CLIFFORD WHITTINGHAM BEERS

A MIND THAT FOUND ITSELF: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

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Beers C.

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Содержание

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I

This story is derived from as human a document as ever existed; and, because of its uncommon nature, perhaps no one thing contributes so much to its value as its authenticity. It is an autobiography, and more: in part it is a biography; for, in telling the story of my life, I must relate the history of another self—a self which was dominant from my twenty-fourth to my twenty-sixth year. During that period I was unlike what I had been, or what I have been since. The biographical part of my autobiography might be called the history of a mental civil war, which I fought single-handed on a battlefield that lay within the compass of my skull. An Army of Unreason, composed of the cunning and treacherous thoughts of an unfair foe, attacked my bewildered consciousness with cruel persistency, and would have destroyed me, had not a triumphant Reason finally interposed a superior strategy that saved me from my unnatural self.

I am not telling the story of my life just to write a book. I tell it because it seems my plain duty to do so. A narrow escape from death and a seemingly miraculous return to health after an apparently fatal illness are enough to make a man ask himself: For what purpose was my life spared? That question I have asked myself, and this book is, in part, an answer.

I was born shortly after sunset about thirty years ago. My ancestors, natives of England, settled in this country not long after the *Mayflower* first sailed into Plymouth Harbor. And the blood of these ancestors, by time and the happy union of a Northern man and a Southern woman—my parents—has perforce been blended into blood truly American.

The first years of my life were, in most ways, not unlike those of other American boys, except as a tendency to worry made them so. Though the fact is now difficult for me to believe, I was painfully shy. When first I put on short trousers, I felt that the eyes of the world were on me; and to escape them I hid behind convenient pieces of furniture while in the house and, so I am told, even sidled close to fences when I walked along the street. With my shyness there was a degree of self-consciousness which put me at a disadvantage in any family or social gathering. I talked little and was ill at ease when others spoke to me.

Like many other sensitive and somewhat introspective children, I passed through a brief period of morbid righteousness. In a game of "one-old-cat," the side on which I played was defeated. On a piece of scantling which lay in the lot where the contest took place, I scratched the score. Afterwards it occurred to me that my inscription was perhaps misleading and would make my side appear to be the winner. I went back and corrected the ambiguity. On finding in an old tool chest at home a coin or medal, on which there appeared the text, "Put away the works of darkness and put on the armour of light," my sense of religious propriety was offended. It seemed a sacrilege to use in this way such a high sentiment, so I destroyed the coin.

I early took upon myself, mentally at least, many of the cares and worries of those about me. Whether in this I was different from other youngsters who develop a ludicrous, though pathetic, sense of responsibility for the universe, I do not know. But in my case the most extreme instance occurred during a business depression, when the family resources were endangered. I began to fear that my father (than whom a more hopeful man never lived) might commit suicide.

After all, I am not sure that the other side of my nature—the natural, healthy, boyish side—did not develop equally with these timid and morbid tendencies, which are not so very uncommon in childhood. Certainly the natural, boyish side was more in evidence on the surface. I was as good a sport as any of my playfellows in such games as appealed to me, and I went a-fishing when the

chance offered. None of my associates thought of me as being shy or morose. But this was because I masked my troubles, though quite unconsciously, under a camouflage of sarcasm and sallies of wit, or, at least, what seemed to pass for wit among my immature acquaintances. With grown-ups, I was at times inclined to be pert, my degree of impudence depending no doubt upon how ill at ease I was and how perfectly at ease I wished to appear. Because of the constant need for appearing happier than I really was, I developed a knack for saying things in an amusing, sometimes an epigrammatic, way. I recall one remark made long before I could possibly have heard of Malthus or have understood his theory regarding birth rate and food supply. Ours being a large family of limited means and, among the five boys of the family, unlimited appetites, we often used the cheaper, though equally nutritious, cuts of meat. On one occasion when the steak was tougher than usual, I epitomized the Malthusian theory by remarking: "I believe in fewer children and better beefsteak!"

