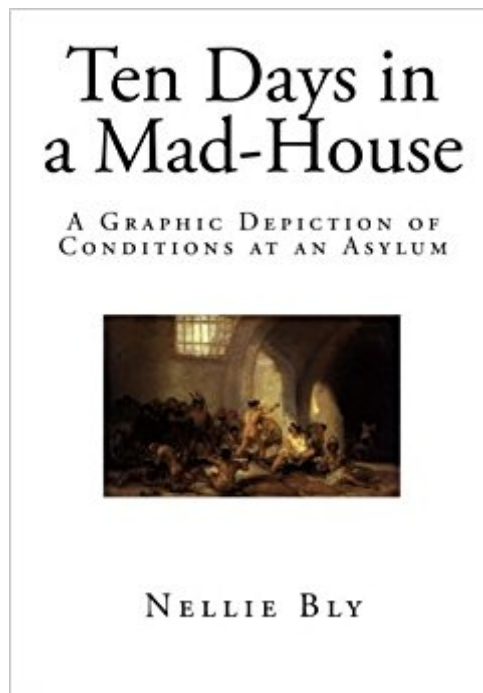




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Ten Days In A Mad-House: A Graphic Depiction Of Conditions At An Asylum (Social Science - Insanity)



Synopsis

Ten Days in a Mad-House
Nellie Bly
A Graphic Depiction of Conditions at an Asylum
Since my experiences in Blackwell's Island Insane Asylum were published in the World I have received hundreds of letters in regard to it. The edition containing my story long since ran out, and I have been prevailed upon to allow it to be published in book form, to satisfy the hundreds who are yet asking for copies. I am happy to be able to state as a result of my visit to the asylum and the exposures consequent thereon, that the City of New York has appropriated \$1,000,000 more per annum than ever before for the care of the insane. So I have at least the satisfaction of knowing that the poor unfortunates will be the better cared for because of my work.
Nellie Bly
The book's graphic depiction of conditions at the asylum caused a sensation which brought Bly lasting fame and prompted a grand jury to launch its own investigation with Bly assisting. The jury's report resulted in an \$850,000 increase in the budget of the Department of Public Charities and Corrections.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"Ten Days in a Mad-House" is a fascinating exposé of an insane asylum in New York City in the late 19th century. Nellie Bly (the pen name for female journalist Elizabeth Jane Cochran), takes an assignment from the New York World newspaper to go undercover into the notorious Blackwell's Island Insane Asylum and write about it. She easily succeeds in convincing a judge and a doctor that she is insane, and a few hours later, she's become an inmate in the asylum. The conditions

inside are abominable, with the female inmates being abused by the staff members, the food is inedible, and most of the inmates are freezing in the cold, drafty wards. It becomes obvious to Ms. Bly that once admitted to the hospital, few inmates will ever leave, even the ones who are perfectly sane. The hospital is simply a convenient dumping ground for misfits and others who don't fit neatly into society. Even the women who were genuinely insane received no treatment, only abuse and cruelty from the doctors and nurses on the hospital staff. The story reminded me of Angelina Jolie's character in the movie "The Changeling," where she is sent to an insane asylum by the police to keep her from exposing their ineptitude and corruption. It's a scary, depressing time for Ms. Bly, even knowing that she will be rescued in a few days. As a result of Ms. Bly's exposé, a grand jury required the city to invest a substantial amount of money in improving conditions on Blackwell's Island. The Kindle edition also includes two shorter undercover articles by Nellie Bly. It's a short book that most readers will finish in a couple of hours, but it's well worth the time for an absorbing look into the state of mental health treatment in an earlier era.

I simply can't resist adding my voice to all the other positive reviews of this ebook. This is the Kindle edition of a book that first came out in 1887, a compilation of newspaper articles by an American reporter using the name of Nellie Bly. She arranged to have herself admitted involuntarily to the worst lunatic asylum in New York to find out what conditions were like and, if anything, got more than she bargained for. Her account of her ten days incarcerated with both the insane and those mistakenly deemed to be insane is no less harrowing now than it was at the time of her investigation. However, the result of the author's exposé was to have conditions in the asylum (and mental care in New York and elsewhere in general) greatly changed through the new attitudes and increased funding that followed her evidence to a grand jury set up expressly for the purpose of hearing this. For example, following the newspaper reports several of the 'nurses' who were harshest to the unfortunate inmates were dismissed. Because of the power of her reportage, the fame of Nellie Bly (real name Elizabeth Cochrane) has justly lasted into the 21st century. The book is very well written without being overly long, and is supplemented by a couple of shorter reports, one on the workings of the employment agencies of the time and another more heartening one about the work of girls in a box-making factory. Here, among the poorest of the poor, the intrepid reporter found much of the sympathy and kindness that was absent in the mad-house, and the reader as a consequence finds her own faith in humanity somewhat renewed. This is a report that I am glad I did not miss, despite the emotions roused in me by the details it contains.

Fascinating. I was looking for something completely unrelated when I ran across this eBook and read it in a day. This story is a non-fiction account of reporter Nellie Bly's purposeful incarceration in 1887 in the Women's Lunatic Asylum on Blackwell's Island. Going under an assumed identity, she spent ten days observing the conditions the women were subjected to -- horrid food, a complete absence of anything to do, no effort at rehabilitation, and frigid conditions, to name just a few. After leaving the institution ten days later, her report caused a Grand Jury to convene, and the state awarded a million-dollar increase in funding to the budget of the Department of Corrections and Charities. What's frightening about the book is the ease in which Nellie Bly got herself committed. All she had to do was act as if she didn't know who she was, cause discomfort among the women in the boarding house she checked into, and that was it. Insane asylums of that day were little more than a dumping ground for penniless trouble cases and people who were essentially disposable. Many sane people were thrown into these facilities, but the conditions were so horrible that if they weren't insane when they entered, they would shortly be so. Disregarding the date and her sex, Nellie Bly is a hero. Considering the date and her sex, she was a saint.

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