

Tucholsky Wagner Zola Scott
Turgenev Wallace Fonatne Sydon Freud Schlegel
Twain Walther von der Vogelweide Fouqué Friedrich II. von Preußen
Weber Freiligrath Frey
Fechner Fichte Weiße Rose von Fallersleben Kant Ernst Richthofen Frommel
Engels Fielding Hölderlin Eichendorff Tacitus Dumas
Fehrs Faber Flaubert Eliasberg Eliot Zweig Ebner Eschenbach
Feuerbach Maximilian I. von Habsburg Fock Ewald Vergil
Goethe Elisabeth von Österreich London
Mendelssohn Balzac Shakespeare Rathenau Dostojewski Ganghofer
Trackl Stevenson Lichtenberg Doyle Gjellerup
Mommssen Thoma Tolstoi Lenz Hambruch Droste-Hülshoff
Dach Thoma von Arnim Hägele Hanrieder Hauptmann Humboldt
Karrillon Reuter Verne Rousseau Hagen Hauff Baudelaire Gautier
Garschin Defoe Descartes Hebbel Hegel Kussmaul Herder
Wolfram von Eschenbach Darwin Dickens Schopenhauer Bebel Proust
Bronner Campe Horváth Aristoteles Voltaire Federer Herodot
Bismarck Vigny Gengenbach Barlach Heine Grillparzer Georgy
Storm Casanova Lessing Tersteegen Gilm Gryphius
Chamberlain Langbein Lafontaine Iffland Sokrates
Brentano Claudius Schiller Bellamy Schilling Kralik Gibbon Tschchow
Katharina II. von Rußland Gerstäcker Raabe Gleim Vulpius
Löns Hesse Hoffmann Gogol Morgenstern Goedicke
Luther Heym Hofmannsthal Klee Hölty Kleist
Roth Heyse Klopstock Puschkin Homer Mörike Musil
Luxemburg La Roche Horaz Kraus
Machiavelli Kierkegaard Kraft Kraus Moltke
Navarra Aurel Musset Lamprecht Kind Kirchhoff Hugo
Nestroy Marie de France Laotse Ipsen Liebknecht
Nietzsche Nansen Lassalle Gorki Klett Leibniz Ringelntz
Marx vom Stein Lawrence Irving
von Ossietzky May Michelangelo Knigge Kock Kafka
Petalozzi Platon Pückler Liebermann Koroienko
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Renaissance in Italy, Volumes 1 and 2 The Catholic Reaction

John Addington Symonds

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It was under the conditions which have been set forth in the foregoing chapters that the greatest literary genius of his years in Europe, the poet who ranks among the four first of Italy, was educated, rose to eminence, and suffered. The political {2} changes introduced in 1530, the tendencies of the Catholic Revival, the terrorism of the Inquisition, and the educational energy of the Jesuits had, each and all, their manifest effect in molding Tasso's character. He represents that period when the culture of the Renaissance was being superseded, when the caries of court-service was eating into the bone and marrow of Italian life, when earlier forms of art were tending to decay, or were passing into the new form of music. Tasso

was at once the representative poet of his age and the representative martyr of his age. He was the latter, though this may seem paradoxical, in even a stricter sense than Bruno. Bruno, coming into violent collision with the prejudices of the century, expiated his antagonism by a cruel death. Tasso, yielding to those influences, lingered out a life of irresolute misery. His nature was such, that the very conditions which shaped it sufficed to enfeeble, envenom, and finally reduce it to a pitiable ruin.

Some memorable words of Cesare Balbi may serve as introduction to a sketch of Tasso's life. 'If that can be called felicity which gives to the people peace without activity; to nobles rank without power; to princes undisturbed authority within their States without true independence or full sovereignty; to literary men and artists numerous occasions for writing, painting, making statues, and erecting edifices with the applause of contemporaries but the ridicule of posterity; to the whole nation ease {3}without dignity and facilities for sinking tranquilly into corruption; then no period of her history was so felicitous for Italy as the 140 years which followed the peace of Cateau-Cambresis. Invasions ceased: her foreign lord saved Italy from intermeddling rivals. Internal struggles ceased: her foreign lord removed their causes and curbed national ambitions. Popular revolutions ceased: her foreign lord bitted and bridled the population of her provinces. Of bravi, highwaymen, vulgar acts of vengeance, tragedies among nobles and princes, we find indeed abundance; but these affected the mass of the people to no serious extent. The Italians enjoyed life, indulged in the sweets of leisure, the sweets of vice, the sweets of making love and dangling after women. From the camp and the council-chamber, where they had formerly been bred, the nobles passed into petty courts and mold-ered in a multitude of little capitals. Men bearing historic names, insensible of their own degradation, bowed the neck gladly, groveled in beatitude. Deprived of power, they consoled themselves with privileges, patented favors, impertinences vented on the common people. The princes amused themselves by debasing the old aristocracy to the mire, depreciating their honors by the creations of new titles, multiplying frivolous concessions, adding class to class of idle and servile dependents on their personal bounty. In one word, the paradise of mediocrities came into being.'