One more incident of my boyhood days may assist the reader to make my acquaintance. In my early teens I was, for one year, a member of a boy choir. Barring my voice, I was a good chorister, and, like all good choir-boys, I was distinguished by that seraphic passiveness from which a reaction of some kind is to be expected immediately after a service or rehearsal. On one occasion this reaction in me manifested itself in a fist fight with a fellow choir-boy. Though I cannot recall the time when I have not relished verbal encounters, physical encounters had never been to my taste, and I did not seek this fight. My assailant really goaded me into it. If the honors were not mine, at least I must have acquitted myself creditably, for an interested passer-by made a remark which I have never forgotten. "That boy is all right after he gets started," he said. About twelve years later I did get started, and could that passer-by have seen me on any one of several occasions, he would have had the satisfaction of knowing that his was a prophetic eye.

At the usual age, I entered a public grammar school in New Haven, Connecticut, where I graduated in 1891. In the fall of that year I entered the High School of the same city. My school courses were completed with as little trouble as scholastic distinction. I always managed to gain promotion, however, when it was due; and, though few of my teachers credited me with real ability, they were always able to detect a certain latent capacity, which they evidently believed would one day develop sufficiently to prevent me from disgracing them.

Upon entering the High School I had such ambitions as any schoolboy is apt to have. I wished to secure an election to a given secret society; that gained, I wished to become business manager of a monthly magazine published by that society. In these ambitions I succeeded. For one of my age I had more than an average love of business. Indeed, I deliberately set about learning to play the guitar well enough to become eligible for membership in the Banjo Club—and this for no more aesthetic purpose than to place myself in line for the position of manager, to which I was later elected.

In athletics there was but one game, tennis, in which I was actively interested. Its quick give-and-take suited my temperament, and so fond was I of it that during one summer I played not fewer than four thousand games. As I had an aptitude for tennis and devoted more time to it than did any of my schoolmates, it was not surprising that I acquired skill enough to win the school championship during my senior year. But that success was not due entirely to my superiority as a player. It was due in part to what I considered unfair treatment; and the fact well illustrates a certain trait of character which has often stood me in good stead. Among the spectators at the final match of the tournament were several girls. These schoolmates, who lived in my neighborhood, had mistaken for snobbishness a certain boyish diffidence for which few people gave me credit. When we passed each other, almost daily, this group of girls and I, our mutual sign of recognition was a look in an opposite direction. Now my opponent was well liked by these same girls and was entitled to their support. Accordingly they applauded his good plays, which was fair. They did not applaud my good plays, which was also fair. But what was not fair was that they should applaud my bad plays. Their doing so roiled my blood, and thanks to those who would have had me lose, I won.

In June, 1894, I received a high school diploma. Shortly afterwards I took my examinations for Yale, and the following September entered the Sheffield Scientific School, in a non-technical course.

The last week of June, 1894, was an important one in my life. An event then occurred which undoubtedly changed my career completely. It was the direct cause of my mental collapse six years later, and of the distressing and, in some instances, strange and delightful experiences on which this book is based. The event was the illness of an older brother, who, late in June, 1894, was stricken with what was thought to be epilepsy. Few diseases can so disorganize a household and distress its members. My brother had enjoyed perfect health up to the time he was stricken; and, as there had never been a suggestion of epilepsy, or any like disease, in either branch of the family, the affliction came as a bolt from a clear sky. Everything possible was done to effect a cure, but without avail. On July 4th, 1900, he died, after a six years' illness, two years of which were spent at home, one year in a trip around the world in a sailing vessel, and most of the remainder on a farm near Hartford. The doctors finally decided that a tumor at the base of the brain had caused his malady and his death.

As I was in college when my brother was first stricken, I had more time at my disposal than the other members of the family, and for that reason spent much of it with him. Though his attacks during the first year occurred only at night, the fear that they might occur during the day, in public, affected my nerves from the beginning.

