

## GIOTTO\*

(1276-1335).

IT has been thought that teachers might like to make a holiday study of the pictures for themselves. The following help is suggested, not that the descriptions should be read to the children, but that the teacher may have the necessary knowledge to answer their questions.

- I. For the Life of Giotto.  
*Vasari's Lives of the Painters*, Vol. I. (Dent, 2/-), or *The Painters of Florence*, by Julia Cartwright (Murray, 6/-).
- II. For the Life of St. Francis.  
*The Little Flowers of St. Francis and The Life of St. Francis* (Dent, 2/-).
- III. For Giotto's Tower.  
*Mornings in Florence*, by John Ruskin (Allen & Unwin, 3/6). Out of print, but can be borrowed from a library.
- IV. *Giotto and his Works in Padua*, by John Ruskin (Allen and Unwin, 3/6).

### I. Poverty.

"Taking the frescoes in their usual order, we may begin with that in which Giotto has represented the allegorical marriage of St. Francis with his 'Lady Poverty.' The master has, principally as an aid to the symmetry of the composition, represented the mystic ceremony as taking place upon the summit of a bare and shelving hill. Upon the highest and central ledge of rock, Christ Himself blesses the union of the Saint with his chosen Bride. Dignified and noble is the figure of the Redeemer, and full of calm expression. That of Poverty is tall and emaciated, clad in a patched and ragged gown supported about her waist by the Franciscan girdle; over her head she wears a tattered scarf held by a hempen fillet. She stands amid briars and thorns, but roses and tall lilies flower behind her and about her head. Faith, Charity, and Hope stand in attendance at her left; the last-named seems to answer for the bride, and with her bears the hexagonal nimbus distinctive of the Virtues. Charity holds in her hand a heart, and from her head, garlanded with roses, spring flames of living fire. St. Francis stands in profile to the left, beardless and comparatively young, clad in the habit of his order, and about to place the ring upon the finger of his Lady. Below,

\* Picture Study for the Summer Term in the P.U.S.

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a boy casts stones at the ragged bride; another smites her with a rod, and a dog, following their example, barks savagely at the gaunt apparition on the rock above, so unconscious of them all in the absorbing solemnity of the moment. On each side of the principal group stands a glorious choir of angels, tall and splendid beings, rapt witnesses of the mysterious celebration. Lower down, to the extreme left, a youth is in the act of divesting himself of his outer garment, and about to give it to an aged beggar; an angel holds him by the arm and points upward to the central figures in the scene. In the opposite foreground, three men, symbolic of earthly greed and pleasure, turn from the gentle admonishments of another angel, who seeks to draw their attention to the main event that is taking place above. One of them, grasping a bag of gold, appears not to disregard the angel's words, but the spirit of avarice seems to gain a painful victory over his heart; a second, cloaked and covered in his hood, appears to be less moved; and the third, with a falcon on his wrist, openly spurns, with a scoffing gesture, the advice of his angelic counsellor. In the space above, two angels float upwards, one of them bearing a garment and a bag of gold, the other a miniature palace with an inclosed garden, both of which gifts, representative of the worldly goods given up in charity, are received with outstretched arms by the figure of the Almighty, leaning from the clouds of Heaven."

*Giotto*, by F. Mason Perkins (Bell, 5/-), page 62, out of print.

### II. The Sermon to the Birds.

"And journeying on in that same fervour of spirit, he lifted up his eyes and beheld some trees by the wayside whereon were an infinite multitude of birds; so that he marvelled and said to his companions, 'Tarry here for me by the way and I will go and preach to my little sisters the birds.' . . . And the substance of the sermon St. Francis preached was this, 'My little sisters the birds, much are ye beholden to God your Creator, and alway and in every place ye ought to praise Him, for that He hath given you a double and a triple vesture; He hath given you freedom to go into every place, and also did preserve the seed of you in the ark of Noe, in order that your kind might not perish from the earth. Again, ye are beholden to Him for the element of air which He hath appointed for you; moreover, ye sow not, neither do ye reap, and God feedeth you and giveth you the rivers and the fountains for your drink; He giveth you the mountains and valleys for your refuge, and the tall trees wherein to build your nests, and forasmuch as ye can neither spin nor sew God clotheth you, you and your children: wherefore your Creator loveth you much, since He hath dealt so bounteously with you; and therefore beware, little sisters mine, of the sin of ingratitude, but ever strive to praise God.' While St. Francis was uttering these words, all those birds began to open their beaks, and stretch their necks, and spread their wings, and reverently to bow their heads to the ground, showing by their gestures and songs that the holy father's words gave them greatest joy: and St. Francis was glad and rejoiced with them, and marvelled much at so great a multitude of birds and at their manifold loveliness, and at their attention and familiarity; for which things he devoutly praised the Creator in them. Finally, his sermon ended, St. Francis made the sign of holy cross over them and gave them leave to depart; and all those birds soared up into the air in one flock with wondrous songs, and then divided themselves into four parts after the form of the cross St. Francis had made over them; and one part flew towards the east; another towards the west; the third towards the south and the fourth towards the north. And each flock sped forth singing wondrously, betokening thereby that even as St. Francis, standard-bearer of the cross of Christ, had preached to them and had made the sign of the cross over them, according to which they had divided

