THE word “ school ” as applied to painting @@1 is used with various more or less comprehensive meanings. In its widest sense it includes all the painters of one country, of every date,—as, for example, “the Italian school.” In its narrowest sense it denotes a group of painters who all worked under the influence of one man,—as, for example, “ the school of Raphael.” In a third sense it is applied to the painters of one city or province who for successive generations worked under some common local influence, and with some general similarity in design, colour, or technique,—as, for example, “ the Florentine school,” “ the Umbrian school.” For many reasons the existence of well-defined schools of painting is now almost wholly a thing of the past, and the conditions under which the modern artist gains his education, finds his patrons, and carries out his work have little in common with those which were prevalent throughout the Middle Ages. Painters in the old times were closely bound together as fellow- members of a painters’ guild, with its clearly defined set of rules and traditions ; *moreover,* the universal system of apprenticeship, which compelled the young painter to work for a term of years in the *bottega* or studio of some estab­lished freedman of the guild, frequently caused the impress of the genius of one man to be very clearly stamped on a large number of pupils, who thus all picked up and fre­quently retained for life certain tricks of manner or peculi­arities of method which often make it difficult to distinguish the authorship of a special painting. @@2 The strong similar­ity which often runs through the productions of several artists who had been fellow-pupils under the same master was largely increased by the fact that most popular painters, such as Botticelli or Perugino, turned out from their *botteghe* many pictures to which the master himself contributed little beyond the general design,—the actual execution being in part or even wholly the work of pupils or paid assistants. It was not beneath the dignity of a great painter to turn out works at different scales of prices to suit rich or poor, varying from the well-paid-for altar- piece given by some wealthy donor, which the master would paint wholly with his own hand, down to the humble bit of decorative work for the sides of a wedding cassone, which would be left entirely to the ’prentice hand of a pupil. In other cases the heads only in a picture would be by the master himself or possibly the whole of the principal figures, the background and accessories being left to assistants. The buyer sometimes stipulated in a carefully drawn up contract that the cartoon or design should be wholly the work of the master, and that he should himself transfer it on to the wall or panel. It will thus be seen how impossible it is always to decide whether a picture should be classed as a piece of *bottega* work or as a genuine production of a noted master ; and this will explain the strange inequality of execution which is so striking in many of the works of the old masters, especially the Italians. Among the early Flemish and Dutch painters this method of painting does not appear to have been so largely practised, probably because they considered minute perfection of workmanship to be of paramount importance.

1. *Italian.*

In Italy, as in other parts of Europe, the Byzantine school of painting was for many centuries universally prevalent, @@3 and it was not till quite the end of the 13th

century that one man of extraordinary talent—Giotto— broke through the long-established traditions and inaugu­rated the true Renaissance of this art. According to Vasari, it was Cimabue who first ceased to work in the Byzantine manner; but the truth is that his pictures, though certainly superior to those of his predecessors, are thoroughly charac­teristic specimens of the Byzantine style. Ghiberti, in his *Commentary* (a century earlier than Vasari’s work), with greater accuracy remarks that both Duccio of Siena and Cimabue worked in the Byzantine manner, and that Giotto was the first who learnt to paint with naturalistic truth.

In the 12th and the early part of the 13th century Pisa and Lucca were the chief seats of what rude painting then ex­isted in Italy. A

number of works

of this date still

exist, chiefly

painted Cruci­fixions treated

in the most con­

ventional By­

zantine manner.

Giunta Pisano,

who was paint­

ing in the first

half of the 13th

century, was a

little superior

to the otherwise

dead level of

hieratic conven­

tionalism. He

is said to have

been Cimabue’s

master. In the

14th century

painting in Pisa

was either Flor-

entine or Sien­

ese in style.

No city, not

even Florence, was so fertile as Siena in native painters during the 13th and 14th centuries. The earliest, work­ing before 1300,

did not emanci­

pate themselves

from the old

Byzantine man­

nerism ; Guido

da Siena, Duc­

cio (see fig.

1 ) and Segna

di Buoninsegna

possessed many

of the peculi­

arities of the

old school,—its

rigid attitudes,

its thin stiff

folds, and its

greenish sha­

dows in the

flesh tints. In

the first half of

the l 4th century

a number of very able painters were carrying on at Siena a parallel development to that which Giotto had inaugurated

@@@1 For classical painting, see Archæology, vol. ii. p. 343 *sq.* ; see also Fresco, Mural Decoration, Tempera, and the articles on separate painters.

@@@2 This is especially the case with the numerous pupils of Perugino.

@@@3 See Mural Decoration, vol. xvii. p. 43 *sq.*