THE NEW PAPER!
THE "EVENING WORLD."
Beginning To-morrow.
PRICE 1 CENT.

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NEW YORK, SUNDAY, OCTOBER 9, 1887.

BEHIND ASYLUM BARS.

The Mystery of the Unknown Insane Girl.

Remarkable Story of the Successful Impersonation of Insanity.

How Nellie Brown Deceived Judges, Reporters and Medical Experts.

She Tells Her Story of How She Passed at Bellevue Hospital.

Displaying the Role of Insanity Before Her Mirror and Practicing It at the Temporary Home for Women—Arrested and Brought Before Judge Duffy—He Decides She is Some Mother's Darling and Committed to the Care of the Physicians for the Insane at Bellevue—Experts Declare Her Demented—Harsh Treatment of the Insane at Bellevue—"Charity Patients Should Not Complain"—Vivid Pictures of Hospital Life—How Our Esteemed Contemporaries Have Fathered a False Trail—Some Needed Light Afforded Them—Chapters of Absorbing Interest in the Experience of a Feminine "Amateur Casual."

A DELICATE MISSION.

I.

ON the 23d 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 pleasant inmates and the methods of management. Ay. Did I think I had the courage to go through with an ordeal as the mission would demand? Could I assume the class-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 "crazed woman 'cm takin' notes?" I said I believed I could. I had some faith in my own ability on 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 simple 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 the 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 breakthrough. Write up things as you find them, good or bad; give praise or blame as you think best, and use truth all the time. Don't be afraid of the chance of being sent to the asylum," 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.

THE PRELIMINARIES.

All the preliminary preparations for my ordeal were left to be planned by myself. Only one thing was decided upon, namely, that I should pass under the pseudonym of Nellie Brown, the initials of which would agree with my own name and my nickname, so that there would be no difficulty in keeping track of my movements and assisting me out of any difficulties or dangers I might get into. There were weeks of getting into the character, for, I did not know them. I might adopt one of two courses. Either I could feign insanity at the house of friends and get myself committed, or else obtain the services of some physicians, or I could go to my goal by way of the police courts. On reflection I thought it wiser not to trust myself upon my friends or to get my good-natured doctors to assist me in my purpose. Besides, to get to Blackwell's Island my friends would have had to feign poverty, and, unfortunately for me, I could not, I was afraid of assuming with the struggling poor, except my own self, was only very superficial. So I determined upon the plan which led to the successful accomplishment of my mission and to which the bulk of the following narrative will be devoted. I succeeded in getting committed to the insane ward of the crazier I was thought to be by all except one physician, whose kindness and gentle ways I shall not soon forget.

PREPARING FOR THE ORDEAL.

But to return to my work and my mission. After receiving my instructions I returned to my boarding-house, and that evening came I began to practise the role in which I was to make my debut on the morrow. Was a difficult task, I thought, to appear before a crowd of people and convince them that I was insane. I had never been insane before to my life and at not the faintest idea of what their actions were like. And then to be examined by a number of learned physicians who make insanity a specialty and who daily come in contact with insane people! How could I hope to pass these doctors and convince them that I was crazy? I feared that they would not be deceived. I began to think my task a hopeless one. I would try it, however. I took a mirror and examined my face. I remembered all I had read of the designs of crazy people, how first of all they must have staring eyes, and so I opened mine as wide as possible and stared unblinkingly at my own reflection. I seemed you the sight was not reassuring, even to myself, especially when I thought of the sleepless nights, the struggle, I succeeded only partially, but I consoled myself with the thought that in a few nights more I would have to look like one who had spent a fortnight in a lot of lunatics. The weather was not cold, and I could go out with a light shawl on, for I had come wintry chills run across up and down my back in very mockery of the perspiration which was trickling down my forehead from out one of my bangs. Between times practicing before the mirror, I would amuse my friends by making hideous sketches of impromptu and impossible ghost stories, so that when the time came I would be able to keep up the belief that I was in a fit mood for my mission. I was so nervous, however, that I vanished my breakfast. Slowly and sadly I took my leave of friends and quietly take leave of a few of the most precious articles known to modern civilization. Tenderly I put my toothbrush in my satchel, when taking a final rub of the soap, I murmured, "It may be for days and it may be for long O!" I packed in the old clothing I had selected for the occasion. It was five years old, short waist, long skirt, and I had a pair of spectacles without lenses, I'll bet as well to take a set "food look." I mused, for I knew that I would have to undergo the strain of playing crazy and being shut up with a crowd of mad people. Slowly I left the house and I would never get back. But not once did I think of shirking my mission. Calmly, outwardly at least, I went out to my crazy business. I walked down Second avenue to the Third avenue elevated, I took a second enter one of the many temporary homes or shelters for females, and that once in I should do the best I could to get forwarded on my journey to Blackwell's Island. The place selected was the Temporary Home for Females, 84 Second avenue.