Tasso was born before the beginning of this {4} epoch. But he lived into the last decade of the sixteenth century. In every fiber of his character he felt the influences of Italian decadence, even while he reacted against them. His misfortunes resulted in great measure from his not having wholly discarded the traditions of the Renaissance, though his temperament and acquired habits made him in many points sympathetic to the Counter-Reformation. At the same time, he was not a mediocrity, but the last of an illustrious race of nobly gifted men of genius. Therefore he never patiently submitted to the humiliating conditions which his own conception of the Court, the Prince, the Church, and the Italian gentleman logically involved at that period. He could not be contented with the paradise of mediocrities described by Balbi. Yet he had not strength to live outside its pale. It was the pathos of his situation that he persisted in idealizing this paradise, and expected to find in it a paradise of exceptional natures. This it could not be. No one turns Circe's pigsty into a Parnassus. If Tasso had possessed force of character enough to rend the trammels of convention and to live his own life in a self-constructed sphere, he might still have been unfortunate. Nature condemned him to suffering. But from the study of his history we then had risen invigorated by the contemplation of heroism, instead of quitting it, as now we do, with pity, but with pity tempered by a slight contempt. {5}

Bernardo, the father of Torquato Tasso, drew noble blood from both his parents. The Tassi claimed to be a branch of that ancient Guelf house of Delia Torre, lords of Milan, who were all but extirpated by the Visconti in the fourteenth century. A remnant established themselves in mountain strongholds between Bergamo and Como, and afterwards took rank among the more distinguished families of the former city. Manso affirms that Bernardo's mother was a daughter of those Venetian Cornari who gave a queen to Cyprus. [1] He was born at Venice in the year 1493; and, since he died in 1568, his life covered the whole period of national glory, humiliation, and attempted reconstruction which began with the invasion of Charles VIII. and ended with the closing of the Council of Trent. Born in the pontificate of Alexander VI., he witnessed the reigns of Julius II., Leo X., Clement VII., Paul IV., Pius IV., and died in that of Pius V.

All the illustrious works of Italian art and letters were produced while he was moving in the society of princes and scholars. He saw the Renaissance in its splendor and decline. He watched the growth, progress, and final triumph of the Catholic Revival. Having stated that the curve of his existence led upward from a Borgias and down to a Ghislieri Vicar of Christ, the merest tyro in Italian history knows what vicissitudes it spanned.

{6} Though the Tassi were so noble, Bernardo owned no wealth. He was left an orphan at an early age under the care of his uncle, Bishop of Recanati. But in 1520 the poignard of an assassin cut short this guardian's life; and, at the age of seventeen, he was thrown upon the world. After studying at Padua, where he enjoyed the patronage of Bembo, and laid foundations for his future fame as poet, Bernardo entered the service of the Modenese Rangoni in the capacity of secretary. Thus began the long career of servitude to princes, of which he frequently complained, but which only ended with his death. [2] The affairs of his first patrons took him to Paris at the time when a marriage was arranged between Renée of France and Ercole d'Este. He obtained the post of secretary to this princess, and having taken leave of the Rangoni, he next established himself at Ferrara. Only for three years, however; for in 1532 reasons of which we are ignorant, but which may have been connected with the heretical sympathies of Renée, induced him to resign his post. Shortly after this date, we find him attached to the person of Ferrante Sanseverino, Prince of Salerno, one of the chief feudatories and quasi-independent vassals of the Crown of Naples. In the quality of secretary he attended this patron through the campaign of Tunis in 1535, and accompanied him on all his diplomatic expeditions.

