Rome. News reached them in 1556 that Porzia Tasso had died suddenly and mysteriously at Naples. Her husband was firmly convinced that she had been poisoned by her brother with the object of getting control over her pro­perty. As it subsequently happened, Porzia’s estate never descended to her son ; and the daughter Cornelia married below her birth, at the instigation of her maternal relatives. Tasso’s father was a poet by predilection and a professional courtier of some distinction. In those days an Italian gentleman of modest fortunes had no congenial sphere of society or occupation outside the courts of petty ecclesi­astical and secular princes. When, therefore, an opening at the court of Urbino offered in 1557, Bernardo Tasso gladly accepted it. The young Torquato, a handsome and brilliant lad, became the companion in sports and studies of Francesco Maria della Rovere, heir to the dukedom of Urbino. The fate which condemned him for life to be a poet and a courtier like his father was sealed by this early entrance into princely palaces. At Urbino a society of cultivated men pursued the æsthetical and literary studies which were then in vogue. Bernardo Tasso read cantos of his *Amadigi* to the duchess and her ladies, or discussed the merits of Homer and Virgil, Trissino and Ariosto, with the duke’s librarians and secretaries. Tor­quato grew up in an atmosphere of refined luxury and somewhat pedantic criticism, both of which gave a per­manent tone to his character. At Venice, whither his father went to superintend the printing of the *Amadigi,* these influences continued. He found himself the pet and prodigy of a distinguished literary circle. But Bernardo had suffered in his own career so seriously from addiction to the Muses and a prince that he now determined on a lucrative profession for his son. Torquato was sent to study law at Padua. Instead of applying himself to law, the young man bestowed all his attention upon philosophy and poetry. Before the end of 1562 he had produced a narrative poem called *Rinaldo,* which was meant to com­bine the regularity of the Virgilian with the attractions of the romantic epic. In the attainment of this object, and in all the minor qualities of style and handling, *Rinaldo* showed such marked originality that its author was proclaimed the most promising poet of his time. The flattered father allowed it to be printed ; and, after a short period of study at Bologna, he consented to his son’s entering the service of Cardinal Luigi d’Este. In 1565, then, Torquato for the first time set foot in that castle at Ferrara which was destined for him to be the scene of so many glories and such cruel sufferings. After the publica­tion of *Rinaldo* he had expressed his views upon the epic in some *Discourses on the Art of Poetry,* which committed him to a distinct theory and gained for him the additional celebrity of a philosophical critic. The age was nothing if not critical; but it may be esteemed a misfortune for the future author of the *Gerusalemme* that he should have started with pronounced opinions upon art. Essentially a poet of impulse and instinct, he was hampered in produc­tion by his own rules.

The five years between 1565 and 1570 seem to have been the happiest of Tasso’s life, although his father’s death in 1569 caused his affectionate nature profound pain. Young, handsome, accomplished in all the exercises of a well-bred gentleman, accustomed to the society of the great and learned, illustrious by his published works in verse and prose, he became the idol of the most brilliant court in Italy. The princesses Lucrezia and Leonora d’Este, both unmarried, both his seniors by about ten years, took him under their protection. He was admitted to their familiarity, and there is some reason to think that neither of them was indifferent to him personally. Of the celebrated story of his love for Leonora this is not the place to speak. It is enough at present to observe that he owed much to the constant kindness of both sisters. In 1570 he travelled to Paris with the cardinal. Frank­ness of speech and a certain habitual want of tact caused a disagreement with his worldly patron. He left France- next year, and took service under Duke Alfonso II. of Ferrara. The most important events in Tasso’s biography during the following four years are the publication of the *Aminta* in 1573 and the completion of the *Gerusalemme Liberata* in 1574. The *Aminta* is a pastoral drama of very simple plot, but of exquisite lyrical charm. It ap­peared at the critical moment when modern music, under Palestrina’s impulse, was becoming the main art of Italy. The honeyed melodies and sensuous melancholy of *Aminta* exactly suited and interpreted the spirit of its age. We may regard it as the most decisively important of Tasso’s- compositions, for its influence, in opera and cantata, was. felt through two successive centuries. The *Gerusalemme Liberata* occupies a larger space in the history of Euro­pean literature, and is a more considerable work. Yet the commanding qualities of this epic poem, those which revealed Tasso’s individuality, and which made it imme­diately pass into the rank of classics, beloved by the people no less than by persons of culture, are akin to the lyrical' graces of *Aminta.* It was finished in Tasso’s thirty-first year; and when the MS. lay before him the best part of his life was over, his best work had been already accomplished. Troubles immediately began to gather round him. Instead of having the courage to obey his own instinct, and to publish the *Gerusalemme* as he had con­ceived it, he yielded to the critical scrupulosity which formed a secondary feature of his character. The poem was sent in manuscript to several literary men of eminence, Tasso expressing his willingness to hear their strictures, and to adopt their suggestions unless he could convert them to his own views. The result was that each of these candid friends, while expressing in general high admiration for the epic, took some exception to its plot, its title, its moral tone, its episodes, or its diction, in detail. One wished it to be more regularly classical ; another wanted more romance. One hinted that the Inquisition would not tolerate its supernatural machinery ; another demanded the excision of its most charming passages—the loves cf Armida, Clorinda, and Erminia. Tasso had to defend himself against all these ineptitudes and pedantries, and to accommodate his practice to the theories he had rashly expressed. As in the *Rinaldo,* so also in the *Jeru­salem Delivered,* he aimed at ennobling the Italian epic style by preserving strict unity of plot and heightening poetic diction. He chose Virgil for his model, took the first crusade for subject, infused the fervour of religion into his conception of the hero Godfrey. But his own natural bias was for romance. In spite of the poet’s in­genuity and industry the stately main theme evinced less spontaneity of genius than the romantic episodes with which, as also in *Rinaldo,* he adorned it. Godfrey, a mixture of pious Æneas and Tridentine Catholicism, is not the real hero of the *Gerusalemme.* Fiery and passionate Rinaldo, Ruggiero, melancholy impulsive Tancredi, and the chivalrous Saracens with whom they clash in love and war, divide our interest and divert it from Goffredo. On Armida, beautiful witch, sent forth by the infernal senate to sow discord in the Christian camp, turns the action of the epic. She is converted to the true faith by her adora­tion for a crusading knight, and quits the scene with a phrase of the Virgin Mary on her lips. Brave Clorinda, donning armour like Marfisa, fighting in duel with her devoted lover, and receiving baptism from his hands in her pathetic death ; Erminia seeking refuge in the shep­herd’s hut,—these lovely pagan women, so touching in