THREE YEARS IN A MAD-HOUSE

CHAPTER I.

LIFE IN AN INSANE ASYLUM.

His brain is wrecked ....
For ever in the pauses of his speech
His lip doth work with inward muttering,
And his fixed eye is riveted fearfully
On something that no other sight can spy.

-Maturin,

One morning in the spring of the year 1886, a carriage containing two men drove up to the huge gates which form the main entrance to the extensive grounds of the North Texas Hospital for the Insane, and signaled to the gatekeeper within. This personage responded with his usual promptness, and the two gentlemen alighted from their carriage and prepared to enter. While the gatekeeper is throwing back the ponderous gates, let us take a glance at the two arrivals. Their vehicle was covered with dirt and travel-stained, and had evidently been driven for many miles through a region of flying sand. The gentlemen themselves were tired and dusty, and stepped about with the manner of men whose limbs had been cramped and confined for a number of hours
within the narrow compass of a small vehicle. The elder of the twain was a tall, spare man, well on toward sixty, though his hair and beard were black as a raven's wing, while his dark and swarthy countenance had a more youthful expression than the face of his younger companion. The latter gentleman was scarcely fifty, but his hair was white, and his face, originally dark and sunburned, had now a sickly and ashen pallor. His eyes were restless and brilliant, and he had a trick of turning, twisting, and rubbing his hands together, sometimes with a bit of twine in his fingers, and sometimes empty, which he kept up without intermission. He spoke but little, and often, indeed, did not reply even when directly addressed. This did not spring from rudeness, nor from intentional discourtesy, but from the fact, which was evident to the most casual observer, that at times he was not conscious of anything going on about him. Now, however, after they had alighted from their carriage, and stepped about briskly for a moment to restore the circulation in their benumbed limbs, and had started toward the gate, he spoke:

"Dr. Taylor," he said, in a low nervous voice, darting a furtive look about them, "we have left the valise."

"So we have!" ejaculated the doctor; and he returned immediately to the vehicle and came back in a moment with a large valise in his hand.

As they passed in at the gate the keeper eyed them curiously, and said "Good morning," but he did not approach any nearer to them than his duties required.
They went on up a broad graveled pathway lined on either side with tasteful shrubbery at a slow and leisurely walk—a pace which Dr. Taylor had never been known to vary. The grounds through which they passed were beautifully laid off and ornamented, and had the appearance of being constantly swept and tended. The graveled walk led up to the open doors of a wide hall which pierced the asylum building in the center, and ran through its entire breadth. The building itself, a massive structure of red brick and sandstone, loomed up, still ominous and frowning, before them, and to one of them at least it had a more gruesome appearance than a sepulchre. As they advanced Dr. Taylor pointed out to his companion the various objects which challenged his admiration, or excited his curiosity, and freely expressed his pleasure, wonder, or disapproval as the case might be. They had now arrived at a point midway between the entrance-gates and the hospital edifice, and some distance away toward their right the doctor remarked a sort of inclosure or park surrounded by a stout plank fence, and which afforded a cool and quiet retreat for some two hundred men who were wandering to and fro, or reposing beneath the wide-spreading boughs of leafy shade trees. This scene attracted Dr. Taylor’s attention immediately, and he turned to his companion.

"Yonder," said he, "is the park where the patients, under guard, of course, exercise themselves during the day."

The younger man looked for a moment in the di-
rection indicated, with a kind of fascinated terror, and turned his face away with a shudder.

No more was said until they reached the hospital building and entered the wide, cool, and lofty hall. The whole house was so still at the moment that one would have found it difficult to believe that he stood within the walls of an insane asylum. To their right as they advanced into the hall a little way was an oaken door on which was inscribed in gilt lettering, "SUPERINTENDENT'S OFFICE." Here they knocked, and a voice called out for them to enter. Dr. Taylor took his companion by the arm, opened the door and entered. They found themselves in a plainly furnished room, supplied with chairs, a desk, some books scattered about, a few portraits on the walls, and lastly, in the presence of a rather stoutly built man with a short beard and a refined intellectual face. He rose at once and advanced to meet them.

"Dr. Wallace," said Dr. Taylor, "I have brought you a patient, Mr. E. B. Fleming, of Sulphur Springs."

"I am glad to see you, Mr. Fleming," said the distinguished superintendent, taking him kindly by the hand, and looking at him with keen penetrating eyes. "I hope your stay among us may be both pleasant and profitable to you."

The patient shuddered and cast down his eyes, but said nothing.

He was then given a seat while the two physicians withdrew to a corner and carried on a low-toned conversation for some time. At the end of half an hour
Dr. Taylor came forward and bade the silent patient farewell. They shook hands warmly and parted (though they knew it not) forever. Dr. Wallace then put a number of questions to the new-comer, and afterward turned him over to the attendants. By the latter he was shaved, put into a bath and dressed in the asylum uniform, a cheap suit of coarse grey with the words *North Texas Insane Asylum* indelibly branded upon every garment. This suit, which was chiefly remarkable for the fact that it did not fit the poor unfortunate who now donned it, and would scarcely have fit anyone, had the appearance of having been worn by every inmate of the asylum from its foundation down to that day. The trousers were some inches too short, but they were set off to great advantage by the pair of shoes now given to the patient in place of his own, and which were so large that he ran a pretty fair chance of sinking out of sight in their unexplored depth.

The ceremony of bathing (the typical lunatic has a holy horror of water, at all times and places, except when used for drinking purposes) and dressing over with, the transformed patient, not over pleased with his new suit,* was carried to the barber, and his tangled shock of hair cut close to his skull. His beard, which had been suffered to grow during the past quar-

* For some reason the law decrees that every applicant for admission into the Texas State Asylums shall be provided with three complete suits of clothes, three hats, and three pairs of shoes; and yet, if we are to judge by this instance, no sooner has the patient entered the hospital doors than he is stripped and compelled to wear a coarse and ill-fitting uniform supplied by the State. Perhaps, however, the real fault is to be laid at the door of greedy and avaricious attendants.
ter of a century, was long, wavy and luxuriant, but its venerable appearance could not stay the desecrating shears of the barber, and it was removed. But when the patient saw the barber’s purpose he protested, and asked that his beard be allowed to remain. The barber, however, had his orders; and he bluntly replied that it could not be, and went on with his work. This cool treatment of his faltering but earnest request roused the poor lunatic’s resentment, and he made a few vain struggles to break loose and rise from the chair. This resistance angered the barber very much.

