

“The Shepherd Boy Painter”
by James Baldwin

The stranger’s name was Cimabue. He was the most famous painter of the time. His pictures were known and admired in every city of Italy.

Bondone was surprised when Cimabue offered to take his little boy to Florence and teach him to be a great painter.

“I know that the lad can draw pictures wonderfully well,” he said. “He does not like to do anything else. Perhaps he will do well with you. Yes, you may take him.”

In the city of Florence little Giotto saw some of the finest pictures in the world. He learned so fast that he could soon paint as well as Cimabue himself.

One day Cimabue was painting the picture of a man's face. Night came on before he had finished it. "I will leave it till morning," he said; "then the light will be better."

In the morning, when he looked at the picture, he saw a fly on the man's nose. He tried to brush it off, but it stayed there. It was only a painted fly.

"Who has done this?" he cried. He was angry, and yet he was pleased.

Little Giotto came out from a corner, trembling and ashamed. “I did it, master,” he said. “It was a good place for a fly, and I never thought of spoiling your picture.”

He expected to be punished. But Cimabue only praised him for his great skill. “There are few men who can draw so good a picture of a fly,” he said.

This happened six hundred years ago, in the city of Florence in Italy. The shepherd boy became a very famous painter and the friend of many famous men.