Now, if a brother who had enjoyed perfect health all his life could be stricken with epilepsy, what was to prevent my being similarly afflicted? This was the thought that soon got possession of my mind. The more I considered it and him, the more nervous I became; and the more nervous, the more convinced that my own breakdown was only a matter of time. Doomed to what I then considered a living death, I thought of epilepsy, I dreamed epilepsy, until thousands of times during the six years that this disquieting idea persisted, my over-wrought imagination seemed to drag me to the very verge of an attack. Yet at no time during my life have these early fears been realized.

For the fourteen months succeeding the time my brother was first stricken, I was greatly harassed with fear; but not until later did my nerves really conquer me. I remember distinctly when the break came. It happened in November, 1895, during a recitation in German. That hour in the class room was one of the most disagreeable I ever experienced. It seemed as if my nerves had snapped, like so many minute bands of rubber stretched beyond their elastic limit. Had I had the courage to leave the room, I should have done so; but I sat as if paralyzed until the class was dismissed.

That term I did not again attend recitations. Continuing my studies at home, I passed satisfactory examinations, which enabled me to resume my place in the class room the following January. During the remainder of my college years I seldom entered a recitation room with any other feeling than that of dread, though the absolute assurance that I should not be called upon to recite did somewhat relieve my anxiety in some classes. The professors, whom I had told about my state of health and the cause of it, invariably treated me with consideration; but, though I believe they never doubted the genuineness of my excuse, it was easy matter to keep them convinced for almost two-thirds of my college course. My inability to recite was not due usually to any lack of preparation. However well prepared I might be, the moment I was called upon, a mingling of a thousand disconcerting sensations, and the distinct thought that at last the dread attack was at hand, would suddenly intervene and deprive me of all but the power to say, "Not prepared." Weeks would pass without any other record being placed opposite my name than a zero, or a blank indicating that I had not been called upon at all. Occasionally, however, a professor, in justice to himself and to the other students, would insist that I recite, and at such times I managed to make enough of a recitation to hold my place in the class.

When I entered Yale, I had four definite ambitions: first, to secure an election to a coveted secret society; second, to become one of the editors of the *Yale Record*, an illustrated humorous bi-weekly; third (granting that I should succeed in this latter ambition), to convince my associates that I should have the position of business manager—an office which I sought, not for the honor, but because I believed it would enable me to earn an amount of money at least equal to the cost of

tuition for my years at Yale; fourth (and this was my chief ambition), to win my diploma within the prescribed time. These four ambitions I fortunately achieved.

A man's college days, collectively, are usually his happiest. Most of mine were not happy. Yet I look back upon them with great satisfaction, for I feel that I was fortunate enough to absorb some of that intangible, but very real, element known as the "Yale spirit." This has helped to keep Hope alive within me during my most discouraged moments, and has ever since made the accomplishment of my purposes seem easy and sure.

II

On the thirtieth day of June, 1897, I graduated at Yale. Had I then realized that I was a sick man, I could and would have taken a rest. But, in a way, I had become accustomed to the ups and downs of a nervous existence, and, as I could not really afford a rest, six days after my graduation I entered upon the duties of a clerk in the office of the Collector of Taxes in the city of New Haven. I was fortunate in securing such a position at that time, for the hours were comparatively short and the work as congenial as any could have been under the circumstances. I entered the Tax Office with the intention of staying only until such time as I might secure a position in New York. About a year later I secured the desired position. After remaining in it for eight months I left it, in order to take a position which seemed to offer a field of endeavor more to my taste. From May, 1899, till the middle of June, 1900, I was a clerk in one of the smaller life-insurance companies, whose home office was within a stone's throw of what some men consider the center of the universe. To be in the very heart of the financial district of New York appealed strongly to my imagination. As a result of the contagious ideals of Wall Street, the making of money was then a passion with me. I wished to taste the bitter-sweet of power based on wealth.

For the first eighteen months of my life in New York my health seemed no worse than it had been during the preceding three years. But the old dread still possessed me. I continued to have my more and less nervous days, weeks, and months. In March, 1900, however, there came a change for the worse. At that time I had a severe attack of grippe which incapacitated me for two weeks. As was to be expected in my case, this illness seriously depleted my vitality, and left me in a frightfully depressed condition—a depression which continued to grow upon me until the final crash came, on June 23rd, 1900. The events of that day, seemingly disastrous as then viewed, but evidently all for the best as the issue proved, forced me along paths traveled by thousands, but comprehended by few.

