The princesses did not want to see him. The duke was engaged. Without exercising common patience, or giving his old friends the benefit of a doubt, he broke into terms of open abuse, behaved like a lunatic, and was sent off without ceremony to the madhouse of St Anna. This happened in March 1579; and there he remained until July 1586. Duke Alfonso’s long- sufferance at last had given way. He firmly believed that Tasso was insane, and he felt that if he were so St Anna was the safest place for him. Tasso had put himself in the wrong by his intemperate conduct, but far more by that incompre­hensible yearning after the Ferrarese court which made him return to it again and yet again. It would be pleasant to assume that an unconquerable love for Leonora led him back. Unfortunately, there is no proof of this. His relations to her sister Lucrezia were not less intimate and affectionate than to Leonora. The lyrics he addressed to numerous ladies are not less respectful and less passionate than those which bear her name. Had he compromised her honour, the duke would certainly have had him murdered. Custom demanded this retaliation, and society approved of it. If therefore Tasso really cherished a secret lifelong devotion to Leonora, it remains buried in impenetrable mystery. He did certainly not behave like a loyal lover, for both when he returned to Ferrara in 1578 and in 1579 he showed no capacity for curbing his peevish humours in the hope of access to her society.

It was no doubt very irksome for a man of Tasso’s pleasure­loving, restless and self-conscious spirit to be kept for more than seven years in confinement. Yet we must weigh the facts of the case rather than the fancies which have been indulged regarding them. After the first few months of his incarceration he obtained spacious apartments, received the visits of friends, went abroad attended by responsible persons of his acquaint­ance, and corresponded freely with whomsoever he chose to address. The letters written from St Anna to the princes and cities of Italy, to warm well-wishers, and to men of the highest reputation in the world of art and learning, form our most valuable source of information, not only on his then condition, but also on his temperament at large. It is singular that he spoke always respectfully, even affectionately, of the duke. Some critics have attempted to make it appear that he was hypocritically kissing the hand which had chastised him, with the view of being released from prison. But no one who has impartially considered the whole tone and tenor of his epistles will adopt this opinion. What emerges clearly from them is that he laboured under a serious mental disease, and that he was conscious of it.

Meanwhile he occupied his uneasy leisure with copious com­positions. The mass of his prose dialogues on philosophical and ethical themes, which is very considerable, we owe to the years of imprisonment in St Anna. Except for occasional odes or sonnets—some written at request and only rhetorically interesting, a few inspired by his keen sense of suffering and therefore poignant—he neglected poetry. But everything which fell from his pen during this period was carefully pre­served by the Italians, who, while they regarded him as a lunatic, somewhat illogically scrambled for the very offscourings of his wit. Nor can it be said that society was wrong. Tasso had proved himself an impracticable human being; but he remained a man of genius, the most interesting personality in Italy. Long ago his papers had been sequestered. Now, in the year 1580, he heard that part of the *Gerusalemme* was being published without his permission and without his corrections. Next year the whole poem was given to the world, and in the following six months seven editions issued from the press. The prisoner of St Anna had no control over his editors; and from the masterpiece which placed him on the level of Petrarch and Ariosto he never derived one penny of pecuniary profit. A rival poet at the court of Ferrara undertook to revise and re-edit his lyrics in 1582. This was Battista Guarini; and Tasso, in his cell, had to allow odes and sonnets, poems of personal feeling, occasional pieces of compliment, to be collected and emended, without lifting a voice in the matter. A few years later, in 1585, two Florentine pedants of the Della Crusca academy declared war against the *Gerusalemme.* They loaded it with insults, which seem to those who read their pamphlets now mere parodies of criticism. Yet Tasso felt bound to reply; and he did so with a moderation and urbanity which prove him to have been not only in full possession of his reasoning faculties, but a gentleman of noble manners also. Certainly the history of Tasso’s incarceration at St Anna is one to make us pause and wonder. The man, like Hamlet, was distraught through ill-accommodation to his circumstances and his age; brain-sick he was undoubtedly; and this is the duke of Ferrara’s justification for the treatment he endured. In the prison he bore himself pathetically, peevishly, but never ignobly. He showed a singular indifference to the fate of his great poem, a rare magnanimity in dealing with its detractors. His own personal distress, that terrible *malaise* of imperfect insanity, absorbed him. What remained over, untouched by the malady, unoppressed by his consciousness thereof, displayed a sweet and gravely-toned humanity. The oddest thing about his life in prison is that he was always trying to place his two nephews, the sons of his sister Cornelia, in court-service. One of them he attached to the duke of Mantua, the other to the duke of Parma. After all his father’s and his own lessons of life, he had not learned that the court was to be shunned like Circe by an honest man. In estimating Duke Alfonso’s share of blame, this wilful idealization of the court by Tasso must be taken into account. That man is not a tyrant’s victim who moves heaven and earth to place his sister’s sons with tyrants.

In 1586 Tasso left St Anna at the solicitation of Vincenzo Gonzaga, prince of Mantua. He followed his young deliverer to the city by the Mincio, basked awhile in liberty and courtly pleasures, enjoyed a splendid reception from his paternal town of Bergamo, and produced a meritorious tragedy called *Torris- mondo.* But only a few months had passed when he grew discontented. Vincenzo Gonzaga, succeeding to his father’s dukedom of Mantua, had scanty leisure to bestow upon the poet. Tasso felt neglected. In the autumn of 1587 we find him journeying through Bologna and Loreto to Rome, and taking up his quarters there with an old friend, Scipicne Gonzaga, now patriarch of Jerusalem. Next year he wandered off to Naples, where he wrote a dull poem on *Monte Oliveto.* In 1589 he returned to Rome, and took up his quarters again with the patriarch of Jerusalem. The servants found him insufferable, and turned him out of doors. He fell ill, and went to a hospital. The patriarch in 1590 again received him. But Tasso’s restless spirit drove him forth to Florence. The Floren­tines said, “ Actum est de eo.” Rome once more, then Mantua, then Florence, then Rome, then Naples, then Rome, then Naples—such is the weary record of the years 1590-94. We have to study a veritable Odyssey of malady, indigence and misfortune. To Tasso everything came amiss. He had the palaces of princes, cardinals, patriarchs, nay popes, always open to him. Yet he could rest in none. Gradually, in spite of all veneration for the *sacer vales,* he made himself the laughing­stock and bore of Italy.

His health grew ever feebler and his genius dimmer. In r592 he gave to the public a revised version of the *Gerusalemme.* It was called the *Gerusalemme Conquistata.* All that made the poem of his early manhood charming he rigidly erased. The versification was degraded; the heavier elements of the plot underwent a dull rhetorical development. During the same year a prosaic composition in Italian blank verse, called *Le Sette Giornate,* saw the light. Nobody reads it now. We only mention it as one of Tasso’s dotages—a dreary amplification of the first chapter of Genesis.

It is singular that just in these years, when mental disorder, physical weakness, and decay of inspiration seemed dooming Tasso to oblivion, his old age was cheered with brighter rays of hope. Clement VIII. ascended the papal chair in 1592. He and his nephew, Cardinal Λldobrandini of St Giorgio, deter­mined to befriend our poet. In 1594 they invited him to Rome. There he was to assume the crown of bays, as Petrarch