

between the cities, and to the war between the different towns was added, from this time, civic strife within. In this civil strife the terms Guelf and Ghibelline were used to designate opposing parties. The names were borrowed from the party designations of the Papalists and Imperialists in the great struggle between Pope and Emperor. But as it has been said "there was a vague general meaning in the party names which rent Italy asunder, but hundreds suffered for their cause on both sides to whom that cause meant nothing more than a dear and cherished hostility against their neighbours"<sup>1</sup>

The result of the party strife was that in most cases the cities, which had been democratic republics at the beginning of the twelfth century, fell under the power of the despots before the end of the Middle Ages.

In Milan, the Visconti family held sway from 1277 to MILAN 1447, and were followed by the Sforza family, of which the founder was Francesco Sforza, one of the condottieri, or leaders of mercenary bands, who were so important in Italian politics towards the end of the Middle Ages. Under their despots the Milanese extended their territory until a great part of the North of Italy was under their sway.

The other great power in the North of Italy was VENICE Venice, whose political history differed greatly from that of the other cities. Venice had never acknowledged the authority of the German Emperors of the West, and thus had not been drawn into the wars between Pope and Emperor. All her energies were thrown into the extension of her trade. Genoa was her great rival, but was completely beaten.

<sup>1</sup> Mrs Oliphant.