IN THE TEMPORARY HOME.

II.

I was left to begin my career as Nellie Brown, the insane girl. As I walked down the avenue I assumed the look which maidens wear in public and entitled "crazing." I passed through the little paved yard to the entrance of the Home. I pulled the bell, which sounded loud enough for a church chime, and presently the door opened and I stepped down the home which I intended should are long cast me forth and out upon the charity of the public. The door was thrown back with a vengeance and a short, yellow-haired girl of some thirteen summers stood before me.

"Is the matron in?" I asked faintly.

"Yes, she's in her room. Go to the book parlor," answered the girl in a loud voice, without the change in her cordially matured tones.

I followed these not overkind or polite instructions and found the matron. I accomplished the book parlor. There I awaited the arrive of my sorrows. I had been seated some twenty minutes

AT THE TEMPORARY HOME FOR WOMEN.

at the door, when a slender woman, clad in a plain dark dress, entered and stopping before me, ejaculated inquiringly, "Well?"

"Are you the matron?" I asked.

"Yes, I am the matron," (the matron is stoic) I am her assistant. What do you want?"

"I want to stay here for a few days, if you can accommodate me."

"Well, I have no single rooms; we are so crowded, but if you will occupy a room with another girl, I should be glad to have you for one."

"I will be glad of that," I answered. How much do you charge?" I had brought out the question which I knew was the one I dreaded that the sooner my funds were exhausted the sooner I should be in jail and be let out at last what I was working for.

"We charge 25 cents a night," was her reply to my question, and with that I paid her for one night's lodging and led the way up two flights of having something else to look after. Left to amuse myself I took a survey of my surroundings. The room I had become familiar with my chamber's cell, which revealed the doorbolts in its windows, begins cleaging in the basement and simultaneously the same in the second story. I imagined, from the obvious signs, that dinner was over, for the most one had said anything to me, I made no effort to follow in the hungry train. Yet I did wish that some one would invite me down, and I was glad when the assistant matron came up and asked me if I did not want something to eat.

I replied that I did, and then I asked her what her name was. Mrs. Stanard she said, and I immediately wrote it down in a notebook I had taken with me for the purpose of making memoranda, and in which I had written several pages of matter, which I thought would be useless. I then equipped I awaited developments. But my dinner—well, I should not care to describe our dinner—I followed the assistant into the basement, where a large number of women were eating, and I sat down to my meal for one at a table with nine other women. The assistant served savory who had opened the door now put in an appearance, and I felt her eyes upon me, alternately and staring me out of countenance she said:

"Boiled mutton, boiled beef, beans, potatoes, coffee or tea?"

"Beef, potatoes, coffee and bread," I responded.