themselves, singing, among the four quarters of the world, so the preaching of Christ's cross, renewed by St. Francis, was through him and his friars, to be borne throughout the whole world: the which friars possessing nothing of their own in the world, after the manner of birds, committed their lives wholly to the providence of God."

*The Little Flowers of St. Francis* (Dent, 2/-), page 29.

### III. Jabal.

"Jabal, the father of such as dwell in tents, and of such as have cattle, lifts the curtain of his tent to look out upon his flock. His dog watches it. . . ."

"I know no dog like this in method of drawing, and in skill of giving the living form without one touch of chisel for hair, or incision for eye, except the dog barking at Poverty in the great fresco of Assisi.

"Take the lens and look at every piece of the work from corner to corner—note especially as a thing which would only have been enjoyed by a painter, and which all great painters do intensely enjoy—the *fringe* of the tent, and precise insertion of its point in the angle of the hexagon, prepared for by the archaic masonry indicated in the oblique joint above; architect and painter thinking at once, and *doing* as they thought."

*Mornings in Florence*, pages 160, 167.

### IV. Joachim Retires to the Sheepfold (Joachim and St. Anna were the father and mother of the Virgin).

"At that time, there was a man of perfect holiness, named Joachim, of the tribe of Juda, and of the city of Jerusalem. And this Joachim had in contempt the riches and honours of the world; and for greater despite of them, he kept his flocks, with his shepherds. . . . Joachim entering the temple with (incense?) and other gifts to offer on the altar, and Joachim having made his offering, the minister of the temple, whose name was Issachar, threw Joachim's offering from off the altar, and drove Joachim out of the temple, saying, 'Thou, Joachim, art not worthy to enter into the temple, seeing that God has not added His blessing to you, as in your life you have had no seed.'"

"Then Joachim, in the following night, resolved to separate himself from companionship; to go to the desert places among the mountains, with his flocks; and to inhabit those mountains. . . . And immediately Joachim rose from his bed, and called about him all his servants and shepherds, and caused to be gathered together all his flocks, and goats, and horses, and oxen, and what other beasts he had, and went with them and with the shepherds into the hills; and Anna his wife remained at home disconsolate, and mourning for her husband, who had departed from her in such sorrow."

"Giotto has represented Joachim retiring unattended,—but met by two of his shepherds, who are speaking to each other, uncertain what to do or how to receive their master. The dog hastens to meet him with joy. The figure of Joachim is singularly beautiful in its pensiveness and slow motion; and the ignobleness of the herdsmen's figures is curiously marked in opposition to the dignity of their master."

*Giotto and his Works in Padua*, page 65.

### V. Justice.

"Giotto has given his whole strength to the painting of this virtue, representing her as enthroned under a noble Gothic canopy, holding scales, not by the beam, but one in each hand; a beautiful idea, showing

that the equality of the scales of Justice is not owing to natural laws, but to her own immediate weighing causes in her own hands. In one scale is an executioner beheading a criminal; in the other an angel crowning a man, who seems to have been working at a desk or table. Beneath her feet is a small predella, representing various persons riding securely in the woods, and others dancing to the sound of music."

"Giotto's Justice has no bandage about her eyes . . . and weighs, not with scales, but with her own hands; and weighs, not merely the shares or remunerations of men, but the worth of them; and finding them worth this or that, gives them what they deserve—death or honour. These are her forms of Remuneration."

*Giotto and his Works in Padua*, page 176.

### VI. Hope.

"Winged, rising in the air, while an angel holds a crown before her."

"Of all the virtues, this is the most distinctively Christian . . . and above all others, it seems to me the *testing* virtue."

*Giotto and his Works in Padua*, page 182.