“Do you want me,” he roared, flourishing his razor aloft, “to cut your blasted throat? Are you a going to make me do it? If you are, it’s all right. If you ain’t, why the h— don’t you lie still?”

The patient, overawed by this terrific outburst, made no further objection, and the beard was removed.

... ...

Such, most courteous reader, was the manner of my entrance into the North Texas Hospital for the Insane, and such the place where I remained for three interminable years. Had the authorities told me in the beginning that they had doomed me to so long a stay, I should have been overwhelmed with despair; but I was encouraged by the hope that there would be no need for me to remain longer than a few months at most. At night I was locked into a narrow iron-barred cell, a light allowed me only long enough to disrobe,
my clothes, if such they could be called, taken from me and deposited upon the floor outside my cell. All lights about the building were put out at nine o'clock, and it is not hard to imagine how intensely dark it was at all seasons of the year, and even on moonlight nights in our small stone cells with the doors closed and the lights extinguished.

The asylum building, generally so still and silent during the day, was a perfect Babel at night. As soon as our candles were taken from us, and all the lights about the building extinguished, the lunatics in my ward, which was ward number one, would set up a most tremendous howl. I dare assert that no man can ever fully realize what dreadful and unearthly noises the human throat is capable of emitting until he has visited an insane asylum. Dozens of wild voices would join in the weird concert which was nightly carried on in the Terrel Mad-House—dozens of maddened lunatics vie with one another in producing the most hideous sounds. No description can do it justice—no imagination conceive the horror of it. It is the nightly occurrence of this demon's concert which transforms into frantic maniacs those unfortunate who, in the beginning, were quiet, docile, and inoffensive.

They gave me medicines regularly; but it generally cost the attendants a struggle to do so, for I dreaded the medicine worse than any spoiled child, and would not take it except upon compulsion. But rebellion in a mad-house, as in a prison, is never tolerated, and it is suppressed by such prompt and rigorous
measures that the delinquent does not care to repeat
the offense very often. Hence after several exciting
conflicts with my keepers, in which I was badly
worsted, and indeed severely punished, I took what-
ever they gave me without objection.

But my differences with those about the asylum
were not entirely confined to the attendants. During
the first few weeks of my stay, I had some trouble
with quarrelsome lunatics. Some of them would vex
and annoy me by their pragmatic curiosity, or else
would attempt to impose upon or bully me. Indeed,
regular fights were now and then occurring about the
grounds, either between the lunatics themselves, or
between them and their keepers.

One day I observed an imbecilic-looking lunatic,
with the stature and frame of a giant, standing a short
distance away who stared at me or peered at me in a
most offensive manner, or he would come up to me
with a great strut, touch me significantly upon the
breast, and back away to his former position with
many unnecessary and astounding contortions of the
muscles of his body. He repeated this ceremony,
with some variations, and with all the pertinacity of
a maniac until it became exceedingly annoying;
hence I said to him:

"Look here, my friend, you be careful whom you
put your hands upon! You may go away and touch
someone else, or touch the fence if you want to, but
don't put your hands upon me again. They're dirty."

"And who are you?" said he, with the grin of an
African gorilla.
“No one, in particular. I do not profess to be anybody at all; but I am big enough to cuff your great red ears for you,” I said, somewhat fiercely, determined to scare him away if possible.

“Oh, you are!” he exclaimed, scornfully. “We shall see if you are,” and he advanced toward me as he had done a dozen times already.

“You shall see!” I retorted, seizing a heavy stick which was lying near; “you come any further, you villain, and I’ll brain you!”

He paused at once, looked at me with an expression of sickly terror for a moment, and then turned and rushed away. It is needless to add that he did not trouble me afterward.

This incident happened in the park, for it was here that I was compelled to go with the other lunatics every day, and spend my time taking exercise. The park was small, but sufficiently large for the purpose for which it was used. It was inclosed by a stout plank wall some fourteen feet in height, and defended upon the top by a guard of two strong steel barbed wires. Here, in good weather, under the watchful eye of a sufficient guard, the male lunatics spent their time, and were allowed many liberties not permitted elsewhere. Thus, though they might not leave the park, unless they were ill, they might sit down, lie down, walk, play, or run, as the humor seized them.

The insane negroes, too, walked in the park; but they were allotted a certain part for their exclusive use, and were not permitted to intrude upon that portion occupied by the whites.
There were among us, as would naturally be expected, patients in every stage of lunacy, from the most tragic to the most disgusting or ridiculously comic. Even among lunatics, as well as everywhere else, there are (if the expression be allowable) "smart Alecs" and fools.

One gentleman, whose name I do not now remember, had become possessed with the idea that God had "called him to preach;"—and preach he did, and at all hours, it mattered not when, endeavoring to edify his fellow-lunatics with the most affecting sermons. And this whether they listened to him or not. Most ministers, I believe, are governed in the length and frequency of their discourses by the degree of attention accorded to them by their hearers, but it was not so in the present instance. Nothing could damp his ardor—nothing induce him to remain silent. On all occasions, possible or impossible, it made not the least difference who was present, or what was going on, this lunatic was giving out texts, beginning sermons or conducting prayer-meetings with great fervor, and accompanying himself with loud groans and sobs.

One afternoon he mounted a bench in the park, gave out the text he designed to preach from, and launched forth into a sermon that would probably have lasted the whole afternoon. But the attendants, having orders to permit no patient to do or say anything which might inflame their insane passions, at this point interfered and pulled the excited lunatic down from his perch. This proceeding put
him into a violent rage; and forgetting, or not choosing to remember, his ministerial employment, he swore a string of oaths most terrible to hear, saying:

"That the world had come to a h— of a pass indeed when ministers of the gospel could not preach without being disturbed by pack of d— ruffians!"

