

the solemn recognition of the great man, that he, Torquato Tasso, listening calmly to the chanting of the pious monks who were grouped around him, and without a murmur of regret or dissatisfaction upon his lips, yielded up his soul to God. Yet to the last his fondest hope had been checked, the dream of his life had been unfulfilled—but he who had chosen this peaceful holy retreat as his last resting place had ceased to care for worldly pageants since he had meditated in those silent cloisters—from the summit of the loveliest of the Seven Hills of Rome, he had taken a broad view of the world and of its glories and turned from them without even a faint desire for what during so many painful years had kept his soul in sadness. He died content here, comforted by religion, content not to hear the acclamations of the Italian populace in the capital. No, his earthly ears heard not the “*Vivas*” showered upon the author of the *Jerusalem Delivered*. He died one day too soon for that. He knew not of the funeral honors he received; He did not see the laurel and the cypress mingled together on his coffin but his tired, melancholy eyes unclosed upon a different pageant from that arranged in the Roman Capitol. The crown he received upon the 25th of April was a true laurel, a wreath of victory for he had “fought the fight, he had won the race, he had kept the faith.” It was fit that this beloved convent of Sant Onofrio should be sacred to the memory of two souls who there found their pleasantest pastime, St. Philip Neri’s resort was a fitting one for Tasso. There was a sweet harmony linking the souls of the poet so full of faith and of the saint so full of poetry. Here Tasso came to learn how vain is the love of glory, here he saw how

sad it is to be the victim of that love of the creature, here too Philip Neri found beautiful confirmations of the wisdom of his choice in losing all earthly love and glory and allowing nothing to absorb his soul but the love of the Creator. Three centuries have passed away since Tasso’s death—the critics still declare his poem the grandest epic of modern times always leaving aside the *Divina Commedia*. Even Voltaire, the flippant enemy of everything that possesses a sacred character or religious tone, was one of the most enthusiastic admirers of the author of the *Jerusalemme*. And he did not hesitate to affirm that Tasso was, in some respects, superior to the literary giants of antiquity, Homer and Virgil.

The Italians themselves, who are certainly the best judges of their countrymen, are fond of instituting comparisons between Tasso and Ariosto. In their opinion Tasso wrote the better poem—but Ariosto was the better poet. The *Orlando Furioso* pales beside the *Jerusalem*. Ariosto is more admired by men, Tasso by women. Ariosto can be enjoyed only if read quickly, Tasso must be read slowly.

The critics of other nationalities content themselves with silent admiration of these two great if not equally great poets and leave the Italians to formulate whatever dogmas they will in regard to the relative merits of both. Whatever be the final decision, the poet who sang of the achievements of the noble Godfrey de Bouillon, calling his poem in the first place in honor of the chivalrous and gallant Duke of Lorraine the “*Goffredi*” instead of the *Gerusalemme* will never be undeserving of the place of honor assigned him among the few whose names are imperishable.

M. L. S.

Peace to Torquata’s injured shade ! ’Twas his
In life and death to be the mark where wrong,
Aimed with her poisoned arrows but to miss ;
Oh, victor unsurpassed in modern song.