

We may imagine with what delight Tasso welcomed the return of spring, which he trusted was to relieve his frame from illness, and open to him his usual sources of enjoyment. In the month of April, he writes thus to his friend Albano, at Rome:

"After a distressing ague, I am, by the mercy of God, restored to health; and have at last, after much labor, completed the poem of 'Goffredo.' And this liberty from sickness, which I now enjoy, and which also I shall soon enjoy from my poetical occupations, is for nothing else more gratifying than that it will permit me to attend to your commands. If I am able to send my poem to press this September, I shall then spend some months at Rome, which I should not have thought it right to do had I not fulfilled my obligations to my patron, the duke, which I shall partly seem to have done by the dedication of my poem."

The assistance and inspection of Tasso's critical friends in his poem proved a great source of annoyance to him; for they disagreed among themselves in all points, and made many objections to the design, though not to the execution of the work. But he combatted them in a vigorous and curious manner; and his fine scholarship was shown in his replies. But there were other trials that Tasso had to contend with which affected him more deeply. The duke's favor had made him many enemies at court, who contrived by a thousand ways to render his residence there disagreeable; and although his patron was uniformly kind, he felt himself very unhappy; and determined, as soon as his poem was published, to retire to Rome, and live as independently as his limited means would allow. His weakened health and shattered nerves rendered him peculiarly sensitive to every annoyance; and he became almost insane on discovering, after a short absence, that his desk had been opened, and copies taken of many cantos of the "Jerusalem." Indignant at the baseness of the thief, he applied to Alphonso for redress. But, as it was impossible to point out the criminal, nothing could be done; yet Tasso suspected a person by the name of Madalo; and meeting him one day, as he was crossing the court of the palace, he gave him a severe rebuke for his perfidy; to which Madalo replied in such insulting language, that the poet struck him on the face with the scabbard of his sword. At this the weak courtier fled with precipitation, but soon returned with his brothers, and following Tasso, endeavoured to wound him in the back; but not succeeding, the whole party retreated, and made the best of their way to Tuscany.

Manso, Tasso's biographer and devoted friend, asserts that from this time his mind became disturbed, and he gave the first symptoms of approaching insanity. The duke, seeing his perturbed state, soothed him by all the means in his power, and sent him to Belriguardo, a most delightful estate belonging to the Duchess D'Urbino, trusting that its quiet and retirement, the perfect enjoyment of nature, and the influence of Lucretia, who resided there altogether, would have a happy effect by restoring the equilibrium of his mind. He was just beginning to show the healthful influence of the place, when he received the news that the parts of the poem which had been pirated were being printed in various parts of Italy. Anxious as he had been that it should appear in the most correct form possible, and looking forward to it as the reward of all his labors, he was greatly distressed, and implored Alphonso to interfere and prevent the circulation of any edition which might appear in this way. Alphonso accordingly wrote to the princes of Italy, requesting them to stop the publication; and his example was followed by the Pope, who exerted his authority in the same manner.

While these powerful friends were interested in his behalf, the Count Torsoni persuaded him to visit Modena, where he hoped, by the change of air and gay society, to relieve him from the melancholy which was rapidly taking possession of his spirits. But neither the society of the gifted or intellectual, the charm of wit, nor the delights of music, could cheer his perturbed mind or restore the buoyancy of his spirits. Wearied with appearing gay to gratify his friend, he returned, oppressed as with an incubus, to Ferrara. Perhaps no portion of Tasso's life presents a more melancholy picture than the present. About ushering into the world a poem as yet unequalled, which was to make for him a name wherever "Jerusalem" was known, he became the victim of the most dire malady to which our frail natures are subject. Slowly and silently it creeps along, dimming the brightness of the intellect, and crushing with its stealthy step the heart's happiness. His bewildered eyes are seeking for the unknown enemies—the phantasmagoria which his imagination has conjured up. Haunted by fear, oppressed with illness, he soon became exhausted by the wearing conflict—the struggles of insanity with bewildered reason. Tasso's biographers differ in the causes which led to his derangement; some attributing it to the high mental excitement produced by his close attention to his studies and the feverish action of his poetical temperament; others to his attachment to the Princess Leonora, and we can view