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Ten Days In A Mad-House: The Women's Lunatic Asylum On Blackwell's Island

Ten Days in a Mad-House

Nellie Bly



The Women's Lunatic Asylum on Blackwell's Island



Synopsis

Ten Days in a Mad-HouseThe Women's Lunatic Asylum on Blackwell's IslandNellie BlyTen Days in a Mad-House is a book by newspaper reporter Nellie Bly. It was initially published as a series of articles for the New York World. Bly later compiled the articles into a book, which was published by Ian L. Munro in New York City in 1887. The book comprised Bly's reportage for the New York World while on an undercover assignment in which she feigned insanity at a women's boarding house, so as to be involuntarily committed to an insane asylum. She then investigated the reports of brutality and neglect at the Women's Lunatic Asylum on Blackwell's Island.On the 22d of September I was asked by the World if I could have myself committed to one of the asylums for the insane in New York, with a view to writing a plain and unvarnished narrative of the treatment of the patients therein and the methods of management, etc. Did I think I had the courage to go through such an ordeal as the mission would demand? Could I assume the characteristics of insanity to such a degree that I could pass the doctors, live for a week among the insane without the authorities there finding out that I was only a "chiel amang 'em takin' notes?" I said I believed I could. I had some faith in my own ability as an actress and thought I could assume insanity long enough to accomplish any mission intrusted to me. Could I pass a week in the insane ward at Blackwell's Island? I said I could and I would. And I did. My instructions were simply to go on with my work as soon as I felt that I was ready. I was to chronicle faithfully the experiences I underwent, and when once within the walls of the asylum to find out and describe its inside workings, which are always, so effectually hidden by white-capped nurses, as well as by bolts and bars, from the knowledge of the public. "We do not ask you to go there for the purpose of making sensational revelations. Write up things as you find them, good or bad; give praise or blame as you think best, and the truth all the time. But I am afraid of that chronic smile of yours," said the editor. "I will smile no more," I said, and I went away to execute my delicate and, as I found out, difficult mission.

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