"Bread goes in," she explained, as she made her way out. I was not very long before she returned. I had not very long before she returned. I had not very long before she returned with what I had ordered, and I was soon finished my meal, which I had gone down before me. I began my simple meal. It was not very long before the assistant came to the table and watched the others. After dinner I went upstairs and resumed my former position in my cell. The room was very cold and uncomfortable and had fully made up my mind that I could not endure the cold for a long time, so the sooner I assumed my insane position the sooner I could be transferred to the warmer wards. Alas, that was longest the longest day I had ever lived. I remember one of the girls, a young Irish girl, was cut off my meagre supply. One old cutting but read and commited to her bed and commodiously said out loud, "Georgie," without lifting her eyes from her book. I felt sorry for the poor girl, but I could not help it, for I was so cold that I felt that I could not endure it longer. I thought, and the mother never had a word, unless she heard my name, which she did not. Another woman always just going to sleep and waking frequently to ask if I was comfortable. I felt thankfully thankful it was only herself she was awaking. The hours passed on and I felt I was doing nothing, but there were a few who made lace and knitted unceasingly.

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NELLIE PRACTISES INSANITY AT HOME.

Blackwell's Island, where I spent ten days and nights and which I shall remember while I shall never forget. I took upon myself to enact the part of a poor, unfortunate crazy girl and felt in my story not to tell a single thing of the ill agreeable results that should follow. I became one of the city's insane wards for that length of time, experienced what I had saw and heard during the period of the treatment accorded to the helpless class of our population, when I had been and I had enough my reliance was promptly secured. I felt the instant that with the exception of the treatment that I was confined more able to enjoy the free breath of heaven; regret that I could have remained with my friends, some of the unfortunate women who lived and suffered with me, and would, I am convinced are not in a case as I was and am now myself. But now let me say one word to the readers of this story. I entered the insane ward on the island I made no attempt to keep up the assumed role of insanity. I talked and acted just as I felt like doing. The strange to say, I lie more easily I talked and acted

IN THE EVENING!

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door-bell seemed to be going all the time and so did the attendants' bells. In the latter sea, between one of those girls who sing all the time stationed at all the stage-door entrances, I had been confined for the last fifty years. There is such a thing as marriage in the insane asylum. The origin of the best brought more people who wanted shelter for the night. Excepting one woman who was from one country on a day's shopping expedition, they were working women, some of them with children. A three years' sleeping Mrs. Stanard came to me and said:

SEE BEGINS TO SHOW SIGNS.

"What is wrong with you? Have you some sorrow troubles?"

"No," I said, almost stunned at the suggestion.

"Why?" she said.

"Oh, because," she said, womanlike, "I can see it in your face. It tells the story of a great trouble."

"Yes, everything is so sad," I said in a haphazard way which I thought indicated a deep sense of sadness.

"But you must not allow that to worry you. We all have our troubles, but we get over them in time. What kind of work are you trying to get?"

"I do not know; we all so sad," I replied.

"Would you like to be a nurse for children and wear a nice white cap and apron?" she asked.

I put my handkerchief to my face to hide a smile and replied in a muffled tone, "I never worked; I don't know how."

"But you must learn," she urged; "all these women have work."

"Do they?" I said in a low, thrilling whisper. "Why, she looks terrible to me; I just like crazy women. I am so afraid of them."

Mrs. Stanard took my hand and answered, sentiously, "but they are good, honest working women. We are all honest here, dear."

I again used my handkerchief to hide a smile, as I thought that before morning she would at least think she had one crazy person among her flock.

"They all look crazy," I asserted, again, and I am afraid of them. There are so many crazy people about, and one can never tell what they will do. Then there are so many murders committed, and the police never catch the murderers."

