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*Nellie Bly*

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#1737523 in Books 2015-12-31 Original language: English PDF # 1 10.00 x .20 x 7.00l, .38 #File Name: 152299780688 pages | File size: 59.Mb

**Nellie Bly : Ten Days in a Mad-House: The Women's Lunatic Asylum on Blackwell's Island** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Ten Days in a Mad-House: The Women's Lunatic Asylum on Blackwell's Island:

96 of 98 people found the following review helpful. One Crazy Woman!By dear readerAs a new resident to Roosevelt Island (formerly Blackwell's Island) I wanted to learn a little bit history surrounding my new home, so I picked up this book. Nellie Bye, a journalist in the late 1800s, was challenged by her editor to have herself committed to the insane asylum on Blackwell's Island, a small strip of land in the East River between Manhattan and Queens. First on her

agenda was to have herself declared insane. She located a woman's work house (sort of a hostel for women), was taken in there, and began to behave as she thought an insane person might...staring off into space, amnesia, feigning fright of the other women, and (this was the determining factor) staying awake all night! Oh, the horror!! In today's society, this behavior would not have earned a second glance. Within 24 hours, Nellie was sent to Bellevue Psychiatric Hospital where she was examined by the physicians, declared insane, and ferried over to Blackwell's Island for "rehabilitation". She found the conditions to be atrocious. Inmates were fed foul-smelling food, completely lacking in nutrition. They were required to share the same bath water, no matter that some had obvious skin diseases and open wounds. The weather was cold and inmates were not provided warm clothes and blankets. Verbal and physical abuse were doled out on a regular basis. Though she acted as her normal self in the asylum and begged to be examined and declared sane, she was ignored. After 10 days, Nellie's editor was able to have her discharged. She reported her findings in a series of articles she wrote about her experience (which were collected into this book) did much to improve conditions on Blackwell's Island. This book is short, absorbing, and informative. Great for anyone interested in New York, the late 1800s, or insane asylums.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Impressive 19th century journalism

By Kathleen W. What a badass Nellie Bly was. I've been wanting to read this for a long time. I remember learning about Bly in school but was reminded again of her investigative reporting when I saw a 4-D film at the Newseum in Washington, DC that touched on a few groundbreaking events in the history of journalism. It has taken me too long to finally get around to reading her personal account. I can only imagine how shocking this must have been at the time if it's release in 1887. Today, we have seen so many depictions in popular culture of the unsympathetic nursing and inhumane treatment of institutionalized people that I can't help but wonder what an uncensored Nellie Bly would write today without concerns of being improper. What she did was courageous in a way that is inconceivable in 2017, where someone with a cellphone camera can effectively expose inhumane treatment to the rest of the world with far fewer risks than a woman working undercover in the 19th century.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Insight into the Institutions for the Insane

By Peggy Harmann What an interesting book! The author took quite the challenge to be admitted to an institution for the insane and to live there for 10 days without any special protection or consideration. It is heart breaking to realize that many fine people ended up in these terrible places - either due to uncaring decisions by legal or medical personnel or the deliberate abuse of relatives or others.

Ten Days in a Mad-House

The Women's Lunatic Asylum on Blackwell's Island

Nellie Bly

Ten 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 among 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 Blackwells 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.

About the Author

Nellie Bly (May 5, 1864 January 27, 1922) was the pen name of American journalist Elizabeth Jane Cochrane. She was a ground-breaking reporter known for a record-breaking trip around the world in 72 days, in emulation of Jules Verne's fictional character Phileas Fogg, and an exposé in which she faked insanity to study a mental institution from within. She was a pioneer in her field, and launched a new kind of investigative journalism. In addition to her writing, she was also an industrialist and charity worker.