{7} The Prince of Salerno treated him more as an honored friend and confidential adviser than as a paid official. His income was good, and leisure was allowed him for the prosecution of his literary studies. In this flourishing state of his affairs, Bernardo contracted an alliance with Porzia de' Rossi, a lady of a noble house, which came originally from Pistoja, but had been established for some generations in Naples. She was connected by descent or marriage with the houses of Gambacorti, Caracciolo, and Caraffa. Their first child, Cornelia, was born about the year 1537. Their second, Tor-

quato, saw the light in March 1544 at Sorrento, where his father had been living some months previously and working at his poem, the *Amadigi*.

At the time of Torquato's birth Bernardo was away from home, in Lombardy, France, and Flanders, traveling on missions from his Prince. However, he returned to Sorrento for a short while in 1545, and then again was forced to leave his family. Married at the mature age of forty-three, Bernardo was affectionately attached to his young wife, and proud of his children. But the exigencies of a courtier's life debarred him from enjoying the domestic happiness for which his sober and gentle nature would have fitted him. In 1547 the events happened which ruined him for life, separated him for ever from Porzia, drove him into indigent exile, and marred the prospects of his children. In that year, the Spanish Viceroy, Don {8} Pietro Toledo, attempted to introduce the Inquisition, on its Spanish basis, into Naples. The population resented this exercise of authority with the fury of despair, rightly judging that the last remnants of their liberty would be devoured by the foul monster of the Holy Office. They besought the Prince of Salerno to intercede for them with his master, Charles V., whom he had served loyally up to this time, and who might therefore be inclined to yield to his expostulations. The Prince doubted much whether it would be prudent to accept the mission of intercessor. He had two counsellors, Bernardo Tasso and Vincenzo Martelli. The latter, who was an astute Florentine, advised him to undertake nothing so perilous as interposition between the Viceroy and the people. Tasso, on the contrary, exhorted him to sacrifice personal interest, honors, and glory, for the duty which he owed his country. The Prince chose the course which Tasso recommended. Charles V. disgraced him, and he fled from Naples to France, adopting openly the cause of his imperial sovereign's enemies. He was immediately declared a rebel, with confiscation of his fiefs and property. Bernardo and his infant son were included in the sentence. After twenty-two years of service, Bernardo now found himself obliged to choose between disloyalty to his Prince or a disastrous exile. He took the latter course, and followed Ferrante Sanseverino to Paris. But Bernardo Tasso, though proving himself a man of {9} honor in this severe trial, was not of the stuff of Shakespeare's Kent; and when the Prince of Salerno suspended payment

of his salary he took leave of that master. Some differences arising from the discomforts and irritations of both exiles had early intervened between them. Tasso was miserably poor. 'I have to stay in bed,' he writes, 'to mend my hose; and if it were not for the old arras I brought with me from home, I should not know how to cover my nakedness.' [3] Besides this he suffered grievously in the separation from his wife, who was detained at Naples by her relatives—'brothers who, instead of being brothers, are deadly foes, cruel wild beasts rather than men; a mother who is no mother but a fell enemy, a fury from hell rather than a woman.' [4] His wretchedness attained its climax when Porzia died suddenly on February 3, 1556. Bernardo suspected that her family had poisoned her; and this may well have been. His son Torquato, meanwhile had joined him in Rome; but Porzia's brothers refused to surrender his daughter Cornelia, whom they married to a Sorrentine gentleman, Marzio Sersale, much to Bernardo's disgust, for Sersale was apparently of inferior blood. They also withheld Porzia's dowry and the jointure settled on her by Bernardo—property of considerable value which neither he nor Torquato were subsequently able to recover.

{10} In this desperate condition of affairs, without friends or credit, but conscious of his noble birth and true to honor, the unhappy poet bethought him of the Church. If he could obtain a benefice, he would take orders. But the King of France and Margaret of Valois, on whose patronage he relied, turned him a deaf ear; and when war broke out between Paul IV. and Spain, he felt it prudent to leave Rome. It was at this epoch that Bernardo entered the service of Guidubaldo della Rovere, Duke of Urbino, with whom he remained until 1563, when he accepted the post of secretary from Guglielmo, Duke of Mantua. He died in 1569 at Ostiglia, so poor that his son could scarcely collect money enough to bury him after selling his effects. Manso says that a couple of door-curtains, embroidered with the arms of Tasso and De' Rossi, passed on this occasion into the wardrobe of the Gonzaghi. Thus it seems that the needy nobleman had preserved a scrap of his heraldic trophies till the last, although he had to patch his one pair of breeches in bed at Rome. It may be added, as characteristic of Bernardo's misfortunes, that even the plain marble sarcophagus, inscribed with the words *Ossa Bernardi Tassi* which Duke Guglielmo erected to his memory in S.

