practical kind. If the cross-bar is not hanging, it is impossible to conceive of it as connected with the trays by chain or string; were the connection in a rigid material, it might be receiving support from below. If it is hanging, from what does it hang? not, as is sometimes suggested, from the iron rod that steadies the arch of the throne; for this is a foot behind the head of Justice, and the trays of the balance a foot in front of it. It is also obvious that the cross-bar is not helpfully related to the lines of the figure, the effect of which without it would be even nobler than it is now. Three scenes in a predella represent the advantages of law and order; in the centre *Music and Dancing*, and *Security in Travelling*, form an interesting comment on the social conditions of the time: which comment is continued with even greater interest in the *Injustice*. The following is Ruskin's account of the fresco, adapted from the tenth

letter of *Fors Clavigera*. "Giotto's Injustice," he says, "lived in a battlemented castle, and in a mountain country; the gate of it between rocks, and in the midst of a wood; for in Giotto's time woods were too many, and towns too few. He had talons to his fingers, like Envy, and a quadruple hook to his lance, and other ominous resemblances to the 'hooked bird,' the falcon, which both knights and ladies too much delighted in. Nevertheless, Giotto's main idea about him is clearly that he 'sits in the gate' pacifically, with a cloak thrown over his chain armour (you can just see the links of it appear at his throat) and a plain citizen's cap for a helmet, and his sword sheathed, while all robbery and violence have way in the wild places about him—he heedless."

The types of feature and expression chosen for Justice and Injustice are peculiarly suggestive when considered in mutual opposition. Both are distinguished and intellectual; but the one broad and placid, serenely meditating upon large and distant issues, the other alert and keen, watching sharply for the immediate material advantage.

#### FAITH AND INFIDELITY.

Faith is very nobly represented. She is a tall figure, but the staff in her right hand, which the Cross surmounts, is taller than she. Its end rests upon a broken idol, which Faith further spurns with her right foot. The first words of the Creed appear upon a scroll, that





*Photo, Alinari"]*

## INFIDELITY

*[Arena Chapel*

*To face p. 159*

## THE ARENA CHAPEL AT PADUA 159

is raised in her left hand, and instead of falling, seems, of its own accord, to rise as it unrolls. This heavenward tendency is a marked characteristic of the whole figure, and with the crown or mitre, which rises to a peak above her head, sets her in clear relation to the spirit, which, in church architecture, finds expression in the spire. Two angels bend from heaven to converse with her. Its key hangs at her waist. She treads upon cabalistic books, and slits in her robe are probably to be taken as signs of martyrdom.

Infidelity offers a perfect contrast. According to Ruskin and Lord Lindsay he totters upon his feet, an idea reasonable enough in itself, and repeated by later writers; but surely not the idea Giotto intended to convey. Infidelity, like Injustice, - is regarded by Giotto as a peculiarly masculine vice, with sordid self-satisfaction for its essence. He presents to the world a miniature idol of his own making, who holding in her right hand the bough of a tree (idolatry being connected with the groves) secures her worshipper with the other by a noose about his neck. His features are gross and lifeless, and his bulky earthbound figure is set in a swaggering attitude, the left hand upon the hip. The fire, which he dedicates to sacrifice, blazes before his feet. His half closed eyes are rendered blind to heavenly things by a broad-brimmed helmet, whose lappets allow no sound to reach his ears. From above bends in vain the figure of an Evangelist or Prophet, with a scroll.

## CHARITY AND ENVY.

All the allegorical figures were originally accompanied and explained by an inscription in mediaeval Latin, in rhyme. These are in most cases almost totally effaced ; but sufficient traces remain of the inscriptions under Charity and Hope to suggest the character and quality of the language employed, although the violations of sense and grammar in the lines as recorded here will show how widely they are at variance from their original.

Haec figura karitatis suae sic proprietatis gerit formam.  
Cor prolatet, in secreto Christo dat, hanc pro decreto servat  
normam.

Sed terrenae facultatis et contemptrix vanitatis coloraret (?)  
Cuncta cunctis liberali offert manu spetiali caelo caret (?)

It is interesting to find that the only disputed point connected with this fresco is solved by the inscription—whether Charity is offering her heart to Christ, or receiving a heart from him. Lord Lindsay and, in early life, Rusk in took the latter view; but Rusk in finally declared decisively in favour of the former, though without having read the inscription. A dim halo still flushes slightly on the dull purple of the background behind Charity's head, and three flames appear against it. She wears a double crown of roses, and in her right hand carries *largesse* in the form of a bowl of flowers and fruit—an apple, a broken pomegranate, barley, filberts, and roses can be clearly distinguished. Coins

## THE ARENA CHAPEL AT PADUA 161

and two purses filled with money, lying on the ground at her feet, symbolise the kind of wealth that she disdains; but the meaning of the sacks, with three rods beneath them, on which she is actually standing, is less clear. It is a misfortune that the face (owing in part to a damaged outline) is not remarkable for appropriateness of expression, so that in spite of a noble conception, little immediate sense of the virtue is conveyed. The reverse, however, is true of the opposing representation of Envy: art never found more direct and convincing expression for an abstract idea. Meredith, in a fine irony, asks

Whether Earth's great offspring by decree  
Must rot if they abjure rapacity.

Giotto pictures the vice as a patent source of rottenness without and within. The symbolism of the head should be contrasted with that of Temperance. Horns spring from the brain, but curl inwards, incapable of inflicting injury except upon their owner; the ear, that catches every breath of slander, has distended hideously ; and a snake issuing from the mouth turns and inflicts its sting between the eyes. The impression of poisonous cunning, associated with the snake, is dominant in the entire figure, and clearly repeated in the snake-like flames that rise about her feet to devour her. The right hand grasps a purse, the left, once taloned, clutches in the air at an imaginary prey.

### HOPE AND DESPAIR.

Despair brings the series of *Vices* to a magnificent

close, and the quality of self-destruction, which was marked already in the preceding fresco, finds its culmination here. The complete abandonment, the sense of dead weight in the limbs and lifeless features, are conveyed with masterly subtlety; the rod from which she hangs bends slightly under the strain. Part of the hair has fallen in a loose coil below the waist. (*Cf.* the figure of Wrath.) A fiend darts from the Inferno close at hand, and inserting an insidious claw into the tress above her temple, prepares to drag her into the abyss. The first two lines of her inscription are decipherable :

Instar cordis desperati Sathan ducta suffocati  
et gehenne sic dampnati tenet haec figura.

The inscription under Hope seems to be as follows :

Spe depicta sub figura hoc signatur quod mens pura,  
Spe fulcita non clausura terrenorum clauditur.  
Sed a Christo coronanda sursum volat sic reanda  
et in celis sublimanda fore firma redditur.

Crowe and Cavalcaselle remark that " In the costume, the drapery, the cast of the profile and dress of the hair, Giotto almost attains to the severe elegance of an antique bas-relief." This, to these critics, was the highest praise that they could give. But however just and true, it directs attention after all to what is only a secondary quality in the work. Perhaps the most pronounced characteristic of all *The Virtues* is the ordered restraint which marks their action and their attire: and if this is emphasised in the figure of Hope, the reason may be



that it was the artist's intention to distinguish her from the ineffective aspiration, which looks idly for good in the future though careless of it in the present. Yet the classic severity of the figure, suggestive as it is, is wholly subservient to a spirit little dreamed of in the earlier art. The perfect precision of handling and orderliness of design, characteristic of Greek work, are here used to express an unearthly grace and tenderness. Giotto pictures Hope winged, in the act to rise heavenwards, Christ stooping to offer her a crown. But it is not to her wings that she owes her aspiring power, so much as to the trustful serenity, which, animating her features and her limbs, springs from her visible consciousness of purposes "accomplished in repose, too great for haste, too high for rivalry." She is, and was designed to be, the fruit of the preceding virtues, and their coping-stone.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE CHAPEL OF THE BARDI

FLORENCE, once rich with chapels, altar-pieces, crucifixes of Giotto's workmanship almost innumerable, realised so little the value of the treasures entrusted to her, that a single crucifix,\* one damaged altar-piece, and two renovated chapels, are all that she now holds in memory of the greatest of her painters. The two chapels, which now claim our attention, stand side by side, to the right of the choir, in the Franciscan church of Santa Croce. Like all the old work in Santa Croce they were once heavily whitewashed. At various times during the last century the frescoes were recovered by scraping; and seeming, after that operation, hardly presentable to the modern visitor, they were copiously refreshed and restored, to such an extent that some of the subjects show now no trace of the original work. It would be difficult to determine which of the two chapels has suffered more severely: the new work in the Peruzzi chapel seems to be finer in quality, but it is not on that account to be assumed that it gives an effect closer in spirit to that which was produced by the

\* That in San Marco. Its authenticity is disputed.

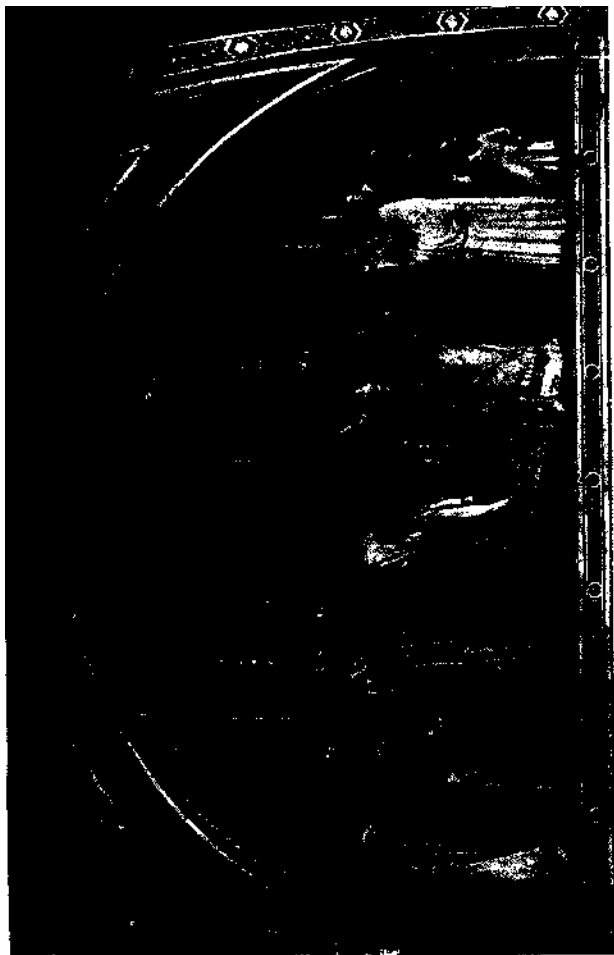
original. The better artist is not necessarily the better restorer. The restorer in the Bardi chapel erred through clumsiness and ignorance; consciously or unconsciously, the restorer of the Peruzzi threw a subtle transformation over the work he proposed to reinforce. But the chapels have been reduced to such a plight, that the impression derived from them spontaneously affords no clue to the understanding of Giotto's work.

In the Bardi chapel the life and death of S. Francis are represented in six scenes, his stigmatisation in a seventh over the arch by which the chapel is entered. All the scenes chosen had already been treated by the artist in early life in the Upper Church at Assisi: though the exact date of the decoration of the Bardi chapel is not known, the presence there of *S. Louis of Toulouse*, canonised in 1317, shows conclusively that it cannot have been painted before that year. There is thus an interval at least of twenty, perhaps of nearly thirty, years between the two undertakings; and if the condition of the frescoes were better to be trusted, the task of determining the main lines of the artist's development would be greatly simplified by the opportunities of comparison they afford. Taking them even as they are, it is of great interest to compare them. The result which has generally been reached is, that, though the principle of symmetry in design is far more carefully adhered to, and the painter's sense of the meaning of "composition" and the demands it makes upon the artist intensified, there is a corresponding loss of intensity in his realisation of the subject treated. This

conclusion has probably been reached without consideration of the wholly different conditions to which the two series are accommodated. In *The Allegories*, in *The Ciborium*, we have early work of Giotto's in which the utmost attention is paid to the claims of symmetry and order in design ; in the series of the Upper Church, where twenty-eight frescoes, each higher than it is broad, are arranged side by side, if every separate subject gave a conventional answer to the conventional test of the balance, the effect of the whole would be wearisome and absurd. In the chapel of the Bardi the frescoes are set one above another, and each takes the whole length of the wall; it therefore becomes as necessary to maintain the balance here, as in the series of the Upper Church to vary it.