This scene being ended, one of the meddlesome and self-conceited lunatics that we have made mention of, feeling no doubt that he must sustain his reputation for "smartness," ventured into that part of the park allotted to the insane Africans. Having done this, he gazed at the various negroes for a moment, and finally walking up to the smallest and most inoffensive-looking, began to abuse him roundly. Whereupon the black lunatic drew back an arm which discovered an astonishing strength in one so small, and with one blow felled the meddlesome white to the ground. This feat seemed to astonish the negro quite as much as it surprised and discomfited his white opponent, and the latter, with terror in his countenance, scrambled hastily to his feet and fled across the park. Up to this point the negro had manifested signs of being ready to take to his heels himself, on finding what he had done; but now, with instincts essentially human, he turned and pursued his fleeing foe.

The white men in the park, though lunatics to a man, with the exception of the keepers, at this occurrence seemed to feel all the rancor of racial hatred rising within them. So long as their fellow-lunatic
was so manifestly in the wrong they had shown no disposition to interfere with a chastisement so justly inflicted. But to see a white man fleeing before a negro foe, and the latter audaciously pursuing him into the midst of his friends, was too much for their self-control. The black, seeing among the whites certain signs which did not argue well for his personal safety, now turned and hurried back whence he came, with the slight difference that he got over the ground a little more speedily.

The angry lunatics, however, with loud shouts and execrations, rushed in a body towards the negroes. The attendants ran after them to preserve peace; but this was hardly necessary, as the blacks, after receiving but not bestowing a few blows, broke and fled in every direction, and frantically endeavored to hide, or crouched down beside the walls, some of them with hands uplifted and eyes rolling wildly toward heaven, moaned piteously; while all were well nigh overcome by the terror of the moment. The negro who had so rashly provoked the conflict was the worst frightened of them all. He rushed madly toward the nearest obstruction, with the intention of concealing himself behind it. He caught one or two blows as he ran, and these so greatly increased his fright that he ran with the speed of a deer; and finally, although no one had pursued him, he fell upon his knees and began to shout out a loud incoherent prayer. But ere this, finding their foes so little disposed to give blow for blow, or repel the assault, the maddened lunatics turned upon themselves, and a general fight ensued
in which the attendants joined. The contestants bit, gouged, scratched, and gave and took many resounding blows ere peace was restored. None of the men were punished for participation in this fight, as during the struggle each man got enough blows to satisfy him for weeks to come.

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Those who have had small or slight dealings with the insane can scarcely imagine the many artifices that some of them resort to to try the patience and forbearance of their friends. While it is vitally necessary to control the inmates of an asylum as with a rod of iron, it is necessary that the hand of steel be concealed under the softest of gloves. It is essential to the success of such an institution that the lunatic be given to understand, at once and for all, that the hospital rules must be obeyed, and that a violation of the least of them will result in speedy and inevitable punishment.

It may perhaps be well at this point to remark that no lunatic ever considers himself insane, and he resents most bitterly the idea of being considered such. Confinement in an asylum he regards as an infringement upon his personal liberty—an indignity designed to insult and humiliate him, and an act of base ingratitude upon the part of his friends. Like the drunkard in the play, he alone of all the world is sober, while all the rest of mankind are drunk.

This is a strange and oftentimes a ludicrous anomaly—an apparent paradox perhaps, in the eyes of many, yet the accumulated experience of age will
sustain my assertion that it is true. The greater the degree of insanity, the more deeply rooted is the unhappy lunatic's conviction that though the world is filled with maniacs, his capacity for coherent thought and rational conduct remains unimpaired.

It is perhaps for this reason more than for all others added together that the lunatic is so hard to control. Their sincere conviction that their minds are sound, and wholly unaffected, contributes more than any other cause to confirm them in their perverse and obdurate opposition to the counsels of friends, relatives, or physician, and the contumelious rejection of all advice. Hence, by a course of reasoning peculiar to themselves, they are enabled to justify themselves in many deeds of cold-blooded violence, and to plan them with the studied duplicity of a professional assassin. The heart, therefore, of your lunatic friend, which appears so docile, tractable, and kind, may in its secret depths be a perfect hell of fury and insane rage.

From this it may be inferred that the attendants in the insane hospitals are always in more or less danger of their lives, and at times they are compelled to be harsh, stern, and inflexible towards their charges. Often, indeed, it is only by the strong hand that they save themselves from the violence or mal-evolence of the lunatics, or quell their turbulent spirits.