Egidio at Mantua, was removed in compliance with a papal edict ordering that monuments at a certain height above the ground should be destroyed to save the dignity of neighboring altars!

Such were the events of Bernardo Tasso's life. {11} I have dwelt upon them in detail, since they foreshadow and illustrate the miseries of his more famous son. In character and physical qualities Torquato inherited no little from his father. Bernardo was handsome, well-grown, conscious of his double dignity as a nobleman and poet. From the rules of honor, as he understood them, he deviated in no important point of conduct. Yet the life of courts made him an incorrigible dangler after princely favors. The *Amadigi*, upon which he set such store, was first planned and dedicated to Charles V., then altered to suit Henri II. of France, and finally adapted to the flattery of Philip II., according as its author's interests with the Prince of Salerno and the Duke of Urbino varied. No substantial reward accrued to him, however, from its publication. His compliments wasted their sweetness on the dull ears of the despot of Madrid. In misfortune Bernardo sank to neither crime nor baseness, even when he had no clothes to put upon his back. Yet he took the world to witness of his woes, as though his person ought to have been sacred from calamities of common manhood. A similar dependent spirit was manifested in his action as a man of letters. Before publishing the *Amadigi* he submitted it to private criticism, with the inevitable result of obtaining feigned praises and malevolent strictures. Irresolution lay at the root of his treatment of Torquato. While groaning under the collar of courtly servitude, he determined {12} that the youth should study law. While reckoning how little his own literary fame had helped him, he resolved that his son should adopt a lucrative profession. Yet no sooner had Torquato composed his *Rinaldo*, than the fond parent had it printed, and immediately procured a place for him in the train of the Cardinal Luigi d'Este. It is singular that the young man, witnessing the wretchedness of his father's life, should not have shunned a like career of gilded misery and famous indigence. But Torquato was born to reproduce Bernardo's qualities in their feebleness and respectability, to outshine him in genius, and to outstrip him in the celebrity of his misfortunes.

In the absence of his father little Torquato grew up with his mother and sister at Sorrento under the care of a good man, Giovanni Angeluzzo who gave him the first rudiments of education. He was a precocious infant, grave in manners, quick at learning, free from the ordinary naughtinesses of childhood. Manso reports that he began to speak at six months, and that from the first he formed syllables with precision. His mother Porzia appears to have been a woman of much grace and sweetness, but timid and incapable of fighting the hard battle of the world. A certain shade of melancholy fell across the boy's path even in these earliest years, for Porzia, as we have seen, met with cruel treatment from her relatives, and her only support, Bernardo, was far away in exile. In {13} 1552 she removed with her children to Naples, where Torquato was sent at once to the school which the Jesuits had opened there in the preceding year. These astute instructors soon perceived that they had no ordinary boy to deal with. They did their best to stimulate his mental faculties and to exalt his religious sentiments; so that he learned Greek and Latin before the age of ten, and was in the habit of communicating at the altar with transports of pious ecstasy in his ninth year. [5] The child recited speeches and poems in public, and received an elementary training in the arts of composition. He was in fact the infant prodigy of those plausible Fathers, the prize specimen of their educational method. As might have been expected, this forcing system overtaxed his nerves. He rose daily before day-break to attack his books, and when the nights were long he went to morning school attended by a servant carrying torches.

Without seeking to press unduly on these circumstances, we may fairly assume that Torquato's character received a permanent impression from the fever of study and the premature pietism excited in him by the Jesuits in Naples. His servile attitude toward speculative thought, that anxious dependence upon ecclesiastical authority, that scrupulous mistrust of his own mental faculties, that pretense of solving problems by accumulated citations instead of going to the root of the matter, {14} whereby his philosophical writings are rendered nugatory, may with probability be traced to the mechanical and interested system of the Jesuits. He was their pupil for three years, after which he joined his father in Rome. There he seems to have passed at once into a healthier atmosphere. Bernardo, though a