The first subject, occupying the lunette of the wall nearest the chancel, is *S. Francis renouncing his Worldly Goods*. The conception of the central episode agrees so closely with that in the fresco at Assisi, that it is hard to understand how doubt can ever have been entertained as to Giotto's authorship of the more primitive work. But it will at once be observed that each of the main actors, far from having lost in dramatic force, now plays his part more truly and more passionately than before. Bernardone presses forward with an expression of far greater vindictiveness, and the bishop clasps Francis, not officially, but with a truly paternal kindness. In this scene, at least, Giotto shows the reverse of decline in the vividness of his imaginative realisation. The later rendering not only shows a





[*Santa Croce*]

*To face p. 183*

S. FRANCIS RENOUNCES HIS WORLDLY GOODS

*Photo. Alinari*

mastery of the means of expression, which cruelly emphasises the clumsiness of the earlier work, it testifies also to developed power of sympathy and insight. Yet the most striking impression derived from comparison of the two frescoes will be connected in general with the advance in pictorial treatment, in particular with the architectural setting and its relation to the figures in the foreground. The treatment, it will be observed, remains frankly conventional. As at Assisi and Padua, the figures and architecture stand on a narrow, insufficient strip of ground, and the sky background comes almost to their feet. Two storeys of a palace-fortress, in pattern closely resembling several that are still to be seen in Florence, rise to a height of not more than twelve feet above the ground. The action takes place at an angle of the building, and the perspective of its receding walls is inaccurately conveyed. Three parts of the building obviously project beyond the horizon line. Yet the amalgamation of the natural and the conventional has been so perfectly achieved, that the absurd inconsistencies just noticed attract no attention, and the general effect is of a real scene. In the earlier rendering, this sense of reality was lost, chiefly through the ineffective treatment of the architecture. Yet the principle on which it was constructed is essentially the same; in neither case does the artist trouble himself to give the buildings their true proportions; he wishes so to accommodate them to the demands of his space and his subject, that they may suggest correct associations and afford a pleasing background to the action, without

either claiming undue notice or violating the sense of reality in the spectator. But in the first case he misses, in the second he realises, his ideal.

The fresco in the opposing lunette represents the *Approval of the Rule*. Perhaps its chief value, in the condition to which it is now reduced, is the light it throws on Giotto's interest in perspective effects, and the perplexities in which they still involved him. The first impression derived from the fresco is that the face of the interior represented directly fronts the spectator. This, however, is not the case ; all is carefully accommodated to give an extended view of the left wall, where the Pope and Cardinals are enthroned ; but this left wall, instead of being set slightly in the background, as it should be if this effect is to be properly secured, is actually brought nearer than the wall which fronts it to the frame of the picture. Another point of interest in the design is that it affords perhaps the only instance in Giotto's extant work of the introduction of figures for a purely decorative end. Without the pairs of attendants, standing under low porticoes or lobbies to left and right, the composition could not have been adapted to lunette form. It is remarkable that the concession, necessary as it was, takes from the scene what little life has been left in it by time and by restorers. It remains one of the least interesting of Giotto's extant works. The ornamental bust of S. Peter finds natural place above his successor's council chamber. It was part of Giotto's constant purpose to make every accessory suggestive and significant.



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In the next fresco, representing *Hie Apparition of S. Francis at Aries*, it is clear that Giotto has found in the low rectangle which it occupies a space difficult to adapt to the requirements of the subject; equally clear, however, that he met the difficulty by contriving to give unusual depth to his design. Whether this effect of depth was adequate and apparent when the work was uninjured cannot now be said : it remains as an effect no longer, but can be inferred from an analysis of the various divisions of the architecture. This consists of a chapel divided into three parts, standing one behind the other. The low, tiled roof of the foremost is supported upon four slender pillars which rise above a wainscoting inlaid with slabs of marble, in the immediate foreground ; under this sit twelve of the brothers, eight with backs turned to the spectator. These are separated by a partition wall, pierced by three round arches, from the place where S. Anthony is preaching; the heads of five brothers more are half seen above the partition ; the central arch forms a doorway, in which S. Francis stands. A crucifix rises behind him, probably to be conceived as standing in the apse of the chapel. This crucifix is undoubtedly introduced to atone for what remains, in spite of it, a flaw in the design, immediately apparent when it is compared with the earlier version at Assisi. S. Anthony's subject was the Crucifixion, and S. Francis appeared with outstretched arms, as if crucified; at Assisi the sweep of the arms is sufficient to suggest the association required; at Santa Croce the main idea would be lost, if it were not for the crucifix in the back-

ground. The later design also suffers from the juxtaposition of Anthony and Francis, and the consequent impossibility of showing that only one of the brothers saw the apparition. It is remarkable, however, that the earlier and later characterisations of S. Anthony are identical; in either case he is a short stout man with thick-set features, and even his posture, as he preaches, is the same. This is the more deserving of notice because of what seems, at first sight, a radical change in the conception of S. Francis himself. The frescoes at Assisi, despite their ruined condition, leave upon the mind a distinct impression of Francis as an individual recognisable otherwise than by his halo. At Santa Croce this is not the case: S. Francis is represented in at least six different forms, and in one instance the restorer has given the halo and stigmata to a figure never intended for S. Francis at all. No evidence could be better calculated to show how fatally the frescoes have been disfigured, how difficult a task it has become even to infer what their original qualities can have been.

The next fresco—central on the right—represents *S. Francis before the Soldan*, and here, except in the figure of S. Francis, Giotto's work is less obscured than in any other painting in the chapel. Ruskin has seized all the main features of the conception and expounded them in the third chapter of *Mornings in Florence*. He notes in particular that, though no effect of light from the fire is aimed at, the effect of heat is conveyed by the prevalence of warm and glowing colour: that Giotto's complete understanding of drapery enables him

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to express the discomfiture of the Magi, in its different degrees, chiefly through the folds of their trains: and equally, in the person of the Soldan, to make it subservient to high nobility of character, the Soldan being, in fact, though infidel, the true hero of the scene. The monumental perfection of style which appears in this and other frescoes in the Bardi and Peruzzi chapels, and can be inferred from the design in all, shows Giotto's work to be in the final sense of the word classic; and the predominance in them of architecture, more antique than mediaeval in character, has led to the belief that their style is the result of a conscious assimilation of the principles of the earlier art, and growing predilection for its forms. The evidence, however, is hardly sufficient to justify such an inference; indeed the inference seems to rest on a somewhat superficial reading of the little evidence there is. Thus Mr. Fry remarks, that a soldier bearing the head of John the Baptist in the neighbouring chapel is dressed in classic style, and contrasts this with the mediaeval garb of the soldiers of penitence in *The Allegories* at Assisi. The change, however, is clearly not to be connected, as he connects it, with the artist's developing taste; it is easily explained by the fact that the soldiers are in one case in the service of the Church, in the other of the Roman Empire. A similar explanation is to be sought for the sparing use of Gothic design in the architectural backgrounds of these scenes. To have introduced Gothic at the Court of the Persian Soldan would have been contrary to Giotto's method of thought: it will be observed that he has

given an Oriental tone to the ornamental sculpture above the throne and over the pillars of the doors. The classic sculpture and architecture distinctively classic in the *Dance of Salome* in the Peruzzi chapel, is used with the same historic purpose; for Herod, a king subject to Roman rule, would naturally affect in his palace the style characteristic of the capital city, and indeed is known to have done so. But, further, the space of wall each fresco occupies—a low oblong—was clearly the worst possible for the accommodation of Gothic backgrounds; yet the design of the chapel necessitated the choice of it. Impartially considered, the architecture in these chapels—except, as in the *Salome*, where a classic effect is consciously aimed at—will be found to be classic in this sense only,—that in all its proportions, as well as in its relation to the action, it is perfectly fitted to the various and complicated requirements of each scene, and to the general scheme of decoration of the chapel. Every style is made use of in its place; the windows of the palace in the first scene are Gothic; so is the Pope's throne in the second; the four saints on either side of the window stand in elaborate Gothic niches. The third is the only scene where the Gothic arch might have been expected; the architecture there used will not be claimed by devotees of the classic style. In the fourth scene, Eastern associations are suggested; the Soldan's throne is classic, because, as remarked earlier, Giotto associates that style with empire. In the fifth and sixth scenes the architecture is the simplest that could be contrived, hardly more than

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a screen of wall behind the figures, and cannot be assigned to any style whatever. Similarly in regard to the more delicate question of the style of the paintings themselves: contrasted with Giotto's earliest efforts—with the scenes from the life of S. Francis in the Upper Church—contrasted even with the mature work at Padua, these scenes are felt at once to be, as it were, enveloped in a protecting atmosphere. The harsh and jarring elements in the first work, the bold, the almost startling realism characteristic of the later, seem to have disappeared; all parts are now fused and blended into a perfect whole. Whereas at Padua it was often the discordant elements, the effects of contrast which attracted first attention, and the underlying unity only gradually apprehended, the reverse is here true; the effect of harmony in the whole is so unbroken, that it can only with difficulty be realised that contrasting elements compose it. This effect, as has been already suggested, depends in part on the fact that the decorative scheme is of much narrower compass and proportionally severer in the restrictions it imposes upon the artist. But it springs also, and far more deeply, from the artist's ripening power. In the less damaged frescoes, such as the first in the chapel, or that now before us, he appears unhampered by the limits set upon his composition. He produces a scene perfectly adapted to the position to which it is assigned, and yet more truly natural than his earlier and more obviously naturalistic effects: the treatment is more penetrative, faithful still to nature, but based on a profounder understanding of her ways.

Thus the retreating Magi in the Bardi Chapel are not only far more grandly pictorial than those in the fresco at Assisi, they are also more deeply and distinctively expressive. The Sultanas royalty needs now no attendants to enforce it, but attendants are given to the Magi, because their presence adds mockery to the discomfiture of their masters. It will be observed in these attendants, that the racial character is seized with precision, and though the quiet deference that has become an instinct is uppermost in them, the one looks askance at his master, the other points with level forefinger towards his breast, a timid reflection, surely, on his master's pusillanimity. Leaving the restored S. Francis out of count, we find again in his companion that the later version is the more vivid and bold : at Assisi he is little more than a shadow to his master; here he is individualised with care; his consternation is apparent; apparent also, as Ruskin observes, that his devotion is the stronger force. But it is in the characterisation of the Soldan that the quality of this later work comes finally to the test: a certain stern fierceness of authority, such as might obviously be associated with a tyrant of barbarians, was his main feature at Assisi; Giotto shows now a new respect for the civilisation of Persia, and represents its leader as "a perfect gentleman and king," above all, as one who recognises the nature of the test to which his faith is called: that it is not an occasion for obedience in his priests, or command in him, but for witness of a kind which no force of authority can claim. He points his priests their duty with the utmost gentleness, prob-

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ably regarding their failure to accomplish it as an exposure of the persons rather than of the creed. It has been necessary to remark all this, in order to show that the harmonious effect, which, on a superficial reading, gives an appearance of sameness to these paintings, has in fact been obtained without the sacrifice of any part of that realistic force which distinguished Giotto's earlier work. The artist's grasp of his subject is wider than ever before, his feeling deeper and more intense : but he now holds all his powers in a balance so delicately constructed, that without constraint he can adjust his work precisely to every condition to be fulfilled ; and the result is a classic style, classic, not by imitation, but because it adapts itself spontaneously to the principles which all great art obeys.