Rows and disturbances were often occurring in the various dining-rooms as well as elsewhere. There was no general eating-apartment, or hall, for the use
of the inmates collectively. Each ward had its own
dining-room, though the meal-hour was the same in
all. In my ward, where the more violent or obstreperous lunatics were confined, our dining-room was
made use of by some forty or fifty of the inmates.
It may be accepted as an axiomatic truth that man's
animal instincts, in the degree according to which he
possesses them, nowhere show themselves more plain-
ly than at table. It is safe to assert that our good
breeding, or the reverse, will tell its own tale in the
dining-room. It goes without saying, therefore, that
a party of lunatics at table presents a scene that can-
not be said to possess many attractive features. On
the contrary it is a disgusting spectacle, even at the
best. The reader need not fear from this preface
that we shall harrow his feelings by attempting a de-
scription of it. We shall content ourselves with
simply requesting his attention to the following brief
account of a conflict which took place betwixt the
keepers and a lunatic a few days after my arrival.
At dinner one day the lunatic referred to, who had
never been known to be over scrupulous in regard to
personal or general cleanliness, became incensed be-
cause a waiter had given him an unclean knife along
with his fork and plate, and broke out into a loud and
emphatic, though somewhat incoherent, objurgation
of the delinquent. The knife which so excited his
ire was spotlessly clean, and the attendant endeav-
ored to convince him of this fact, but in vain. The
keeper, realizing the folly of being betrayed into an
argument with a maniac, cut the discussion short
so far as he was concerned by walking away and going about his duties. The lunatic grumbled and complained for a while, but not very loudly until he perceived that no attention whatever was being paid to him. Whereupon, renewing his demand for another knife in a loud and vociferous manner, he worked himself into a great rage, throwing his arms and legs wildly about, his eyes almost starting from his head, while he ground and gnashed his teeth together in a manner at once vicious and bloodthirsty. He went on to declare, in the midst of inarticulate interjections and snarls, his fixed purpose of having another knife instantly or of perishing in the attempt. Some of the more timid lunatics shrunk back from this ebullition of insane wrath; but the attendants, realizing the necessity of action, fell upon him in a body, and in the struggle which ensued bore him to the floor. Here they punished him without mercy, and did not leave off striking, kicking, and choking him until he was scarcely able to howl for mercy. They then forcibly replaced him at table, and during the remainder of the meal he was the most quiet, docile and inoffensive man among us. I caught him now and then fixing his eyes upon the attendants as they hurried about the room intent upon their duties, with an expression compounded of hate, malice and superstitious fear; but whenever one of them approached him, he instantly sunk his eyes upon his plate and maintained a steady silence.

But while we were compelled to deport ourselves with proper decorum at table, more freedom was
allowed in the ball or dance-room of the hospital. On Friday nights in the winter season every lunatic who was physically able, both men and women, were expected, or rather required (for no excuse would be taken) to repair to the large hall where the dancing was carried on. At such times the characteristic perversity of the maniac showed itself to peculiar advantage, and came to the surface in many amusing ways. Most of the lunatics on these occasions obediently chose partners and endeavored to keep time to the music. But others, who could dance very well, obstinately refused to do so, sometimes assigning the most ridiculous causes for their refusal, and again declining to vouchsafe any reason at all. Far more amusing, however, were those, both men and women, who fancied themselves the most graceful and elegant dancers imaginable, but who in reality could not dance at all, nor could they be taught to do so. Their awkward and senseless movements on the floor were supremely ridiculous, and excited a great deal of laughter and ridicule. But this they would mistake for applause, and it would so elate them that they would cast aside all restraint, and throw themselves about the room with all the frenzy of wild Indians on a war dance, and yet with the sobriety and gravity of a judge upon the bench.

Should the reader ask me what was the nature of my feelings, or the state of my mind, in the earlier days of my incarceration, I should answer: "Even if I could tell, it would require too much time and
space to do so.” However, I shall give a brief outline which may serve in the place of a more extended description. Although at that time I believed myself to be as sane as any man who ever walked the earth, I could realize that something was wrong, either with myself or with the world. I should labor in vain were I to attempt to convey to the reader any adequate idea of the intense mental anguish I suffered. The many and strange hallucinations which sprang into being when my mind first lost its equipoise were so real that nothing could persuade me that they were merely the vagaries of my own brain. But the fancies which occasioned me so much acute mental torture and suffering—robbing my life of every joy, and embittering my whole existence—was the thought, or rather the belief, that some dreadful doom was impending over me and over my family. Nor could I rid myself of this impression. It pursued me night and day, hung over me like the sword of Damocles, and poisoned the few hours of peace that I might have had. At all hours, both during the day and in the long watches of the night, I could see my loved ones in situations of the most terrible peril, calling upon me for the aid I could not give.

The most dreadful scenes passed in solemn procession before my eyes,—mournful pageants—innumerable armies, passing and repassing, hour after hour, with the heart stirring roll of drums, the rumbling tread of marching feet, and wild sweet strains of supernatural music. Many a time, when lying alone in the darkness of my cell, I have seen the members of my
family borne by, loaded with chains or bound with cruel thongs, with the shadow of some fate unheard-of in its cruelty hovering over them. I accused myself of horrible crimes—nay, I believed that I had murdered, killed and robbed—heard the stern sentence of death pronounced against me, and in the darkness and silence of night have listened with cold despair for the expected footfalls of my executioner.

The reader may learn from this brief and imperfect outline something of what I suffered. But this was not all. Soon I came to believe that every inmate of the asylum was my enemy, and that my companions were constantly laying plots to entrap and destroy me. Whenever, at any hour, I saw two or more persons about the premises conversing together, an incident that happened every day, I felt that they were conspiring against me, and contriving pitfalls into which I might stumble any moment. The gaunt face of Death looked out upon me from every corner and Destruction lurked in every by-way.

In fancy I saw myself convicted of revolting crimes, and condemned to suffer the most agonizing and terrible forms of death which savage ingenuity could devise. I was dragged to the tops of mighty precipices and hurled down to endless perdition, or seized, while mocking and jeering laughter rang in my ears, and cast into terrible lakes of fire, to be tossed like a cork upon their waves, while dreadful tongues of fire shot over me; and then, snatched by jeering demons from the very jaws of death, I was hurried to where huge cauldrons of boiling oil stood hissing and
seething over furnaces a hundred times hotter than fire, and held over them, while terrible voices shrieked in my ears that this was to be the manner of my death. Again I felt myself standing before open graves, in which something told me that I was soon to be buried alive, and suffocated under a mountain-weight of earth. Anon huge pits would suddenly open before me whose bottoms were lined with dagger-pointed spikes, and some irresistible weight seemed to press upon me and bear me down upon them.

Often during the stiller hours of night dreadful voices would call out to me and accuse me of committing atrocious crimes, and in time I came to believe this, and that my wickedness really deserved some punishment. Then I concluded that the asylum was full of keen and merciless detectives, sent there to secure proofs of my guilt in order that death in some barbarous form might be meted out to me; and I soon came to realize that I was subjected to a constant and sleepless espionage, which could only result in the detection of my guilt.

