

CHAPTER VIII.

GIOTTO.

The early training of Giotto at Assisi may not have been without influence on the development of his career. Two mendicant fraternities divided with their influence the mass of society in central Italy, at the close of the thirteenth century. The Franciscans and Dominicans admitted indistinctly into their ranks men and women of every class in life, and Peter de Vineis affirms that, in his time, hardly a single person could be found who had not secretly or openly assumed the frock of lay brother or sister.¹ The Franciscan order, however, appealed more naturally to the feelings of the masses than the Dominican, and certainly took the lead in representing its sovereignty in a majestic edifice which the art of successive painters adorned. It is difficult to appreciate in our day the services which art and letters yielded to the order of S. Francis, but the pen of Dante and the pencil of Giotto were both devoted to it, and hence probably the connection which arose between two great men, of whom one sprung from the ranks of the noblesse, the other from the cottage of a peasant.

The humble condition of Giotto who, as a child, led his father's flock through the scant and solitary pastures of Vespignano, his early feeling for art as exhibited to Cimabue on the public roadside,² the simple confidence

¹ Cesare Guasti. *Opusculi*.
Flor. 1859. p. 20.

² He was drawing with a coal,
on a stone, the figure of a lamb.