The fifth fresco—representing the *Death of S. Francis*—may be said to have achieved its reputation, being regarded by all critics as the crowning miracle of Giotto's skill in design. Two subjects are combined here, which received separate treatment in the series at Assisi, and, as often before noted in Giotto's paintings, the unity of the work depends on its representation not of a chosen moment of time, but of various events that naturally associate themselves with a central theme. The peaceful solemnity of the saint's death, and his joyful anticipation of heaven, which one brother shares, are combined with a practical testimony to the truth of the miraculous stigmata and the conversion of the incredulous Jerome, described in Franciscan tradition as " a second Thomas," while two groups of the brothers, standing at the head

and the feet, conduct the burial service. As in the preceding fresco, the arrangement here is so masterly, the harmony so complete, that it is only by an effort we can realise that difficulties have been overcome, and elements of discord reconciled. The composition includes twenty-seven figures; yet there is no appearance of crowding, and Mr. Fry justly calls attention in it to "a feeling for space, which imposes,"<sup>1</sup> he says, "a new mood of placidity and repose."<sup>1</sup> This repose—placidity we can hardly term it—maintains itself in spite of the pronounced amazement, curiosity, and scepticism, which appear in the attitude and features of three brothers who form the central group.

The remaining fresco, on the opposite side of the chapel, has been so terribly defaced that even its theme has become a matter of dispute. A note in Crowe and Cavalcaselle's history (vol. ii, p. 83) explains that "after the fresco was whitewashed, a monument placed against the wall cut away the whole of one and the greater part of the other figure of S. Francis, besides one-half of the monks on the left side of the first subject. The remainder has suffered from retouching."<sup>1</sup> According to these critics the left half of the fresco represented S. Francis blessing Assisi. The blessing was given, as the reader will recollect, while Francis was being carried, shortly before his death, to the Portiuncula. It seems, therefore, almost superfluous to point out that, if any part of the original design remains, this cannot have been the subject intended by the painter.



The scene is in a room ; the haloed figure, which a restorer has taken for the saint, is in his bed. A brother, behind him, pulls back the bed-curtain and peers out from behind it. Another, in the immediate foreground, throws back both hands in the attitude which (to quote an expression elsewhere applied to it by the same critics) " had now become a favourite of the master." Yet surely they would not suppose that the attitude was appreciated for its own sake, and without reference to the state of mind producing it. Wherever it occurs, it expresses vehement surprise, an emotion which it would be monstrous to connect with the subject, as understood by them. But this surprise, as well as other details noted already, fulfils all the requirements of *The Vision of Augustinus*, narrated on a previous page, and there can be no question that this was the subject originally presented by Giotto. That Augustinus himself lacks character is not surprising, as he is undoubtedly the creation of a modern restorer. The remaining part of the design represents the saint's appearance to the Bishop of Assisi; in this portion again the character of the original is obscured, and what remains is of little interest either as picture or document.

The four Franciscan saints who stand on either side of the window in Gothic niches have been grievously injured by restoration ; yet they are not on that account undeserving of attention. It is worth noting, that not only does the treatment of such figures offer a peculiar test of a painter's power, but also that the delicacy, which must pervade the designs if they are to be faithful

to the spirit of the decoration and rightly expressive of individual character, is precisely the quality which it must be most difficult for the restorer to apprehend; and the isolation of the figures adds further to their elusiveness. It is therefore not wholly surprising to find high authorities in dispute about the degree in which these saints have been repainted. Thus the *S. Louis of France* is regarded by Crowe and Cavalcaselle as "quite new," but Ruskin says that, after careful examination, he has "found most lovely and true colour left in many parts: the crown nearly untouched: the lines of the features and hair, though all more or less reproduced, still of definite and notable character, and the junction throughout of added colour so careful that the harmony of the whole, if not delicate with its old tenderness, is at least, in its coarser way, solemn and unbroken."<sup>7</sup> It is compatible with perfect reverence for the genius of Ruskin on its positive side to recognise that his critical faculty was at times perverted by his enthusiasm, and that he could be led to speak with pronounced conviction about matters he had insufficiently examined. Yet his attention, when he gave it, was of the most piercing kind; and thus it is, that in spite of the numerous elementary errors which occur in the pages of *Mornings in Florence*, Giotto's position in history, his conception of art and his artistic achievement, have nowhere been more justly appreciated. Ruskin endorses his view of the *S. Louis* by the following description of the head: "his face gentle, resolute, glacial-pure, thin-cheeked: so sharp at the chin that the entire head is

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almost of the form of a knights shield, the hair, short on the forehead, falling on each side, in the old Greek - Etruscan curves of simplest line, to the neck. . . . He wears a crown formed by an hexagonal pyramid, beaded with pearls on the edges, and walled round, above the brow, with a vertical fortress parapet, as it were, rising into sharp-pointed spines at the angles : it is chasing of gold with pearl.<sup>1</sup> All this exists, and may be recognised by visitors to the chapel; the ideas are not those of a restorer. In the disfigured *S. Louis*, clumsy as he at first appears, the mediaeval character still asserts itself: in him a fine expression was given to the passion that purifies itself by asceticism; a certain sharpness or angularity entered as one element into the artist's conception, and this, being greatly obscured in the re-toration, has left the figure wooden and awkward in its first effect. The *S. Louis of Toulouse*, who stands in a corresponding position to the left of the window, is probably renewed also; but the simple sweeping lines of his drapery presented comparatively little difficulty, not demanding the same nicety of feeling as the short cloak of the king. *S. Elizabeth of Hungary*, who stands below King Louis, carrying roses in her lap, is too blurred and faded to be judged. The *St. Clare* is much better preserved: the poise of her head and shoulders is closely parallel to that of the *Temperance* at Padua, and the figure is no less notable for its combined severity and grace; but the face, beautiful as it is, lacks the force of individuality which gave peculiar value to that of King Louis. The four angles of the vaulting are

decorated with fields of blue, set with golden stars, and in each is a medallion, one representing *S. Francis showing the Stigmata*, the other three the Cardinal Virtues of his order. All are very much damaged; the designs were necessarily slight, and the ideas derived in each case from the allegorical scenes at Assisi.

Above the arch by which the chapel is entered, Giotto's fresco of *S. Francis receiving the Stigmata* may still be seen. It would be natural to institute comparison between this and the earlier versions of the subject as depicted in the Upper Church at Assisi and the altar-piece at the Louvre (a work, if Giotto's, of approximately the same date); but the latter now give no more than an indication of Giotto's arrangement. It is difficult to believe that the Louvre altar-piece can ever have been effective in design, and the three scenes in its predella so closely reproduce numbers 6, 7, and 15 of the Upper Church series, that it may well be questioned whether the work is rightly attributable to Giotto himself.\* In any case, the figure of the seraph is wholly modernised; the attitude of *S. Francis* seems to have been the same as that adopted in the fresco at Assisi. In the later version, though the conception, broadly considered, remains unchanged, the saint's posture is at once nobler and more natural; it is determined, as before, by the desire to visualise the actual infliction of the several wounds, to which attention is directly called by lines (originally red) joining hands and feet and side to those of the Man

\* The fact that the work is signed is evidence of about equal value with Vasari's attribution.

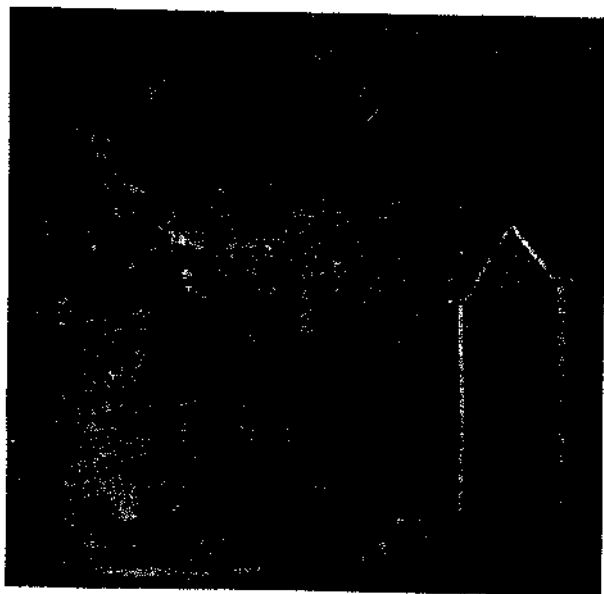


*Photo. Minari)*

S. FRANCIS RECEIVING THE STIGMATA

*[Santa Croce*

*To face p. 180*



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Crucified who appears with the seraphic vision. It would be easy to criticise such a representation as the result of a crude and materialistic attitude of mind. It might well be questioned, on the other hand, whether, more intimately considered, the subject could be adapted to pictorial treatment at all. In any case, the painter felt it his duty to reconcile the demands of high art with an unmistakable testimony to the truth of the great miracle, which was the pride of the Franciscan Order; and there is no doubt that the character of the design was largely influenced by this didactic purpose.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE PERUZZI CHAPEL

THE date of the decoration of the Peruzzi chapel is, like that of the Bardi, unknown, and hardly conjecturable except in accordance with such internal evidences as the style of the paintings affords. And here the authorities disagree. Crowe and Cavalcaselle make a curiously wild conjecture. "There is some evidence," they say? "to show that Giotto, who had been at Padua in 1306, had returned to his old abode in Florence in the following year; and if, as a local annalist affirms, Giotto made a donation to the Company of Or San Michele in 1307, we may assume that he was then in a position to begin the finest series of frescoes which he ever produced." If the frescoes show finer qualities than those of the Bardi chapel, it would be natural, in the absence of conflicting evidence, to suppose them of later date. But, unless the *S. Louis of Tmilouse* was introduced into the Bardi chapel as an afterthought—a hypothesis in itself gratuitous—that work cannot have been undertaken before the year of his canonisation, 1317. If, then, the decoration of the Peruzzi chapel shows a still further development of the artist's powers, it cannot belong to



the period represented by his Paduan work; we must assign it, at earliest, to the decade 1220-1230, and probably to the latter part of it, regarding it, in fact, as the single relic by which the standard of Giotto's mellowest achievement may be judged. Mr. Fry, in pointing out that the *Dance of Salome* was copied by the Lorenzetti at Siena in 1331, and must therefore have been finished earlier, implies that, judging the fresco only by its style, he would have been ready to believe it of even later date.

Unfortunately, the problems of restoration present themselves in the Peruzzi chapel in their most perplexing form. The student deficient in technical knowledge is apt to suppose that the degree in which an old work has been repainted is a matter upon which an expert can pronounce a final verdict. Experience, however, has convinced the present writer that such is not the case. Without himself making any claim to understanding of this difficult branch of the subject, he is forced to realise that experts differ. So far as he himself ventures to offer opinions in this connection, he offers them as opinions merely, and is unable to support them by technical observations or scientific testing of the wall-surface; they are based upon the impressions derivable from each fresco when studied as a work of art, the comparison, in this respect, of various parts of the same work, and of the work itself with those preconceptions with regard to it, undefined and yet irresistible, which form themselves in the mind after continued study of other works of the same artist or the same period.