The reader will readily imagine—if he is not already too wearied with these small details to imagine at all—that under these circumstances my life was a torture and my existence a dreadful burden. Hence I resolved to destroy myself. This resolution was no sooner formed than I took steps to put it into execution. It was easier, however, as I soon ascertained, to plan a suicide in the asylum than to carry it out, as it seemed that the Superintendent, Dr. Wallace, had suspected me of such designs from the first.
By his orders I was watched, and several attempts at self-destruction proved abortive. I was determined, however, and with all a madman's cunning, I waited my chances. Not a great while after this, therefore, I contrived to purloin a large cake of laundry soap and secrete it upon my person. At the first opportunity I broke the soap into smaller pieces and swallowed them. It was a nauseous dose, as I need hardly say, but I should have swallowed a porcupine had it been possible, if it would have freed me from my misery. The soap did not kill me, but it made me so deathly sick for a few hours that I thought my end was near. Yet it was not so, for it only added to my misery without abating any part of it. The suffering it caused me was pretty considerable for a few days, but it finally passed off, leaving me no worse for my experience. I learned at the time, and have never since forgotten, that laundry-soap, as a means of lessening the ills of life by stopping its machinery, is a dismal failure.

This attempt, like the others, having proved to be so hopeless a failure, it might be supposed that I should have given the idea over, with no better means at hand for affecting my purpose. And so, probably, I should; not out of choice, but from necessity, had I not been fortunate enough a week or so later to find a part of an old beer-bottle buried in the sand. This circumstance opened a way for the accomplishment of my design, and I concealed the bottle as I had done the soap, in the pockets of my jacket. I afterwards broke the bottle into small
pieces and swallowed them. When this was done I had no doubt that it would be impossible for me to survive for more than a few hours, and I waited with no little anxiety for the appearance of those symptoms which should announce the approach of dissolution. But to this day, seven years later, no such symptoms have made their appearance, and I waited in vain. Indeed, the swallowing of the pounded glass gave me no inconvenience whatever. When finally I began to realize that the pounded flint had caused me no injury, I could scarcely believe the evidence of my own senses. I had always supposed, without thinking much about the matter, that beaten glass swallowed in this manner was as certain to cause death as a cannon ball, properly aimed. I know now that there are many persons who would not be incommode in the least by the presence of broken glass in the stomach, while others could not survive such a catastrophe more than a few hours. In my own case, however, the truth compels me to state that the soap came nearer killing me than the glass.

This last failure decided me, and as long as I remained an inmate of the hospital, I never renewed the attempt. Whether I did so afterwards remains to be seen.

But, while I no longer meditated self-destruction, my mental sufferings were as acute as before; and I studiously avoided the Superintendent, and all those whom I believed to be spies. Often, however, in walking about the asylum building, or through its corridors, I came suddenly upon Dr. Wallace, who went
to and fro upon his official duties. To my suspicious temper it appeared that he always looked upon me curiously, and with a glance which penetrated to the innermost recesses of my soul, and read like an open book every hidden thought and impulse. These casual meetings always greatly alarmed me, for I thought I saw in them conclusive evidence of their design to penetrate into all the secrets of my life.

In reverting for a moment to my mental record of those gloomy and despairing years, I find myself wondering at the considerate care and kindness, as well as the calm and benignant temper that invariably characterized Dr. Wallace's demeanor, as well as that of his great-hearted associate, Dr. F. S. White, towards the unhappy but patience-trying lunatics.

At this point I am reminded of the fact that visitors, most generally, I believe, of the female sex, were coming to the hospital at nearly all hours. Some of these had relatives or friends whom they wished to see, while others came out of mere curiosity. Many sad and pitiful scenes occurred in the parlors during the visits of these ladies, many of whom had husbands held in restraint. To some of the male lunatics these brief calls were sources of pleasure greatly wished for and long remembered. Often I have seen their worn faces light up with feverish but timid hopefulness when a female form was seen entering the parlors, and I have watched them sink back into a dull apathy of despair when the minutes passed and no summons came for them. There were others who dreaded these visits greatly and looked forward
to them with nervous apprehension. Indeed, any such, when they had warning that a summons would presently come for them from the parlors, would endeavor to conceal themselves, and had to be brought in by main force.

A keeper came to me one day to announce the fact that two ladies were awaiting my presence in the parlor. Wrapped up as I was at the moment in my own melancholy thoughts, I was ungracious enough to say that I did not wish to see them. No choice in the matter, however, was given me, and I followed the attendant obediently enough. The ladies rose on my entrance and asked me if I knew them. I replied that I did, but that I was not receiving lady callers that day. At this rude and ungallant speech the ladies laughed heartily, in which they were joined by Dr. Wallace, who was present. Strange to say, I was the only one in the room who became offended. But their laughter did offend me, very much, for not being at the moment conscious of having done anything wrong, I thought they were making sport of me!

Of course the lunatic men and women were carefully kept apart, and were never allowed together except when they met by accident or in the hospital dance-room. When they came together here, many comic as well as ridiculous scenes occurred, besides those which have been mentioned. For it must be remembered that in nearly all cases the male lunatic loses all that natural gallantry and reverence for the fairer and gentler sex that is so characteristic of
every true man who is in his sober senses. If any woman present did anything to bore or disgust a lunatic, he did not hesitate to tell her so, without stopping to bother himself about a choice of words.

Thus I have often heard conversations something like the following. One night a quiet-looking lunatic, disgusted at the unmaidenly conduct of one of the women present, said to her:

“You are a fool. You haven’t got any sense, and you make me sick. You go away from here,” and with that he put forth his hand and pushed her back.

Nothing abashed, however, the woman clung to him, saying fondly, though very likely they had never met before:

“But I love you, dearest. When are you going to marry me?”

Giving a snort of disgust, and endeavoring to break away from her, the lunatic replied:

“I will never marry you. I don’t want you. I wouldn’t have you. You aint got no sense.”