I had finished with a sob that would have broken up an audience of blasé critics. She gave a sudden and sympathetic start, and I felt my end approached gone home. It was amusing to see what a remarkable effect my words took. She got up from her chair and to whisper hurriedly: "I'll come back to talk with you later; I have work to do now. Do not come down, and she did not. When the sapper-bell rang I went along with the others to the

NELLIE'S FIRST MEAL AT THE HOME.

basement and partook of the evening meal, which was similar to dinner, except that there was a smaller bill of fare and more people, the women who are employed outside during the day having returned. After the evening meal I was ordered upstairs to my cell. I sat and stood, as there were not chairs enough to go round. I walked two weeks, who seemed of all the crowd to be the most sensible, and I selected them as the ones to work out my salvation, or, more properly speaking, my condemnation and release. Mrs. Stanard noticed my seclusion. I felt lonely, I asked if I might join their company. The unanimous answer was "Yes," and I was soon in the midst of the conversations. Several times I told them I thought everybody in the house looked crazy, and they were slow to catch on to my very original remark. One said her name was Mrs. King and that she was a Southern woman. Then she said that I had a northern accent. She asked me bluntly if I did not really come from the South. I said I did. I then asked the Southern woman out to talk about the Boston boats and asked me if I knew at what time they left. I was so nervous I forgot my Southern accent instantly and told her the correct time of sailing. She then asked me what I was in for. I said I was going to do so if I had ever done any. I replied that I thought it very sad that there were so many women in the world who were insane and in reply that she had been unfortunate and had lost her mind. Mrs. King said she had worked at correcting proofs on a medical dictionary for some time, but that her health had given way under the task and that she was going to Kansas again. When she said came to tell us to go to bed I remarked that I was afraid, and again received the assurance that all the women in the house seemed to be crazy. The nurse insisted on my going to bed, and I finally consented to do so. I was not the said decidedly: "No; for every one is in the house should take you for a crazy." Finally I allowed them to take me to a room.

A KIND SOUL DISCOVERED.

Here I must introduce a new personage by name into my narrative. It is the woman who had been a proofreader and who was insane. Her name in her bios was a Mrs. Caine, who was as courageous as she was good-hearted. She came into my room and sat and talked with the long time, taking down my hair and talking to me. She then told me to go to mention and go to bed, but I stubbornly refused to do so. Mrs. Caine then gave a signal to the inmates of the house had gathered around us. They expressed themselves in the same way.

"Why, she's crazy enough!"

"I am afraid to sleep with her; she will murder us all before morning." One woman was our senior, a policeman to take her to the station-house. They were all in a terrible and real state of fright. No one wanted to be responsible for me, and the woman who was to occupy the room with me declared that she would not sleep with that crazy woman" for all the money of the Vanderbilts. I was then left to myself for a time, but that did not last long. I felt her I would like to have her do so. So we went to bed together. I was very nervous, but I lay down on the bed, watching of my movements. She tried to induce me to do the down, but I was afraid of by the. I knew that if I once gave way I should fall asleep and dream I was pleasantly and peacefully as a child. I should, to use a slang expression, be fixed. I gave myself real awake. I had one a-a up my mind to stay awake all night. So I insisted on sitting on the edge of the bed and keeping myself at vacancy. My poor companion was put into a wretched state of nervousness. Every few moments she would rise up to look at me. She told me that my eyes were terrible, and then began to question me, asking me where I had lived, how long I had been in New York, what I was doing, and many things besides. To all her questionings I had but one response—I was very sick. I forgot everything, that I ever since my headache had come on I could not remember.

One scene I now recall I have pictured her and what a kind heart she had! But now I forgot all about it. One night I had dreamed of a night-mare. After I had been in the room an hour or so I was startled by hearing Mrs. Caine groaning and lying in the next room. I began to imagine that I was dreaming, and I was in a terrible state. The dreadful groans continued, and I was at last wide awake, looked around, frightened, and listened. I was so nervous I could not lie down and sleep. I heard her asking another woman some questions. The woman answered that she had no idea that the woman had had a hideous nightmare. She had been dreaming of me. Mrs. Caine was sitting up in bed, rocking herself to and fro with a knife in my hand, with the intention of killing her. I was so frightened I could not even be able to scream, and so to awaken herself an-scare off her nightmare. I asked Mrs. Caine got into bed with me, considerably agitated, but very sleepy.

But I was so frightened myself up, had worn, and was determined to keep awake all night. I could not sleep. My mind was in impression—to a successful end in the morning. I felt I was a-a-a-