Standing in the Peruzzi chapel, the student sees to left and right of him, in the frescoes nearest the floor, two scenes which are recognised to be among Giotto's most splendid achievements. He will not need to observe them closely, before realising that there is a remarkable disparity between the effects they produce. In the *Dance of Salome* he will see abundant traces of a quality which occurs in all the finest and best preserved passages of Giotto's work—a quality which the Academician of to-day would probably term awkwardness, but which depends, in reality, upon the constant determination in the artist to mould his forms, not according to a conventional notion of what is right or pleasant, but according to the idea he wishes them to express. To Giotto it is never the shape of the body that is primarily or intrinsically of interest, but only that shape as influenced by the thoughts and emotions of the spirit that animates it. And because this interest in the spirit, rather than in the flesh, is rare in artists, and because no laws can be given for the apprehension of the forms it is in search of, the forms it chooses are apt to appear irregular and imperfect, when judged by the material standard; they are likely to lack the complete grace which belongs to the work of men who confine their aspirations to the harmonious treatment of the external, and, owing to the infinite possibilities, the inexhaustibility of the ideal from which they proceed, to leave on the mind a sense of the effort and desire, which were working in the artist, urging him to express, if possible, even more than his method and his

medium would permit. Now there is not a figure, in the *Dance of Salome*, which does not, in one way or another, testify to the spirit I have attempted to define. In no case is it the form or action, materially viewed, that attracts primary attention, or is naturally dwelt on; it is the relation of the various actors—king, soldier, servant, guest—considered as human and alive, to the tragic event the fresco celebrates. Thus considered, the fresco is felt to be supreme; but if the figures be taken separately, and judged according to conventional standards of beauty or of artistic fitness, there is hardly one in which obvious faults may not be found. The viol-player is square and heavy, the soldier insecure upon his feet; Salome's neck is stiff, and her head unpleasantly small; the king and his guest squat at the table as if they were dependent on it for support. Other criticisms, equally true in one sense, equally irrelevant in another, might be multiplied almost without end. The fact that Giotto tends to invest his figures, considered as figures or material shapes merely, with an imposing presence and stately dignity, has led certain critics to insist that the figure as such was the centre of his interest. It was not so. And to make such a claim for Giotto is to challenge a kind of criticism which his work as a whole is not qualified to bear. The material form interests him only in so far as he can make it the vehicle of something immaterial, thought, emotion, in one word, life. This fact, gathered gradually from our whole preceding study of his works, makes itself felt infallibly in the *Dance of Salome*. In the fresco of

*The Ascension of S. John*, and, above all, in the treatment of the ascending apostle himself, the same conviction is not felt. The graceful posture of the figure, the grand disposition of the draperies, cannot be enough admired. The poise is perfect, the upward motion conveyed as happily as in *The Ascension of Padua*. Yet the effect of the whole is disappointing, for the spiritual intensity is gone.

The problem comes again to a focus in the appearance of the prostrate disciple on the right. Crowe and Cavalcaselle remark that it would be difficult to find a figure in finer or more energetic movement. This may have been true when they wrote, or may have come of a general appreciation of the fresco, misapplied; it could not be asserted now. The characteristic boldness of the artist's thought is amply illustrated by the figure, but the idea is not justified by the execution. The contours have a roundness wholly inappropriate to the action,\* and the arrangement of the drapery is unintelligible, suggesting little more than a confused indeterminate mass. Possibly we are provided here with a key to the problem engaging us, and may infer from the condition of this figure the kind of injury which the work has suffered from restoration. This injury might succinctly be described as mollification. Let us assert boldly that the central figure strikes us as almost more characteristic of Raphael than of Giotto. An infinitesimal adjustment of the leading curves, such as

\* It is possible to see or conjecture the action originally intended; the right knee was raised, the left crossed under it.

would be natural to a hand trained in the modern method, would suffice to destroy the incisive character of the original, and to explain the comparative lifelessness that has been complained of. Such an adjustment, such smoothing, rounding, or conventionalising of contours—however best described—is still more evident in *The Raising of Drusiana*, and it may there be noticed that the head of the apostle, as well as his figure, has suffered from it, and in a marked degree. Thus, though an attempt will be made later to point to certain unmistakable evidences of Giotto's developed power, which these paintings still supply, it must be premised that no painting in the chapel, except the *Dance of Salome*, can be relied on to give a true impression of his work, the characteristic and uncharacteristic being hardly distinguishable in the rest, except according to a preconceived understanding of his aim and methods.

Passing then to a consideration of the separate frescoes, it will hardly be necessary to note that the ceiling and its symbols are completely new, and the half lengths of Prophets under the arch of entrance restored in such a manner as to leave only the dimmest evidence of the variety and beauty of Giotto's imaginations in such-like details. The fresco in the lunette of the wall nearest the choir, representing the *Annunciation of the Birth of John the Baptist*, is also in deplorable condition. Crowe and Cavalcaselle speak of it with unusual enthusiasm : "None of Giotto's wall paintings," they say, "is more perfect as a composition : . . . Zacharias stands on the steps of the altar waving a censer, with two lute players

and a piper behind him, when suddenly he draws back at the sight of the angel who appears under the altar-porch and gives him the news. Two women behind the angel witness the scene." It is characteristic of modern criticism that it can bestow its highest praise on a composition of which it assumes that a principal group is blocked in with lay figures. Dr. Thode explains the fresco in the same way: "Zwei Frauen in miichtig drapierten Gewiindern rahmen die Scene ein." Our previous study of Giotto makes it impossible for us easily to admit that these women are spectators merely, particularly as it is abundantly clear from the Gospel narrative that the ceremony of the burning of incense was *one* in which the body of worshippers did not participate. And even if we should suppose that so grave an error might have occurred through oversight, we must allow that Giotto, though not a naturalist, knew the leading distinction between the ways of man and snail. If, therefore, these women appear with their house by the step of the altar, we are not to argue that they have brought it with them, but that in effect, according to the artist's conception, they are not at church, but at home. It does not, indeed, require a very close acquaintance with the architecture used in paintings of this date to perceive that in the fresco before us two kinds are used, and that the portion on the right is distinctly domestic in design. If the two buildings are considered as one, it will at once be felt that they are very ill composed. Their disjointed appearance is the first thing in the fresco to catch the

eye, and would be intolerable unless a reasonable explanation could be found for it. Taddeo Gaddi has employed a porch similar to that under which the two women stand in his fresco of *The Adoration* in the Baroncelli chapel, and the house presents a clear parallel to that used, also in *The Adoration*, by the author of the *Life of Christ* in the transept of the Lower Church at Assisi. This building, then, is undoubtedly a house, and it can hardly be other than the house of Zacharias. The character of the two women is so far preserved that their difference of age is apparent: the elder is dejected ; the younger appears to comfort her, and raises her hand, as if to direct her attention to the angelic apparition. Is it not reasonable to conjecture that the artist here portrays Elizabeth, as " in the days before the Lord looked on her, to take away her reproach among men ? " It would be a bold employment of poetic licence to imagine her sharing, even indirectly as she does, the news of the angelic visitation ; yet the appropriateness of her presence in the fresco is obvious. Without her the situation would be incompletely given, and the very cause of the angel's presence unexplained. That she lacks the halo cannot be received as an argument against her identity, in view of the state to which these frescoes have been reduced.

The next fresco, also in two parts, represents the *Birth and Christening' of the Baptist*, This again has been fatally damaged; and it is peculiarly unfortunate in connection with the theory just propounded, that the head of Elizabeth (as Crowe and Cavalcaselle

remark) is new, so that no possibility remains of judging the intention in the previous fresco by a comparison of features. The two parts of the scene are represented as occurring in two rooms separated by a wall, but connected by an open door. They are not conceived as synchronous, for one figure at least may be recognised in both. In the section showing the *Nativity*, the two attendants behind the bed seem closest in spirit to the original work, the effect of both the other figures having been destroyed, though we can still realise that the attitude of Elizabeth was noble, and studied with peculiar care. Though the head is repainted, it may perhaps be assumed that the restorer was working on a basis sufficient to acquaint him in a vague way with Giotto's purpose. The eyes are turned to the (now) over-bulky figure of a woman,\* who stands at the foot of the bed, and raises her hand in a manner to which no meaning can be attached; yet it may be remarked that the gesture attracts kindly notice from one of the attendants. It is strange—perhaps unparalleled—in a *Nativity*, to find no attention paid to the subject on which all turns, the child itself: it is presumable, if the baby was ever part of the picture, that he should be looked for at the point towards which the eyes of his mother and his nurse are turned. The woman's gesture, upon which they meet, lends itself to

\* Crowe and Cavalcaselle take the figure for a man. It may be well to quote their description in full. \*\* S. Elizabeth on her bed (head repainted) hardly attends to the question of a maid, near whom another maid, with a vase in her hand, looks at a grand figure with his back to the spectator."

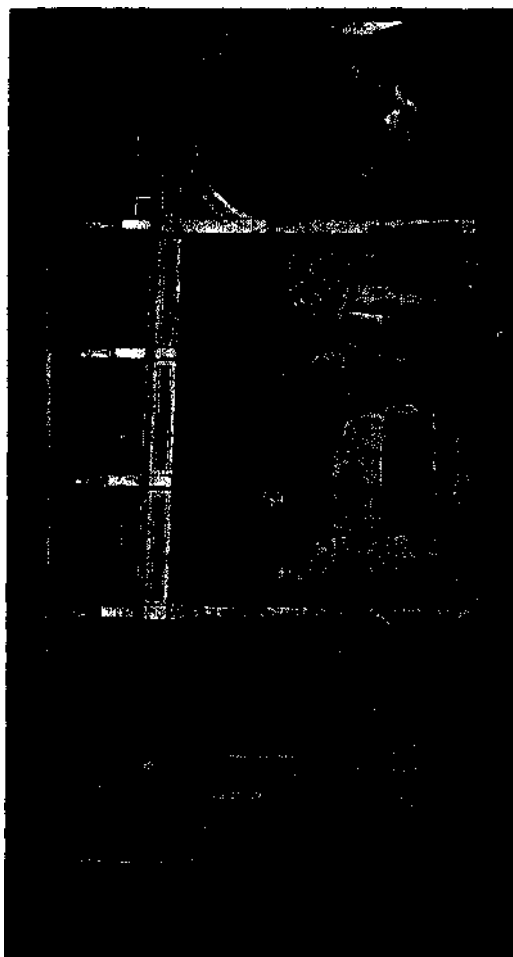


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the idea that the child was once upon her arm, and is thereby not only itself explained but gives a new meaning to the whole scene. The section which represents the *Christening* much better preserves the spirit of the original, and here it can be seen that the mute decision of Zacharias, the surprise, the protests of the neighbours, were perfectly rendered. Special attention must be called to the fascinating action of the child, his hand raised partly no doubt with the idea of blessing; it appears that Giotto has at last succeeded in the delineation of infant form. The figure of Zacharias, and particularly the head, has been damaged, but without losing the effect originally intended: a closely similar pose is given to it in the relief upon the bronze door of the Baptistery. Giotto must not be held responsible for the character of the woman nearest the door.

