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Confessions of a Maniac.

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From my well known interest in all establishments for the protection of the insane, I had no difficulty in obtaining admission to that of——. I had already inspected many of their apartments, in company with the matron, when she was suddenly called away, and I was left to pursue my observations in a manner better suited to my taste.

Amongst other interesting objects, my attention was attracted by the countenance and manners of a middle-aged female, who strongly reminded me of the picture of Mrs. Siddons as the tragic muse. This lady—for a lady she certainly was—beckoned me towards her; and told me with a look of great meaning, that she wished to relate to me her history. She complained bitterly of her confinement, and added, that, when she had told me all, I should judge whether the mode of treatment in that institution was not the worst that could possibly be adopted in her case.

These complaints, with the prevailing idea so frequent amongst the insane, that the body rather than the mind requires to be restored to health, convinced me that there was more of malady in her case than met the eye. There was, however, at the same time, so much intelligence in the expression of her face, such evident superiority in her manners and appearance, and traces still so striking of what had once been beauty of the highest order, that I felt strongly tempted to listen to her story. The consequence was, I found myself, on the following day, by permission of the authorities of the place, seated in her little apartment, while she opened the narrative, (which would doubtless have been told to any other listener as attentive as myself,) in the following simple manner:—

We lived in a pleasant habitation in the midst of a lovely garden, my sister Lillah, and I. My mother died when Lillah was a baby; and my father, who had nothing else to love, thought we were the best and the prettiest children in the world. And so perhaps we were. At least I may speak of Lillah, for the wild rose on its waving bough was not more delicate or fair. For myself, "men said that I was beautiful;" and the people of our village, and the strangers who came to our house, paid me the most marked and flattering attentions, I can well remember—but these things have all passed away, and it behoves me now to be silent in the dust.

My father took great pleasure in our education, especially mine; for I had talents to lay hold of every branch of learning, and a thirst so insatiable for every kind of knowledge, that often, when I ought to have been attending to my domestic duties, I was buried in the pages of ancient history, or occupied by the investigation of some disputed point in philosophy or science. Nor were the lighter accomplishments of female education forgotten. Music was the amusement of my father's leisure hours. With me it was a passion; for nothing else seemed to satisfy my soul. Music, however, though it satisfied me for a time, was apt to leave me melancholy and depressed; and the result of my various pursuits was only this—that all was vanity.

To my sister, the aspect of the world, and the tenor of life, were as opposite to mine, as if we had lived in two different planets. Tormented by no aspiring dreams, but simple in her tastes, domestic, quiet, meek, and pleased with little things, she was uniformly cheerful; and her happy voice used to be heard in the house and the garden, singing as gaily as a young bird.

Lillah was five years younger than myself, it was therefore my duty, and sometimes I fancied it was my pleasure, to attend to her learning. My system of instruction, however, was too fitful and capricious to be attended with any striking results, and she was too happy in her partial ignorance to feel any thing like ar-
dour in the pursuit of greater knowledge.

Notwithstanding these deficiencies, my sister was so lovely and so loving, so gentle and so kind, it was impossible not to regard her with feelings of the utmost tenderness; and my father and I, though she occupied but little of our attention, would either of us have defended her from danger at the peril of our lives? Besides this, I know not how it was, but Lillah, in her own little sphere of usefulness, was accustomed to accomplish more than I ever did in mine; for such was her love of order, and the simple and direct application of such talents as she had cultivated, to whatever end she had in view, that she became, as she advanced in years, the support of our domestic comfort, without losing any thing of her refinement, her gaiety, or of that indecipherable loveliness, which seemed less to be a part of her nature, than to shine like a halo around her wherever she went.

These were our days of happiness. Every one has some such point to look back to, that seems in the distant past like a green island of rest, in the troubled ocean of life; and this was mine: for we lived together so harmoniously, and yet were all so different. Perhaps it was from that very reason, that we never interfered with each other's sphere of action; but all seemed rather to supply what might otherwise have been found wanting in one.

Such was the tenor of our lives, when my father's failing health rendered it necessary for him to engage a curate; and a gentleman accordingly came down from Cambridge, with the highest recommendations to my father's confidence and esteem.

We had expected to see a youth whose education was but just completed; but we found a man of nearly thirty, whose serious turn of thought, and studious habits, had combined with his religious impressions, to induce him to choose the life of a clergyman; and as he was not in want of money, and preferred residing in the country, he was perfectly satisfied with the humble sphere of action which my father's offer opened to his choice.

"What do you think of his appearance?" asked Lillah, the first time we were left alone together, after he had made his call at the parsonage. And without waiting for an answer, she went on—"He frightens me to death. I am sure if I were to make the slightest blunder in the use, or even the accent of a word, it would offend his ear. I am determined, however, not to care for him; but to talk on in my usual way, the same as if he was not present; and if he thinks my conversation too trifling for his notice, he may turn to you. But tell me what you think of him, Flora?"

She repeated the question, and looked anxiously for my answer; but neither on this occasion, nor on any subsequent one, was I able for a long time to make up my mind. I had been accustomed to admiration, both from my equals, and from those who could neither understand nor appreciate me; but this man seemed quite insensible to my superiority. I had been accustomed to flattery; but the tenour of his conversation, though it could not be called rude, was calculated to rob me of all false pretensions, and reduce me to the scale of an ordinary woman. I had been accustomed to take the lead in conversation—to be drawn out, and made way for, as if my opinion was law to the society in which I moved, but now I often felt myself involuntarily shrinking back, as if I possessed not a single sentiment worth uttering.

I will call our new acquaintance Ennle, for it is of no consequence to you or to me, what was his real name. Suffice it, that he became associated, not only with our domestic arrangements, but with our pleasures, our studies, and with all things in which my father had been accustomed to take a part. Indeed, we became more than ever dependent upon such a companion, for, as I said before, my father's health failed rapidly, and he had an affection of the head which disqualified him for all literary pursuits.

My sister, unlike me in this, as in all other things, soon recovered her self-possession in the presence of our new friend. She even talked to him with the utmost composure, about such