At this the fair Helena protested, and a sort of scuffle ensued, she expostulating with fond persistence, and he endeavoring to unclasp her detaining hand and escape. Finally, however, she became enraged, and forgetting the ardent love she had professed but a moment before, she abused him in strong terms and, even gave him a blow or two by way of emphasis. The attendants finally were compelled to interfere, and bear the shrieking and struggling Helena from the presence of her disgusted Demetrius.

On another occasion, when the lunatics were re-
turning in a body to dinner, at the noon hour one day, a woman broke from the body of females who were filing towards the house on the opposite side of the grounds, and eluding the outstretched hands of her keepers, she ran madly towards the column of men a hundred or so yards away. The peculiarity of her disease was, as I afterwards learned, that she was constantly in search of a mythical husband, and whenever she discovered him, as she did nearly every day, a terrible scene of hysterical joy and obstreperous delight would ensue.

The woman ran towards us shrieking as she came, her long hair flying in the breeze, and her eyes gleaming with insane fire. She removed her clothes as she came, throwing each garment wildly aside, and rending at another in order to remove it with the least delay. By the time she reached us she was entirely nude, the white flesh of her naked body showing with startling distinctness against the dark back-ground of earth and trees, while her clothes were scattered at unequal distances along the ground for a space of two hundred yards. With a wild scream of joy she rushed forward and sprang upon the largest lunatic among us, clinging to him frantically, with a grasp that would not be shaken off, crying:

“O my husband—my husband—my dear, precious husband! I have found you at last!”

“Go away, woman!” ejaculated the lunatic, struggling to free himself; “I do not know you. Go away!”

“O my husband!” she shrieked, and clung all the tighter.
They struggled back and forth for a time, and the big lunatic contrived to free himself, and step hastily back. But she rushed upon him again and managed to seize him in a tighter grip than before. He struggled manfully, but could not free himself. He cursed her in vigorous English, while her frenzied shrieks rose high and shrill. Some one finally caught her, and the man released himself and fled towards the house. She pursued him wildly and, in frantic despair, filling the air—with her shrill screams.

Seeing that she was about to overtake him, the big lunatic stopped, faced about, and picked up a brickbat that was lying near. He drew back his arm with a look of determined fury.

"I'll kill you," he yelled, "you she-devil! If you come another step, I'll crush your head with this brick!"

But she came on in spite of his threat, and the enraged man would have struck her with the brick had not an attendant at that point interfered and restored peace by seizing the woman, holding her until help could arrive, and then bearing her bodily from the grounds.

* * *

One of the strangest features in a lunatic's character is curiosity. This faculty seems to grow at the expense of the other faculties, and it sometimes attains to enormous proportions. It is manifested in many curious and ludicrous ways. Those who possess an unusual share of it—and they are generally the more harmless ones—pass their time in prowling and pok-
ing about the asylum premises. They examine such things as seem to strike their fancy with the simplicity of a child, and they are often observed gazing curiously, wonderingly, but sedately at their fellow-lunatics, just as though they presented the most attractive sight in the world. Often they try the patience of the more gloomy and violent maniacs very greatly.

I have seen one of these latter in some corner of the park completely surrounded by a crowd of the harmless ones. They would stand or sit about him in a perfect swarm, looking at him curiously, and watching his every movement with the most owl-like gravity. Some would stand while many would seat themselves upon the ground, but no word would be spoken and not a sound uttered. In perfect silence they would sit or stand, gazing at their gloomy fellow-lunatic as though they thought him the greatest curiosity in the world. In return, the object of this strange espionage generally feigned to be unconscious of their presence, and for whole hours neither side would utter a word. The harmless lunatics, however, unable to restrain their meddlesome and prying proclivities, would draw closer, some of them perhaps plucking at their victim's sleeve, or otherwise disturbing him. Whereupon, he would turn upon them with savage fury, and, scrambling frantically to their feet, they would run for their lives, the perfect picture of ludicrous terror.

On one occasion—and many of this kind happened to me—I was seated in a retired corner of the park
conversing with a friend (who had lately been confined as a lunatic) named Smith, or at least we will call him so. We had not finished our conversation when a number of the harmless lunatics that we have referred to, their curiosity getting the better of them, came and squatted down in a circle around us. They watched us curiously, but very gravely, and in perfect silence, as was their custom, dividing their time between gazing at us and industriously drawing all sorts of fanciful figures in the sand, or digging miniature wells, with pieces of broken sticks. This surveillance became very annoying, and we turned our backs upon them.

This manoeuvre on our part puzzled them for a while, as they wished to bestow their whole attention upon our faces and not our backs. Evidently they were greatly perplexed as to how to meet such a contingency, and did nothing at all for some moments but puzzle their beclouded wits in an endeavor to find some way to check-mate our unexpected movement. Finally two of them rose and came up to within a yard of us, without uttering a word, and bent their heads towards us in listening attitudes.

My friend Smith became great annoyed.

"You go 'way," he said, pushing them back, not very gently. "We don't want you here; you are fools."

This, as may be supposed, had no effect on them whatever, especially when uttered by a lunatic who was much nearer imbecility than they had ever been; hence we left them and retired to another
corner of the park. They followed us at once, and formed another circle, squatting upon the ground, and maintaining a steady silence. The same incident was repeated, with the slight exception that Smith became enraged and knocked one of them down, whereupon they fled as fast as their terrified legs could take them, and thereafter only watched us from a distance.

* * * * *

Of the many lunatics confined in the North Texas Insane Asylum, probably a large proportion of them had lost their minds through intense meditation on religious questions. One of them whom I particularly observed had for some time been declaring his belief in his ability to fly, with no other wings than his arms. Yet so far he had never actually attempted to do so, contenting himself with boasting, and with the long flights that he every day took in fancy. He did not, however, give up the idea, as will presently appear.