Much has been said already about the third and lowest fresco, but it will be necessary to give some further attention to its details. Like its companions it boldly violates the "unities of space and time." On the extreme left, a tower, the design of which has called forth much admiration, represents the prison where the Baptist has been confined; its door takes the form of a grating: to this the king's banqueting-hall is adjacent, carefully studied in classic form, and ornamented with sculpture in imitation of the antique; a door-way, with round arch, connects it, on the further side, with the queen's boudoir. These discrepant elements are **combined with so much skill and in such pleasing proportions,**

that the unguarded spectator fails to realise the artist's achievement and accepts what is before him as a piece of natural realism. Vasari makes a noteworthy comment upon this picture: he describes it as "a very life-like representation of the dancing of Herodias, and of the promptitude with which some servants are performing the service of the table." The inaccuracy of this statement is obvious—Mr. Fry justly claims that the artist did not even intend to represent Salome as in motion—but it is interesting, and particularly the second part of it, because it reveals Vasari's preconception as to the character of Giotto's work ; and because that preconception, though the result in him of a very superficial study of the artist, is apt even now to pass to others under his authority, and, mistaken as it is, represents a way of thinking into which a careless observer is still liable to fall. Indeed, Vasari must to some extent be excused for his error, since the same misunderstanding makes its appearance repeatedly in the works of the less intelligent of Giotto's followers, who believed they were faithful to their master in using a serious subject as a means to the display of a realistic study of irrelevant or commonplace action. Now in this case Vasari, so far as his remark points only to the presence of the servants and the lifelike treatment of them, has hit upon a trait characteristic of Giotto's work. But his description of their action, shows how completely he misunderstood the artist's aim. His impression had been, that here was a man with a queer predilection for common things, and a habit, witty as





## THE PERUZZI CHAPEL

he thought it, of inserting them in high places: he remembered babies sucking their thumbs, angels tearing their hair, disciples holding their noses ; all of which struck him as bold and bad, but enjoyable enough, (if we must paint sacred things,) and much to be commended. At Herod's feast, when the Baptists head is brought in, such an artist, he thinks, will naturally think a great deal of how the servants manipulate their dishes. The servants indeed are there, and conspicuous too, one with a napkin about his neck, both standing in the doorway of the queen's boudoir, and useful to the design in filling it. But what is really remarkable about them is that they have wholly forgotten their position ; their conduct, if we give it a detached consideration, is unseemly; they are clearly unaware that they are servants and in the presence of the king. But the cause of their forgetfulness is the appearance of the executioner and what he brings. They draw together, as would be natural in people of their class in the presence of an object that they felt uncanny; and in the face of the foremost is something more than this, something that approaches a recognition of the deeper meaning of what he sees.

It would be a pity to leave the fresco without quoting Buskin's well-considered words as to its colour and condition: he takes it as a type of " what good fresco painting is,—how quiet—how delicately clear—how little coarsely or vulgarly attractive—how capable of the most tender light and shade, and of the most exquisite and enduring colour. In this latter respect," he says, " this

fresco stands almost alone among the works of Giotto, the striped curtain behind the table being wrought with a variety and fantasy of playing colour which Paul Veronese could not better at his best."\*

The frescoes on the opposing wall give scenes from the life of S. John the Evangelist, that in the lunette being devoted to the *Apocalyptic Vision*. This work still retains certain elements of former beauty, particularly in the apostle's expression of peaceful, happy contemplation, but it has suffered too much from restoration to be securely judged. The principal incidents depicted will at once be recognised, and the reader may be referred, for an account of them, to the twelfth and fourteenth chapters of the Revelation.

The *Raising of Drusiana* which occupies the central space, is perhaps the most remarkable instance in Giotto's work of that power of reconciling apparently conflicting claims, of which he has appeared already and in numberless ways so great a master. It has been shown above that Giotto's treatment of architecture and of landscape is frankly conventional. Deliberately he asks no more from either than that they shall form a suggestive and harmonious background to the human action; it is on this he chooses to concentrate his interest. Indeed, art can only be effective, when it is willing thus to accept restrictions, or voluntarily to impose them: it depends for its power upon the choice of a single purpose, and the elimination of all that does not directly contribute to the fulfilment of that purpose.

\* "Mornings in Florence," p. 81, note.



*Photo, Aianari]*

# THE RAISING OF DRUSIAXA

*[Sa?ita Croce*

*To face p. 194*





Now it is usual, in estimating the achievement of Giotto, to assume that the conventionalities of his pictorial treatment were part and parcel of his ignorance, that indeed nothing better was to be expected of him considering the primitive condition of science in his times. And of course it is obvious from the *Vision of S. John* in this chapel, and the *Stigmatisation of S. Francis* just outside it, that he was unable, even at the height of his power, to give a realistic appearance to a natural scene. Yet it would be dangerous to assert of Giotto that he erred through ignorance or incompetence. The limitation, in part at least, was self-imposed. I have attempted in another place to show that in spite of the extraordinary development which appears in his treatment of architectural accessories, his conception of their meaning and value remained permanently unaltered. The same was the case with his idea of landscape. To reproduce the complicated forms of actual landscape was wholly foreign to the purpose of an art whose theme was man: the problem confronting it was to find for landscape as for architecture a method of representation which the mind might accept as an adequate suggestion of the truth. And here Giotto, though he made great progress, failed: *S. John on Patmos* shows a wonderful\* advance on the *Baptism of Christ* at Padua; in the *Meeting of Joachim and his Shepherds* the landscape contours are of considerable beauty, and violate our sense of natural form far less than any of such backgrounds in the artist's work at Assisi or at Rome. Yet, to the end, landscape continued to offer problems which

he was unable to solve. With architecture such was not the case: and of this statement the *Raising of Drusiana* may be regarded as an adequate proof. Here the architecture is, in one sense, no more than a screen to set off the action ; its towers and domes are used to echo and enforce the two main groups into which the figures are divided ; yet with this the city gate and wall are clearly given, and the church is of a form that suggests associations with the East. The procession is on its way to the sepulchre, and has left the town. This simple screen of buildings is thus composed of details, every one of which is purposeful; but, what is more, in spite of its simplicity, we accept it as a faithful copy of reality. " Here,"<sup>1</sup> says Mr. Fry, " the figures all have their just proportions to one another and to the buildings, and to the town wall which stretches behind them. The scene is imagined, not merely according to the conditions of the dramatic idea, but according to the possibilities and limitations of actual figures moving in a three-dimensional space; even the perspective of the ground is understood." Such is actually the effect produced ; and yet if we were required to compute the real height of the various buildings, and their distance from the figures, we should find ourselves involved in inextricable difficulties. Their relation to actuality is a delusion ; these are phantom towers, and we are mocked by the magic of a master hand.

With regard to the principal theme, it must be repeated that the spirit of the artist presents itself under a veil, which robs it of a great part of its clear-





*Photo\<Alinari\*

THE ASCENSION OF S. JOHN

*[Santa Croce*

*To face p. 197*

ness and vigour.\* It may be seen, even in the reproduction, that the left hand of Drusiana has been supplied by a restorer on a patch of fresh plaster, and it is unlikely, as Crowe and Cavalcaselle remark, that the gesture he has devised is faithful to Giotto's original intention. But despite this definite flaw—happily of insignificant dimensions—and other indefinite and yet more disastrous modifications, the clearness of the narrative, the magnificence of the figures, the grandeur of the grouping assert themselves incontestably still.

Of the *Ascension of S. John* there remains little further to be said. It was clearly Giotto's intention to represent S. John received into heaven by Christ and the apostles of whom he had been the sole survivor; the features of Peter may be recognised in the figure at Christ's left hand, though grievously obscured by restoration. It would appear that the apostle's friends were come to conduct the last offices at the tomb, when he was caught up out of their sight. Giotto tells the story with characteristic boldness; uses all his power in portrayal of the main event, and, for the rest, with large-hearted fidelity and tolerance, shows its various appeal at once to the meaner and more lofty instincts of human nature. It is interesting also to note that wherever the architecture is in danger of interfering with the play of action, he has no scruple in cutting it away.

Santa Croce once contained five chapels decorated by

\* The repetition of S. John's action by his follower may be compared to the similar repetition by S. John himself of the action of Christ in the *Raising of Lazarus* at Padua.

Giotto's hand. The Bardi and Peruzzi chapels are all that *now* survive, with the exception of an isolated fresco situated on the outer arch of the Tosinghi chapel, in the north transept, and representing the *Assumption of the Virgin*. We have nothing to add to the comment passed by Crowe and Cavalcaselle upon this damaged relic, "of which," say they, "unfortunately, little that is worthy of admiration has been preserved by the restorer."

## CHAPTER VIII

### GIOTTO AS SCULPTOR AND ARCHITECT

WE saw in an earlier chapter how Giotto, at the outset of his career, at a time when he was hardly above thirty years of age, received a commission for a mosaic of the very first importance in Rome, that is, in a city, which, if it deserved any eminence in art at all, deserved it for the skill of its mosaists. We know nothing otherwise of his training and practice as a mosaist; we know only that he was preferred above every member of the native school, and for his allegorical representation of the Pope, in the person of S. Peter, acting as intermediary between Christ and the storm-tossed Church, received 2 200 florins of gold. Here we have a story, which, if not substantiated, as, happily, it is, by contemporary evidence of an indisputable kind, no modern critic would dream of crediting. He would point out in a sentence that, finding the arts of fresco and tempera as undeveloped as he did, and bringing both to the perfection in which we know him to have left them, Giotto could not possibly, in one mortal life, have found time for any other occupation. The story, he might add, was a mere fiction, characteristically Florentine, historically not

more valuable than Dante's tribute to Cimabue. But from the closing years of Giotto's life comes another story more incredible still. The art-historian Vasari, near the end of his *Life of the painter*, and after a lengthy account of his numberless commissions, and of the travels in which they involved him, suddenly without comment or introduction narrates that "after these things, in the year 1334, on the ninth day of July, he began work on the Campanile of S. Maria del Fiore, the foundations of which were laid on a surface of large stones, after the ground had been dug out to a depth of twenty braccia, the materials excavated being water and gravel. On this surface he laid eight braccia of concrete, the remaining eight braccia being filled up with masonry. In the inauguration of this work the bishop of the city took part, laying the first stone with great ceremony in the presence of all the clergy and magistrates."\* Here, surely, is "Florentinism" run riot. Here we have the design and supervision of a building, to which the world offers no match, calmly attributed to a man, of whose architectural activity nothing else is known. That a work such as the Campanile would never have been entrusted but to one proved and tried, is too obvious to be remarked. Must not the credit for it in reality belong to a man of genius fetched from some rival city—probably the despised Siena? Is it not obvious that the circumstantial details of the story, the priestly ceremonies, the gravel and water Vasari speaks of, are dust thrown in our eyes? So we should undoubtedly

\* From Mr. A. B. Hinds' translation, vol. i. p. 95, Dent.



## AS SCULPTOR AND ARCHITECT 201

believe, if it were not for the preservation of a document of state, which sets Vasari's story beyond dispute.

" Desiring that the works now in operation and those which it is fitting should be undertaken in the City of Florence on behalf of the Florentine Commune, should proceed honourably and worthily, a thing which it is wholly impossible should rightly be brought to pass, unless some man of experience and renown be set over them and appointed to be master of this kind of works : for as much as it is said that there cannot in the whole world be found one of better avail in these and in many other things than Master Giotto, son of Bondone, painter of Florence, and that he is to be received in his own country as a Great Master, and to enjoy universal repute in the city aforesaid, so that he may have means to make long sojourn therein ; and that from his sojourn many will derive advantage from his knowledge and instruction, and no little glory will accrue to the aforesaid City—to this end it is provided, established and ordained, that the Lords Priors and Standard Bearer of Justice, assisted by the twelve Boni Viri, shall have power, on behalf of the Commune of Florence to elect and depute the said Master Giotto to be Master and Governor of the building and work of the church of S. Reparata, and of the erection and completion of the walls of the city of Florence, and of the fortifications of the city itself, and of the other works of the said Commune."

Though Giotto did not live to see his Campanile completed—for it appears that the tower had hardly risen above the first storey when he died—though his design was freely modified by his successors, and changed

in an essential feature by the omission of the Gothic spire, with which he intended it to be surmounted—set aside, if we may believe Vasari, as "a German thing"—the tower has always been regarded, and rightly regarded, as his, and a proof that the audacious words, in which the decree of his appointment was couched, were no more than a just recognition of his true place among the great artists of the world.

