

Thus Sordello is clothed with all those external advantages for which he had longed ; position, power, and wealth are his. But Sordello himself has changed. The old ideals have passed away ; new aspirations are strong within him. The acceptance of these advantages involves the renouncing of the Gueft cause—the neglect of that one step for the advancement of humanity which lies in his power. Shall he sacrifice the people to his own aggrandizement ?

Then follows a long internal debate,—the keen struggle between old egoism and new-born altruism. Sordello in his search for light reviews his past life. Each aim pursued, each part of his life seemed justifiable in itself ; but yet he is conscious that he has not made as much of his life as many inferior men have made out of theirs ; and this arises from lack of a single predominating aim which might have given unity and concentration to his efforts. The objects to which men of less comprehensive spirit devoted themselves,—wealth, pleasure, power,—good, or apparently good, as they may be, were too narrow and inadequate for the wide preceptions and impulses of Sordello. In the absence, then, of any sufficient external object, might it not be true that his object was himself,—the full realization of his own individuality ? Indeed, it strikes him that this self-realization is the true end of every individual, but that inferior spirits require some external stimulus to draw them on to action,—to force them unconsciously to develop themselves.

But if self-realization is his end, why should he sacrifice himself for the people ? True, he has found that he is so closely connected with the rest of mankind, that the full development of his own nature depends on the development of theirs,—that they are, as it were, a part of him. Then why sacrifice for one part of himself (*viz.*, the people), the other part (*viz.*, his individual existence) ? Again, should he renounce individual ends and succeed in rendering the Guelfs triumphant, the advantage conferred upon men would be exceedingly small, while his personal sacrifice would be tremendous.