Believing that he had only to make the attempt in order to find himself able to fly to heaven, he climbed one day when no one was looking upon the roof of a small building in the park. Perching himself upon the edge of the roof, he stretched out his arms, gave a great "flop" with them, and sailed out into space. But he found that flying without wings was a hazardous experiment, as it chanced that "space" into which he sailed with such confidence was merely the space between the roof of the house and the ground. He fell headlong to the earth, where he lay
as one dead, without motion or sign of life. He had no sooner struck the ground than the attendants, with exclamations of horror and dismay, ran to him and raised his limp form from the ground. The fall however, had not killed him, strange to say, but had done no greater damage—which was sufficient—than to break his leg, and (what was most wonderful of all) the shock restored his mind. He recovered in due time and was discharged. I never saw him afterwards, but I felt sure that he had learned a useful lesson.

There was in the asylum at this time a young woman whose history was one of the saddest I have ever heard. My attention was attracted to her by her peculiar behavior, and by inquiry I learned the melancholy story of her life. It was short, for her years were few; but it was pregnant with unhappy incidents. I had noticed her at times decked out in what she fondly thought was bridal array, and learned that she spent a large portion of her time before her mirror, ornamenting her person with all manner of wedding finery. Each morning, in fond anticipation of the marriage ceremony which was to be performed that day, with herself as bride, she would make an elaborate toilette, and manifested the greatest anxiety in regard to the fit and appearance of her apparel. Then, when the bridegroom did not come at the expected hour, she would wander about the place with a far away look in her eyes, yet with such a hopeful and pathetically expectant air until the close of day, that no one had
the heart to undeceive her. When night came, she would quietly begin her preparations for the morrow's bridal; and though days and weeks and even years had gone by, and still the groom came not, she never lost hope, nor despaired, nor ceased her constant watch for him. But alas! he for whose coming she thus waited, day after day, had long since journeyed whence none ever return; and while she thus passed her time in waiting for his hand-clasp, and listening for his footfall, his body was mouldering to dust in a far-off grave. When she saw each day that he did not come, she did not grow weary nor complain, but only smiled, with a sadness more pitiful than tears, and said that she knew he would come; and so the days passed on. Her extraordinary hopefulness under continual disappointment, and her brave though saddened resignation, were not the least among the features of her strange character and, seemed to spring from a fountain which nothing could exhaust.

Her story is here given, though briefly, both for its interesting features, and the palpable lesson it conveys. As her exact name is really of little consequence, and many of her relatives are still living, let us call her Ellen Smith.

At the time I saw her she was near twenty years of age, though the incidents I am about to relate occurred some two or more years before. Her father was a prominent and well-to-do farmer, and Ellen, his only daughter, was the pride of his life. She was a beautiful and intelligent girl, very popular
among all classes in her native county, and as thoroughly accomplished as the lavishly expended means of a fond father could make her. As she grew up her beauty increased, and many good qualities of mind and heart along with it. It need hardly be said that she had a great number of devoted admirers, and it was astonishing to see what abject slaves she made of them. There were many indeed who manifested such a romantic and chivalrous attachment to her and, showed so much perturbation and distress whenever she exhibited the least sign of displeasure, that they were both pitied and laughed at.

In time, however, she became betrothed to a young farmer in the community named James Robertson. He was a quiet, modest, and unassuming young man who loved her very fondly. Although young he had been thrifty and industrious, and had acquired a comfortable home, and much valuable property lying near the homestead of the Smiths. The other suitors, finding themselves outdone by their modest young rival, and seeing that every hope was lost, retired in despair, leaving a clear field for the victorious young farmer.

Regularly every Sabbath morning James Robertson rode over to the home of his fiancee and passed the day with her, only returning through the quiet country woods to his bachelor quarters when the old-fashioned clock upon the mantelpiece warned the young couple of the approach of Monday. The young farmer's intense and consuming passion for Ellen was well known in the neighborhood, and it was believed that
the loss of her love would overturn his reason, or cause him to commit some desperate deed. Of this Ellen was perfectly well aware, and it is probable that she did not have that love for him that she supposed, or that he expected and demanded. The fiery vehemence of his own love was so intense and exacting as to be painful alike to both, and doubtless so operated, more than any answering fire in her own breast, as an influence in his favor. The chances are that when she had daily such evidences of the consuming intensity of his passion, that its very force pleaded, more strongly with her than any love in her own breast.

However this may be, everything seemed to promise a future of Utopian happiness for the young couple, and many a maiden in the quiet country neighborhood looked upon the progress of this apparently perfect love with mingled feelings of awe and envy. Young Robertson was so happy, and his life so full of joy, that he could not conceal his ecstasy, and his plain but honest face had softened and taken on a new beauty that was wonderful to see.

But in the course of a few months, a new character appeared upon the scene that was destined to work irreparable woe. This character came in the person of a young man named Albert Harrison, who came into the secluded neighborhood early in the autumn. He was a handsome, dashing and agreeable young man, and he soon made devoted friends of half the community. A gayer or more rollicking young gentleman had never been among them, or one more
able to creep into the affections of young and old with such surprising quickness. He adored the gentler sex with outspoken fervor, and had so soft a spot in his own gay heart for them, that he had no difficulty in finding his way to theirs.

In an evil hour he became acquainted with Ellen Smith, and from the first day of their meeting it became evident to all that they had formed a sincere and mutual attachment. Young Harrison after that became a frequent and open visitor to the homestead of the Smiths, and in a comparatively brief space of time his engagement to Ellen was publicly announced. When this intelligence reached James Robertson (and you may be sure that it was conveyed to him with very little delay), he indignantly denied its truth, and repelled the insinuation upon his lady's good faith with such vehemence that his acquaintances soon became chary of mentioning it to him at all. Nevertheless, in spite of his brave denial of the story, it gave him no little uneasiness; and at the first opportunity he mounted his horse, and rode immediately to the home of his affianced wife.

At first she refused to see him, and at this his heart sank within him; but his perseverance overcame her scruples, and she met him in the parlor. Here he gently and cautiously told her the nature of the story that was going the rounds of the neighborhood, and questioned her upon it. Such was her infatuation for Albert Harrison, that she boldly and flatly told James Robertson that she had plighted her troth to him. Astounded and indignant, he en-
deavored to reason with her, but so completely had the luckless girl forgotten her duty and her honor, that nothing he could say succeeded in rousing within her a single feeling of pity for him, or repentance for her conduct. A stormy and passionate interview ensued, and at its conclusion Robertson strode from the house mad with despair, and returned to his home.