It will no doubt have been observed that the decree spoke of Giotto as without a rival in these and "many other things": he is frankly regarded by his contemporaries as a man whose range of practical ability it is unnecessary, and indeed hardly possible, to define: whatever he touches, he touches with a hand that is supreme. Deservedly among the most famous, and happily among the best preserved of all relics of this golden period of Florentine art, are the sculptured reliefs about the base of the Campanile, representing the origin of humanity and its arts, and the growth of civilisation. Tradition has always ascribed the general conception of the series and the designs for the various subjects to Giotto himself; the sculptor Ghiberti, born hardly fifty years after Giotto's death, makes a decisive statement to a similar effect. "He was most excellent in every branch of the art, and in the art of sculpture also. The first stories \* in the building, which was built by him, of the bell tower of Santa Iteparata were chiselled and designed by his hand. In my time I have seen models by his hand of the stories mentioned most excellently designed." And at this early

\* *I.e.*, in the language of modern art-criticism •• compositions."



Photo, Alinan]

CREATION OF WOMAN  
(After Giotto)

[Cumfanile

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age, when the great arts went hand in hand, what more natural than that the man who was pre-eminent in graphic and in constructive arts, should also have explored the art in which they meet? That he, the master of design, should never in his work as architect have been impelled to leave his breath upon the lifeless stone, would indeed be barely credible. Yet the critic of to-day denies it. "It is scarcely conceivable," says Mr. Langton Douglas, "that an old man, overburdened with several vast undertakings and holding important public offices could have found time to apply himself to an art which hitherto he had not practised at all, or had at most practised but little." These are idle words. We know as much of Giotto the sculptor as of Giotto the architect; of both, nothing but the crowning achievement. As to the weight of his years and of his undertakings upon him, we are equally in the dark; we know only that his spirit is never seen to flag. His is a genius that we dare not limit by our preconceptions of what is possible to man; we can but admit in humility that what is conceivable by us falls short of what was practicable to him.

But Giotto's share in these reliefs has also been denied on less vague and intangible grounds; it has been asserted and, also by Mr. Douglas, that "style-criticism does not confirm the opinion that the models or even the designs of these reliefs were executed by Giotto":<sup>#</sup> that traces of the influence of Giotto are to

\* In the new edition of Crowe and Cavalcaselle's *History*, vol. ii. p. 117.

be found in them, but no more. It must be admitted that the use of such a word as " style-criticism " is misleading in this connection. The very critic, whom Mr. Douglas quotes to support his view, is only partially in agreement with him. Ruskin, and Crowe and Cavalcaselle themselves, think very differently. "Florentine statuary," say the latter, " here is in all its vigour, with a purely Giottesque character." After all, until the principal authorities are agreed, " style-criticism," however scientific in aspiration, must consent to be regarded as the expression of an individual point of view. Moreover, it is not an " opinion " that Mr. Douglas is required here "to confirm," it is, as we have seen, a statement of unusual clearness, proceeding from an early authority, whose evidence it is usual to regard as unimpeachable. But even if no more were necessary than to confirm or refute an opinion, it must be confessed that the problem by which style-criticism is confronted in these bas-reliefs, is of the most delicate kind imaginable. Giotto's style is known only in his paintings; what modifications a painter's style may undergo, when he applies himself to the very different conditions offered by work in stone, style-criticism has little apparatus for predicting. The manifest difference in spirit between the sculpture and painting of Orcagna, Giotto's great successor, is instructive in this respect. Unless evidence of a decisive kind had been forthcoming, the identity of sculptor and painter would certainly have been called in question. The bas-reliefs in Orsanmichele are remarkable for their softness of outline, and for the tenderness of their

## AS SCULPTOR AND ARCHITECT 205

conception; in Orcagna's painting, gravity and a grandeur that comes near to sternness are the qualities that predominate. Even in the absence of such an example, it would be reasonable to suppose that different materials would offer to the artist different facilities for self-expression; and the identity of the self expressed in either need not be expected to be obvious. It is clearly futile to argue vaguely, that, because the same combination of qualities may not at once appear in the bas-reliefs as in the frescoes, they cannot be the work of one man. No argument can be of value, which does not take into consideration every element of change in the conditions. Under these circumstances, it would manifestly be absurd to set aside lightly the evidence of so important an authority as Ghiberti : the more so, when we consider that, largely viewed, these sculptures are remarkable, not for their differences from Giotto's other work, but for their resemblance to it. This is not the place to enter into an elaborate and detailed discussion of the various subjects, or to attempt an exact estimate of the relation in which they stand to the mind or to the hand of Giotto. The designs are of uneven merit, their execution follows different methods, and is much finer in some cases than in others. The view accepted generally by modern critics is that they are the work of several sculptors, chief among them Andrea Pisano, who look to Giotto as their leader, and execute his designs.

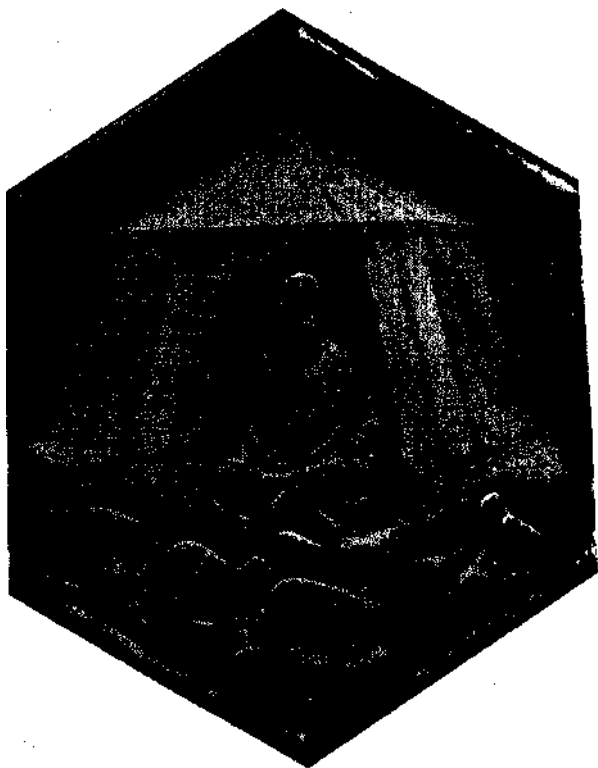
But Ghiberti, as we have seen, speaks of the "first stories " as not only designed and modelled, but actually

chiselled by Giotto ; to this statement too little attention has been paid, greater importance having been allowed to a casual remark of Vasari's, more likely to represent a vague tradition, that it was the reliefs representing *Sculpture* and *Painting*' which Giotto chose himself to execute. Yet the testimony of both may be true, and, though declining the larger issues involved in a discussion of the entire series, we can hardly do less than give each of these statements a brief consideration. And first, in regard to Ghiberti's statement, it is obviously a statement susceptible of different interpretations ; for his expression " the first stories " is indeterminate : it might refer to the whole series of bas-reliefs nearest the ground, for there is a second series in the storey above; it might, equally, refer to the first subjects of the series. To insist on a strict reading of his words is to place the first interpretation wholly out of count; for the stories he speaks of were chiselled as well as designed by Giotto, and it is indisputable that the series, as we know it, is not the work of one hand. The view, not seldom held, that all the designs and none of the chiselling are Giotto's, even if it should turn out to be just, is clearly not derivable from Ghiberti's testimony. There remains the second interpretation : and it must be noted, that in his mention of Andrea Pisano, Ghiberti corroborates this distinctly. "The greatest part," he says, " of those who were the Founders of the Arts were cut by Andrea. There is a saying that Giotto chiselled the first two stories."

In the sixth chapter of *Morning's in Florence*<sup>^</sup>







Photo, Alinari]

JABAL.

[*Campagna*]

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Ruskin examines the bas-reliefs in some detail, and though he is ignorant of Ghiberti's evidence on the subject, this very ignorance adds value to his decision. His criticism is, of course, not primarily technical: much of his interpretation is fanciful, and some of it is forced. But he makes certain observations of great importance, and of a kind to carry with them a conviction of their truth. The first six subjects, he points out, divide themselves into two sets of three. In grandeur of conception, in concentration of purpose, no distinction is to be drawn between them. All are worthy and characteristic of Giotto at his best. But there are noticeable differences in workmanship. In the second set "the drapery sweeps in broader, softer, but less true folds.\* The handling is far more delicate, exquisitely sensitive to gradation over broad surfaces, scarcely using an incision of any depth, but in outline ; studiously reserved in appliance of shadow, as a thing precious and local."" And these, he adds, are qualities which might well belong to a man who brought to stonework the experience of a painter. If, then, any of these "first stories" come directly from Giotto's hand, we should look for it not in the "first two,"<sup>1</sup> where Florentine tradition found it in Ghiberti's time, but in the fourth, fifth, and sixth subjects, together representing the arts of nomad life. The tradition to which Vasari refers in

\* What is of still more importance to note is that the drapery, if truer in the first, is treated as of greater value in itself; a concession is made to decorative ends : whereas the error in the second springs, if at all, from the sculptor's anxiety to make it directly expressive of the action of the figure.

his *Life of Luca della Robbia*, that the reliefs that represent *Painting* and *Sculpture* were also of Giotto's chiselling, is naturally of inferior value. It is of interest to know that a tradition recognising Giotto's activity as a sculptor was extant in his day; but it is easy to see that the association of it with these subjects may have been grounded in sentiment. Yet, as Ruskin in his treatment of them implies, they more nearly approach the stories of nomad life than any other in the series. But there are, as he points out, signs of haste and roughness in the execution. His supposition that this was deliberate on Giotto's part, his mode of expressing the greater reverence in which he held the shepherd and the smith, is hardly tenable : it would be more natural to suppose that Giotto left the subjects unfinished at his death, and that the coarser workmanship is from the hand which completed them.

But, perplexing as is the problem of the authenticity of these bas-reliefs, the exact determination of Giotto's share in the shaping of the tower itself is more perplexing still. Giotto's architectural style had, doubtless, its distinguishing traits, but we know nothing about them ; and though they must exist in such parts of the Campanile as follow his original design, they cannot be recognised; for they are not known to exist anywhere else. The only means to a reasonable decision would be found in a comparison of the tower as it stands with Giotto's drawing for it. In the Opera del Duomo at Siena a drawing for a bell tower is preserved, the base of which

## AS SCULPTOR AND ARCHITECT 209

corresponds closely with that of the Florentine Campanile, and which is similarly inlaid throughout with red, black, and white marbles; it is crowned, moreover, with a spire. This drawing has, on account of the coincidences noted, been claimed as Giotto's work, perhaps somewhat too boldly. To prove it Giotto's is manifestly impossible. Even were the coincidences more notable than they are, they would be explained by supposing that a Sienese artist had seen Giotto's design and used it as a model. Such an assumption would not recommend itself to the advocates of artistic independence for Siena; and it is therefore right to remark that, if the drawing is Giotto's, its preservation among the documents of the Sienese cathedral is in itself compromising.

It must further be noted that Vasari, on whose authority we learn that Giotto planned a spire for the Campanile, describes this spire as "a quadrangular pyramid"; it is possible that Vasari was mistaken in supposing that Giotto intended a spire at all; but, in any case, the drawing at Siena does not accord with his description, the spire there shown being hexagonal. These arguments, however, are of very little weight; the only point of real importance is this, that the drawing at Siena, if Giotto's, shows him to have been, in architecture, a designer of little originality or power. The tower is constructed on a principle with which all travellers in Italy are perfectly familiar, the lights in each successive storey becoming more numerous or more elaborate, until the spire is reached; this, in the

drawing, is ornate and graceful, and gives the design what little distinction it possesses.\* To contrast with this the unique proportions of the Florentine Campanile is almost an insult to the reader. Were this design Giotto's, and Francesco Talenti, on succeeding him, destroyed his drawings or sent them to Siena, he did well. But it is impossible to forget that Giotto's fellow citizens, in appointing him to the work, expressed their confidence in his ability to produce a building "so magnificent in its height and quality that it should surpass anything of the kind produced in the time of their greatest power by the Greeks and Romans."† It is impossible not to believe that the man, who gave rise to expectations of so high an order, had more than a nominal share in the work which fulfilled them.

