

## CHAPTER IX.

## GIOTTO AT PADUA.

The well known story of the O has been told by Vasari to illustrate the cause of Giotto's visit to Rome. The story has apparently its kernel of truth concealed in a superfluous husk of legend and untruth. Though well known to Boniface the Eighth, Giotto was personally a stranger to Benedict the Eleventh, who seems only to have heard the rumour of the painter's fame. He therefore sent a legate from Treviso to Florence to test Giotto's ability,<sup>1</sup> and Vasari is probably correct in the details of an interview which gave rise to a joke familiar to the Tuscans of a later age.<sup>2</sup> The courtier, who had visited Sienna to gather examples of the art practised in that city, made his way one morning into the "bottega" of Giotto at Florence, and introduced himself as the envoy of the Pope. He explained the intentions of his master and the manner in which he was commissioned to carry them out, and concluded by asking for a specimen of the painter's ability. Giotto took a sheet of paper, and a brush dipped in red, and firmly pressing his elbow to his side so that the lower limb of the arm might act as the branch

<sup>1</sup> By a misprint no doubt, Vasari's text speaks here of Benedict the IX<sup>th</sup>. Vol. I. p. 320.

<sup>2</sup> "It is well known, says an annotator to Schorn's edition of Vasari (Stuttgart und Tübingen 1832. Vol. I. p. 116.), that Benedict the XI<sup>th</sup>, at the express wish of Petrarch, sent a legate to seek out the best artists of Italy for the purpose of restoring and adorn-

ing the churches and palaces of Rome which were falling into decay." But if the courtier of Vasari was really an envoy from Benedict the XI<sup>th</sup> the residence of Giotto at Rome could not be owing to the circumstance related. For Benedict succeeded Boniface the VIII, under whose papacy the Florentine painter executed the mosaics and frescos above noticed.