Meantime, preparations for the wedding went on and Ellen, in spite of the entreaties, remonstrances, or even commands of her relatives and friends, steadily refused to reconsider her determination to become the wife of Albert Harrison. As for James Robertson, he went about his business very much as usual, and was never heard to utter a word of reproach against his faithless bride, or a threat against his successful rival. It was remarked, however, that he was quietly disposing of all his property, and converting everything he possessed into ready money.

The wedding ceremony was to be performed at eleven o'clock A. M. one Sunday in October. On the morning of that day, Ellen stood before her glass decorating her person with that beautiful and fascinating finery which is at once the pride and despair of every female heart. Her mother, and several of her young girl friends were flying about in a great state of excitement, or bending over the bride to pin this and arrange that, while Ellen, in a perfect flutter of delicious excitement, yet with a strange sinking at her heart (she had such sensations often now), ordered her assistants about like the imperious
little autocrat she was, or admired her pretty face in the mirror.

When all was done, and the great work of dressing for the bridal was actually accomplished, the girl walked with immense dignity (in her character of *bride*, which gave her a greater importance in the eyes of all women than if she had been elevated to the Presidency itself), to and fro across the room, to listen to the semi-critical and wholly admiring comments of her friends, and with the ostensible purpose of ascertaining "how she looked," though she knew perfectly well that she looked irresistibly bewitching.

They were expecting the appearance of the bridegroom every moment, and Ellen had sent the girls out two or three times to stretch their fair necks in an endeavor to catch a sight of the expected groom, when the rapid beat of a horse's hoofs rang out on the crisp autumn air. On hearing this, the girls hastened immediately to the door. A horse, covered with dust and foam, dashed up to the gate, his rider pale and trembling, and bearing visible marks of perturbation and excitement.

But for the present we must leave this scene, in order to relate the adventures of the bridegroom. He had a number of miles to ride before reaching the home of the Smiths, and had accordingly mounted his horse and set forth quite early, accompanied by some half dozen young men. The road they pursued led through a forest all the way. They rode along gayly, passing the time in laughter, song, and anima-
ted conversation. In passing a spot where the road made a sharp turn, and a great mass of tangled undergrowth lined one side of the highway, a human figure put aside a mass of overhanging vines and stepped out before them. The bridegroom rode in front, and the intruder, who bore a long gun in his hand, called out to the cavalcade to halt. They did so mechanically, most of them meanwhile recognizing James Robertson in the man before them, but so wild, unkempt and haggard that hardly a feature resembled those of the man whose happiness, so short a time before, had been the talk of the neighborhood.

"Gentlemen," he said, in a voice they had never heard before, his dry lips working convulsively, while his eyes glared with an expression that was terrible to see, "I would ask of you that you all remain here in this spot as witnesses to what I shall say to this man," waving his hand towards the bridegroom, whose face had grown white with fear.

"Albert Harrison," he continued, with a dreadful calmness, and without giving anyone time to reply, while the young men looked at him, and at the groom, and at one another, in amazed and wondering silence, "you have triumphed over me, and trampled my happiness in the dust. You have stolen my love from me, and ruined my life forever, for without her I do not care to live. You have done all this, and without feeling one sentiment of pity for me. Even now you are on your way to go through with the ceremony that shall make my wife your bride. But your
treachery will avail you nothing, for your hours are numbered! If Ellen Smith cannot be mine, by the God who rules above us, she shall never be yours!"

The countenance of Harrison, during this address, had turned to the hue of death, and with trembling hands and faltering tongue, he begged the enraged man in piteous tones to spare his life.

The only answer that Robertson returned was to glare on his rival with a look of mortal hate, and aiming his gun at him, he shot him through the heart. He then turned back into the silent depths of the forest, and was never apprehended, or even heard from afterwards.

Harrison had fallen from his horse, and now lay, a bloody and lifeless figure, in the dusty road. His horrified friends sprang from their horses and raised the unfortunate man's head, but life was extinct. One of the young men was sent in hot haste for a physician, while another bore the sad news to Ellen Smith. She was standing, as we have seen, in the doorway, as the messenger galloped up. As soon as the miserable girl could be made to realize that Albert was dead, and by whose hand, she fell to the floor in a swoon.

She was roused with great difficulty and only after long hours of anxiety and suspense. But with the return of consciousness it was found that her reason had fled. She became a hopeless and incurable maniac, and in the course of time was incarcerated in the Terrell Asylum.

This is the brief story of the melancholy life of Ellen Smith.
It is fitting, in bringing this chapter to a close, that we speak of the death and manner of burial of those who die at the asylum. Of the large number of unfortunates who are yearly confined there, there are many who never leave it alive. Those that die, as a general rule, are buried on the premises by their fellow-lunatics. Death is always a melancholy thing; but to die far away from home, among strangers, and at a time when the mind has become clouded, is a dreadful thing indeed. To me, it was always a sad and solemn occasion when any of my associates died. Yet no regular funeral, in the common meaning of the word, is given to these unfortunates, such as we of the outside world always have on such occasions. Indeed, this is impossible, and the corpses of such as are to be buried at the asylum are interred with very scant ceremony. The manner of such burials might remind one of the interment of Sir John More, in Wolfe’s immortal lyric:

"We buried him darkly at dead of night,
    The sod with our bayonets turning;
By the struggling moonbeam's misty light,
    And the lantern dimly burning."

The corpse is hastily inclosed in a cheap pine coffin, and in the night, without friends or mourners, the grave is dug, the coffin lowered, and the damp sod thrown in upon it. In this lowly and humble manner, within the precincts of the hospital grounds, many an unfortunate is mouldering to dust; and thus has no doubt ended the mortal career of many who somewhere in the unknown past began their lives with high hopes and burning ambition.