\* A photograph of the drawing is given in the monograph on Giotto by F. Mason Perkins. (George Bell & Sons.)

† From a decree quoted by Crowe and Cavalcaselle, revised edition, vol. ii. p. 107.

## CHAPTER IX

### GIOTTO AND HIS SCHOOL

IT is not seldom the characteristic of a great master that he exercises a cramping effect upon his contemporaries and successors ; he works upon a level to which they cannot attain ; and their efforts to rise to the lofty sphere of expression in which he moves amount to little more than the clumsy or unintelligent repetition of detached ideas, ideas which depended for their value in the original work upon the context in which they were placed or the atmosphere which surrounded them. It is often felt that this truth holds in a peculiar degree of Giotto and his school, and the great Leonardo himself remarked that art retrograded under Giotto's disciples because of their unceasing imitation of Giotto. Undoubtedly the power of creative expression, and the power to recognise and transmit the principles it must obey, are seldom united. To determine how far Giotto combined with his creative genius the faculties of a true teacher will be our chief object in the present chapter.

The electric influence of his personality, the astounding revelation offered by his perfected method to the

artists of the time, are facts upon which in the pages which precede there has been little occasion to lay stress. Yet it is true that wherever he went—and his travels extended through the length and breadth of Italy—he gave a new impulse and a new direction to the artistic energies with which he came in contact. Vasari gives lengthy accounts of his various journeys, and of the works he undertook upon his way, and the reader who is interested to follow them may be referred to the pages of his *Lives*. The story must be regarded as quite untrustworthy in its details, but as representing in its sum the unquestionable fact that Giotto's services were everywhere in demand, and his activities, except by time, unlimited. It may be well here to notice shortly a commission which is among the most important that he received, and of which certain facts are known that throw light on his character, his standing, and his influence. Under the seal of Robert, King of Naples, and dated January 20, 1330, a royal decree confers an interesting distinction upon the painter in the following words:

<sup>i</sup> It is our good pleasure to gather in the society of our household those who are distinguished by uprightness of conduct and by virtue joined to discretion: And whereas we understand that Master Giotto of Florence, a painter familiar and faithful to ourselves, is supported by the prudence of his actions and engaged in profitable service, we receive him into our household and retain him as our guest, desiring that he may possess and enjoy those honours and privileges which are possessed by its other



members, on condition that he takes the customary oath. And in witness of this thing we command that it be ratified forthwith in our presence and endorsed with the sign and seal of our majesty."

The terms in which this decree is couched suggest that it refers to a man already well known at the Court, and expected to make it his centre for some time to come. A document dated 1332-3 shows that Giotto was still in Naples at that time, and engaged in a lawsuit there. Of his paintings in the palace and chapel of King Robert, and in other buildings in the city, no vestige now remains. This is the more deplorable because we know them to have been executed at a time when his strength was at its height. Vasari's stories of Giotto's personal intercourse with his royal patron are the only living relics of his presence there. The king, he relates, became fond of the artist and often came to watch him and talk with him while he was at work. Giotto was always ready with a jest or a retort, and thus entertained the king at once with his hand and with his tongue. Once the king remarked to him, "Giotto, if I were you, this hot day, I should suspend my painting for a while."<sup>1</sup> "I should certainly suspend it,"<sup>11</sup> he replied, "were I King Robert." Another time it chanced the king asked Giotto to paint his kingdom. Giotto made answer with a saddled ass sniffing a second saddle at its feet, and on both the royal crown and sceptre. "This," he explained, "is an image of your kingdom and your subjects, who are always anxious for a change of masters." These stories

are of interest because they represent an aspect of Giotto's character, which may undoubtedly be accepted as historical; and because, unlike some other tales that are told of him, they have a certain freshness and spontaneity about them, and are not of a kind that would be worth inventing or easy to invent.

Yet, though there is nothing now preserved of Giotto's personal activity in Naples but a jest, certain frescoes may still be seen there from which we may deduce what kind of relationship must have existed between the master and his followers. These are the famous frescoes of the chapel of the Incoronata, and it will be interesting to consider shortly the history of criticism in regard to them. As the result of an error of Vasari's, and a misunderstanding of Petrarch, they were taken at one time for authentic works of Giotto, and received the eulogy which it seemed proper to give to a master of Giotto's standing. But when it was discovered that they decorated a building of which the first stone was laid fifteen years after the painter's death, this view could be no longer held, and, to use the words of Sir Joseph Crowe, "they are now decried, as much as they were before praised." We may perhaps be permitted to carry the history one step further. Evidence thus finally proving that these works were not by Giotto, they were naturally assigned to one of his followers, and Crowe and Cavalcaselle describe them as "a development of the Giottesque manner, by a painter of the middle of the fourteenth century," who "if a Neapolitan in name, was a Tuscan

in style." Later criticism, however, is not prepared to allow even so much as this: "the frescoes of the Incoronata," says a recent writer,\* "are very similar in style to the works of Simone, and were probably painted by a follower of his. These frescoes seem to us to be thoroughly Sienese in style." This statement deserves peculiar attention, because it proceeds from a critic, who refuses to admit that Giotto exercised any appreciable influence over Sienese painters ; and therefore asks us to believe that works once praised as Giotto's show in truth hardly a trace of his influence. But setting aside this view, as likely to be exaggerated, we shall find that this is only one instance of many in which the authenticity of Giotto's work, the question whether the master himself or one of his disciples was author, has proved a stumbling-block to the astutest critics. The well-known *Coronation of the Virgin* in Santa Croce is another. Crowe and Cavalcaselle remark that "it was for long a standing piece for the critics of Giotto's style," and describe it with elaborate care. Since they wrote, it has been generally admitted to be the work of a follower. Now, if art retrograded after Giotto's death to the extent generally supposed, we should expect works that are his to be divided from works not his by some clear line of demarcation. This has never been found to be the case ; and yet so long as the balance of opinion is in favour of Giotto as author, a painting will be placed above praise, although the very same, should the balance turn against it, is apt to be treated as beneath

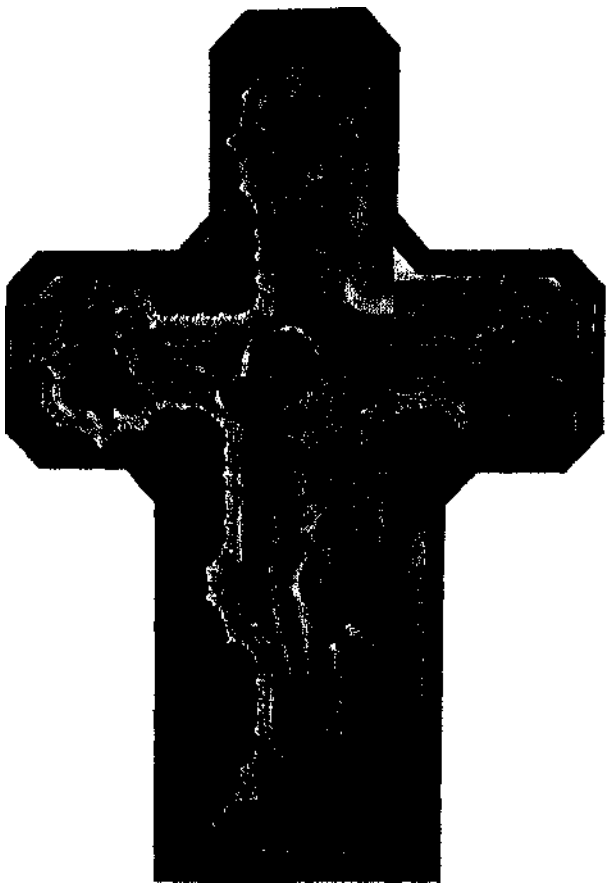
\* Mr, Langton Douglas in Crowe and Cavalcaselle, vol. ii. p. 95.

contempt. The situation is artificial, and it would seem that the true inference to be drawn from it is, not that Giotto's pre-eminence dwarfed or limited the abilities of those who surrounded him, but that his power to communicate, not only his methods, but his ideals also, was of such a kind as to enable some at least of his followers to produce work hardly distinguishable from his.

There exists one great class of paintings in which this intimate participation as well of thought as of execution is marked in an especial degree. These are the crucifixes, a kind of work which was much in requisition in Giotto's time, and of which there remain five examples associated by tradition with his name.\* It is not necessary to say that this subject was one calculated, above all others, to test character to the utmost, to demand, if it was to be worthily presented, the co-operation of every noble quality, and after exhaustion of these qualities, if there lurked behind them anything mean or petty, to betray it, and reveal the insufficiency of the painter. In early times, artists had conceived the Crucifixion as a triumphant experience, and Christ had been represented erect and alive upon the Cross, exempt from suffering. This conception, though noble, was one-sided, and, perhaps on that account, gave way to a mode of representation, in which the contrary thought was emphasised, and artists felt it right to dwell on physical distortion and suffering to the almost total exclusion of the deeper spiritual

\* Preserved at Santa Maria Novella, San Felice, Ognissanti, and San Marco at Florence, and at the Arena chapel at Padua.





*Photo, Alinan]*

THE CRUCIFIX OF THE ARENA CHAPEL

*To face p. 217*

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associations of the event. Giotto introduced a new conception, which may in so far be called a mean between these two extremes, that it reconciled and united what was of value in each, but which it would be far truer to call an original creation, a creation perhaps perfect in its kind, and certainly unsurpassed in the history of Christian art. The only presentations of Christ upon the Cross which can with certainty be attributed to Giotto, are the two which are preserved in the Arena chapel at Padua, the one in the fresco of the *Crucifixion*, the other a *Crucifix*. The two figures convey a very different effect, and not till they are minutely studied can it be found that there is no positive discrepancy of any kind between them, and that the wooden appearance, the want of articulation in the fresco, can be accounted for completely by the injuries it has sustained, in the loss of the surface tones which gave the figure its modelling, and made its posture fully intelligible.\* The outlines, the proportions are the same in both, and the droop of the head and its expression, which are well preserved in the fresco, agree accurately with those of the *Crucifix*. But it is only in the *Crucifix* that the effect originally intended, though the work has suffered many injuries, is still immediately conveyed. The key to Giotto's conception may be found in the colour-scheme which he adopts, and of this it will be best to take the *Crucifix* in San Marco at

\* I had failed to realise this when I wrote the article published in the *Monthly Review*, Oct. 1903.

f It now hangs in the Sacristy.

Florence as an example, because it is better preserved than the *Crucifix* at the Arena: the same harmony was aimed at in each case, but at San Marco the constituent elements are more clearly distinguishable. The background, which is, of course, cruciform in design, is gold, and upon this the cross itself is painted in deep blue, of the same colour as the robes of the Virgin and S. John. A narrow band of vermillion follows the outline of the cross on either side, breaking the background of gold. The flesh is painted upon this in clear cool tones, and its form defined by the subtlest gradation of colour, no conspicuous depth of shadow being anywhere tolerated. The white translucent napkin about the loins is bordered with gold.\* The effect of the whole, considered simply as a decoration, is of great beauty. Of the haunting, sad, ominous associations of death there is not a trace nor a suggestion. Every tone is as pure and clear, as if the painter had gone for his inspiration to the first hour of morning, when soft clouds lie peacefully upon an unsullied sky. The treatment of the central theme accords with such an interpretation of the colour used to convey it. Giotto is commonly called a realist; and the title is a true one, so long as its meaning remains

\* The San Marco *Crucifix* has certain interesting individual traits. The medallion above the cross represents the Pelican with her brood, whom she is feeding with blood drawn from her own breast. The blood that flows from the feet of Christ is treated decoratively, and is gathered as a symbol of Redemption under the skull, which appears, as always, in a hollow of the ground at the foot of the cross. Two small figures of a man and a woman are seen near by, possibly saints of the Dominican order.



