

Next to the aim of making manifest to the people the acts and miracles of S. Francis, that of illustrating the principles upon which the order was founded, would naturally be considered imperative. Hence Giotto was called upon to demonstrate with the feeble aid of allegory the virtues which ostensibly distinguished the mendicants of Assisi. Poverty, wedded to Christ and widowed in Golgotha, was the spouse which S. Francis chose, a spouse whose rags and suffering, as she pursued the thorny path of life, were still not without charm. For poverty, though her way is amongst briars, enjoys the bloom of the roses. She may be stoned by the heedless, feared and despised by the worldly, but she is the foe of avarice and lust, the friend of charity; and hope whispers to her that she may inherit eternal happiness. He who gives his all to the poor, is himself a beggar, but the consciousness of good is as the rose on the briar, and the reward is a seat amongst the angels. Yet poverty without penitence for past sin, — poverty without chastity, was, according to the teaching of the thirteenth century, no blessing. Of him therefore who would take the vow of the mendicants, purification and penance were demanded. To undergo the ordeal, fortitude was required; but he who had strength and faith, drove out the sins of the flesh, and, by the help of prayer, was admitted to the fortalice of chastity, whose walls, if guarded by prudence, justice, temperance, and obedience, would be impregnable. Obedience however was the necessary yoke imposed upon the mendicant brother. With it, humility and prudence went hand in hand, for whilst the first taught contentment, the second was a defence against pride, envy, and avarice; and whoever willingly bore the yoke, was certain of paradise, and would occupy with S. Francis a seat in glory amongst the heavenly host. Such was the theme which Giotto was to develop pictorially on the central ceiling of the lower church of

the choir in the Vescovado (Vas. | said; inasmuch as the fresco has
Vol. I. p. 324.), nothing can be | perished.