

asunder. He was himself through Palma, closely connected with the Ghibellines, who supported the claims of the German Emperor. This party seemed to be identified with foreign domination, and the aristocratic supremacy of the few. The Guelfs, on the other hand, were in league with the Pope and Rome, and seemed rather than the Ghibellines, to represent the elements of spiritual and political progress. To be sure, the distinction was, as it were, accidental; the parties were not themselves aware of it. Notwithstanding, Sordello felt that his new-born sense of the claims of humanity required that he should throw his influence on the Guelf side.

Now the real head and the moving spirit of the Ghibelline party in Italy was Taurello Salinguerra. He had for many years acted as lieutenant to Ecelin, the nominal head, and was now acting as adviser to Palma. The Emperor, however, had placed a badge in the hands of Taurello with the power to confer it on whom he would, together with the office of Imperial vice-gerent in Italy and the leadership of the Ghibelline party. To win Taurello over, seemed to Sordello the way to secure the triumph of the Guelfs. "Talking was his trade"; to persuade Taurello was plainly the duty which the time and the occasion imposed upon Sordello.

His lofty arguments and aspirations fell on unreceptive ears. How could they avail to change the life purpose of Taurello, a sage and practised man of the world! Yet this was what Sordello, in his inexperience and his craving for great results, had hoped would be the effect of a single speech. Notwithstanding, Taurello is struck by the enthusiasm and power of the poet; he knows him to be the betrothed of Palma; the idea suddenly strikes him that this is the man on whom to confer the imperial vice-gerency, while he himself remained, as formerly, the real leader of the party. No sooner thought than done; he throws the Emperor's badge about Sordello's neck. Then comes a revelation from Palma of a secret which she had recently learned. Sordello is in truth the son of Taurello, supposed to have been killed in infancy.