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clearly defined. But there are different kinds of realism. Men tend as a rule to call real the things that their minds apprehend most readily, and to which they instinctively attach the most importance. The crudest kind of realism is that of the man who is tied to his own sensations, and can only believe in the existence of the things which he can touch or feel. Other men believe that thoughts in the mind, and the emotions that pervade human life, both in its simplest and its most exalted conditions, are real, although they are intangible. It is not possible to touch a thought; nevertheless it is my fellow's thought about me which decides him whether to grasp my hand or spurn me with his foot. His thought, his attitude of mind, is indeed the central fact about him, equally real with the tangible members that execute its bidding. And often it is said, by an easy metaphor, that the thoughts of the mind, because they are the source of action and the seat of its government, have a more complete reality than the visible and tangible agents ; at any rate, they are by many regarded as of supreme importance, and in this sense more real, than the realities, of which touch is the test, neither could be conceived nor would be worth conceiving, except in relation to them. Giotto's realism is of this latter kind: his interest in the attitude or gesture of the body depends on the degree in which it can be made expressive of the state of heart or mind. Therefore, when he is called on to represent some event of world-wide meaning—the Nativity, for example—he sinks for the time being, whatever interest he may feel belongs

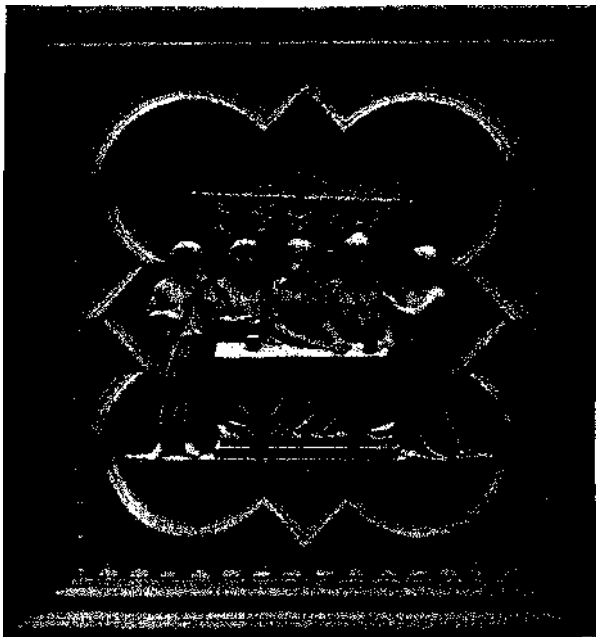
intrinsically to the size or shape of the human body, or any other material object as such—its rotundity, its tangibility—and simply considers how he can present or arrange every part so that it shall convey by its appearance those subtler qualities which make the event unique. The same considerations apply with peculiar force to the treatment of the *Crucifixion*. Duccio, Giotto's great Sienese contemporary, is not usually regarded as a realist at all; but his *Crucifixion*, in the great altar-piece from the Cathedral at Siena, has lately been set above Giotto's on the ground that it gives a more realistic picture of the event. Yet his representation has one cardinal flaw, of a kind to render needless any minute examination of his work in its details. On either side of Christ one of the two thieves is crucified, and the central figure is not distinguished from theirs by any nobility of posture or expression. Save for the halo behind the head and the flight of angels above the cross, we could believe this the crucifixion of three thieves, not of two. The central fact, the one essential reality, is not expressed. To Giotto, as realist, the first necessity is to show those aspects of the Crucifixion of Christ which separate it from the execution of a malefactor: he does not ignore the obvious associations of so grievous a form of death, but he refuses to dwell on them in such a way as to divert the mind from the rarer, deeper truth he is presenting. A thousand have died upon the cross, and the horror, the agony was the same for them all: there was only one whose nature and purpose were such as this.

It cannot fairly be taken as a disparagement of Giotto's pupils and followers that so great a painting as the *Crucifix* of San Marco is by many critics regarded as the work of one of their number and not of the" master himself. The question indeed hangs in the balance, and no critic has felt justified in pronouncing emphatically against the traditional attribution to Giotto. But the difficulty of decision indirectly shows how high a level of excellence both in understanding and in technique is expected of the foremost Giotteschi. Nor can it justly be argued that the difficulty has arisen because the artist, whoever he be, was working frankly after Giotto's design. The frescoes of the Chapel of the Magdalen at Assisi, and, more emphatically, those of the south transept of the Lower Church, prove that the same difficulties may occur in respect of works the designs of which are partly or even completely original. And it may be well to repeat here that the *Coronation of the Virgin* in Santa Croce, now admittedly by a follower, was "long a standing piece for the critics of Giotto's style."

But perhaps the most interesting branch of this topic is that which concerns Giotto's relation to Andrea Pisano, the greatest of contemporary sculptors. Andrea's two most important works, the Bronze Doors of the Baptistery, at Florence, and the Reliefs about the base of the Campanile, were executed, according to tradition, after Giotto's designs. Of the latter we have already spoken in the preceding chapter. The former is hardly less

monumental in character, and is composed of twenty-eight subjects, of which eight are allegorical figures of the virtues, and the remaining twenty tell the life of the Baptist. In the perfect adaptation of these scenes to their artistic medium, their frank recognition of its limitations, in the extreme simplicity and suggestiveness of the accessories, the clearness and continuity of the narrative, in the grandeur of expression dominating the whole and coming to a climax in passages of passionate intensity which show no trace of weakness, the work is characteristic of Giotto and worthy to be classed with his noblest masterpieces. The tradition that refers the design for the series to Giotto has till lately been accepted; and the validity of the arguments now used\* to set it aside is slight. But it will be of interest to give them a passing examination. The critic, who is their author, states that the scenes "show scarcely any trace of the influence of Giotto." An exaggeration of this kind throws doubt on the impartiality of his judgment. He points out that the figures are admirably placed in their decorative framework; and this is true, and marks a characteristic which is conspicuous in all Giotto's mature work. Yet this critic denies Giotto a share in the undertaking, because, in some of his earlier frescoes he finds the composition tentative and fumbling. It is impossible to see what bearing such a criticism can have upon a work known to belong to the last period of

\* By Mr. Langton Douglas, in Crowe and Cavalcaselle, vol. ii. pp. 113, 114, notes 1 and 2.



Photo, Alinari]

SALOME BEFORE HEROD  
(Andrea Pisano after Ciotto)

[1'litrcuT. linptiiterv

To face p. 222



Giotto's life. To point to the gracefulness and charm of the style, in which these reliefs are executed, and to insist that they bear the print of an individuality other than Giotto's, more lovable than his, proves little. Andrea, in executing the designs, could not be expected to divest himself of his individuality. It was the custom at Florence for sculptors to work from drawings, and it is obvious that in the process of modelling the subjects in relief, the artist could not fail to give expression to individual traits. He could not suppress himself entirely, nor is there any reason to suppose he would desire to do so.

But to determine the issue thus raised, even if it were possible, is hardly material to our present purpose. Although the traditional account of the designing and executing of the doors—that we have here the mind of Giotto expressed, interpreted, modified, by a personality different from his—seems fully endorsed by the impression to be derived from studying them; yet, if they are indeed to be regarded as the wholly independent work of another artist, they afford a final justification for that view of Giotto's greatness as a teacher, which, throughout the present chapter, we have been endeavouring to press home. Whether these are or are not the works of a man who belongs to Giotto's school, is a question which cannot be seriously put. In several figures a frank imitation of Giotto is obvious at first sight: the posture of the viol-player in *Herod's Feast* is obviously repeated from the fresco in the Peruzzi chapel. A trait so superficial as the shape of the decorative

framework may be taken as a further test. The same pattern of frame is used for the famous *Presses of Santa Croce* in the Accademia, once attributed to Giotto; it is used for the side panels of the *Crucifix* in the Arena chapel, and was in constant favour both with the master and his followers. The twenty-eight repetitions of it upon the bronze doors become somewhat monotonous, and we may believe that it would not have been chosen, except by an artist to whom the choice was natural. But these, of course, are surface indications merely; it is more important to note that no great quality which was observed in Giotto's crowning achievements in the Bardi and Peruzzi chapels is absent in this series: it might on this account be natural to suppose that he was, in some degree, its author; but if this supposition be set aside, it would manifestly be ridiculous to assert that the artist who produced it was not his disciple. Were we, therefore, to regard the Doors as Andrea's work wholly, we might claim for Giotto an achievement without parallel in the history of art: that being himself not only the foremost artist of his time, but also of a stature, if equalled, never at any time surpassed, he was further able so to imbue a contemporary with his principles and methods, in such degree to share the very inspiration which prompted his work, that the same concentration, the same simplicity, the same passion, the same restraint were shared by both, and in the works of both found expression in forms of equal grandeur.

It would be an error to dwell at length upon



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the contingencies of a view that lacks probability : yet as that view seemed to spring in the main from the preconception, that Giotto's greatness had been exaggerated and Florentine patriotism had claimed for him works for which the credit belonged to others, it was interesting to point out that his greatness was not lowered, but rather enhanced by the suggestion.

Rightly considered, however, his great powers as a teacher are wholly independent of it. It is usual to regard the interval between Giotto's departure and the advent of Masaccio as something like a blank in the history of art, or at the least as a stagnant period. An estimate of Masaccio's merits would be out of place here ; but the fact that he was an innovator, and, by his discoveries in the treatment of perspective, introduced a new ideal of pictorial representation, has given him a kind of eminence which is, in part, confusing. Without wishing to disparage the value and importance of his achievement in its relation to the development of painting, we may truly say that the art of heroic and historic figure painting, the art, which, keeping human passion for its central motive, drew its examples of that passion from the most exalted experiences in the annals of the race, was brought by Giotto to a pitch of excellence, that has not been touched again since his day. He understood its conditions and gave them their final definition. So far, therefore, as the artists, who succeeded him, entered into and shared his purpose, there was no choice open to them but the adoption of his

methods. The school of Giotteschi has fallen into disrepute, because, as was inevitable, it was composed principally of men who adopted the methods of Giotto, but were unable to comprehend his ideal. Yet there were also among them artists of originality and understanding, artists who might have been the pride of a less favoured age. It is not necessary again to refer to men whose works have been confused with those of Giotto himself; it is more pertinent to mention names which are connected with works of pronounced individuality. Giotto and Orcagna, in a less degree Lorenzo Monaco, showed that the Giottesque method was susceptible of delicate adjustment to various minds, that it was something other than the stubborn heavy harness, which, since it fitted his master, every luckless painter was compelled to wear till the time when a better was invented ; in short, that its value in Giotto was independent of any personal bent or bias, and came of an intrinsic reasonableness, which left it the common inheritance of all who made good their claim. The host of feeble imitators, that sprung up all over Italy like weeds in Giotto's track, are not to be regarded as the true representatives of his school. That school included men, some of them now nameless and some not more than names, but of whom Andrea Pisano is the perfect example, who were able to enter into the spirit of Giotto and execute his ideas with an accuracy and susceptibility which places their work at its best upon a level with his : it included men, among whom Orcagna is supreme, whose grasp of the underlying principles was

even more secure, and who were therefore able to use the Giottesque medium for the expression of original ideas. In Orcagna we see it used by a man whose power of intellect leaves him inferior indeed, yet comparable, to Giotto himself.



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