I had continued to perform my clerical duties until June 15th. On that day I was compelled to stop, and that at once. I had reached a point where my will had to capitulate to Unreason—that unscrupulous usurper. My previous five years as a neurasthenic had led me to believe that I had experienced all the disagreeable sensations an overworked and unstrung nervous system could suffer. But on this day several new and terrifying sensations seized me and rendered me all but helpless. My condition, however, was not apparent even to those who worked with me at the same desk. I remember trying to speak and at times finding myself unable to give utterance to my thoughts. Though I was able to answer questions, that fact hardly diminished my feeling of apprehension, for a single failure in an attempt to speak will stagger any man, no matter what his state of health. I tried to copy certain records in the day's work, but my hand was too unsteady, and I found it difficult to read the words and figures presented to my tired vision in blurred confusion.

That afternoon, conscious that some terrible calamity was impending, but not knowing what would be its nature, I performed a very curious act. Certain early literary efforts which had failed of publication in the college paper, but which I had jealously cherished for several years, I utterly destroyed. Then, after a hurried arrangement of my affairs, I took an early afternoon train, and was soon in New Haven. Home life did not make me better, and, except for three or four short walks, I did not go out of the house at all until June 23d, when I went in a most unusual way. To relatives I said little about my state of health, beyond the general statement that I had never felt worse—a statement which, when made by a neurasthenic, means much, but proves little. For five years I had had my ups and downs, and both my relatives and myself had begun to look upon these as things which would probably be corrected in and by time.

The day after my home-coming I made up my mind, or that part of it which was still within my control, that the time had come to quit business entirely and take a rest of months. I even arranged with a younger brother to set out at once for some quiet place in the White Mountains, where I hoped

to steady my shattered nerves. At this time I felt as though in a tremor from head to foot, and the thought that I was about to have an epileptic attack constantly recurred. On more than one occasion I said to friends that I would rather die than live an epileptic; yet, if I rightly remember, I never declared the actual fear that I was doomed to bear such an affliction. Though I held the mad belief that I should suffer epilepsy, I held the sane hope, amounting to belief, that I should escape it. This fact may account, in a measure, for my six years of endurance.

On the 18th of June I felt so much worse that I went to my bed and stayed there until the 23d. During the night of the 18th my persistent dread became a false belief—a delusion. What I had long expected I now became convinced had at last occurred. I believed myself to be a confirmed epileptic, and that conviction was stronger than any ever held by a sound intellect. The half-resolve, made before my mind was actually impaired, namely, that I would kill myself rather than live the life I dreaded, now divided my attention with the belief that the stroke had fallen. From that time my one thought was to hasten the end, for I felt that I should lose the chance to die should relatives find me in an attack of epilepsy.

Considering the state of my mind and my inability at that time to appreciate the enormity of such an end as I half contemplated, my suicidal purpose was not entirely selfish. That I had never seriously contemplated suicide is proved by the fact that I had not provided myself with the means of accomplishing it, despite my habit, has long been remarked by my friends, of preparing even for unlikely contingencies. So far as I had the control of my faculties, it must be admitted that I deliberated; but, strictly speaking, the rash act which followed cannot correctly be called an attempt at suicide—for how can a man who is not himself kill himself?

Soon my disordered brain was busy with schemes for death. I distinctly remember one which included a row on Lake Whitney, near New Haven. This I intended to take in the most unstable boat obtainable. Such a craft could be easily upset, and I should so bequeath to relatives and friends a sufficient number of reasonable doubts to rob my death of the usual stigma. I also remember searching for some deadly drug which I hoped to find about the house. But the quantity and quality of what I found were not such as I dared to trust. I then thought of severing my jugular vein, even going so far as to test against my throat the edge of a razor which, after the deadly impulse first asserted itself, I had secreted in a convenient place. I really wished to die, but so uncertain and ghastly a method did not appeal to me. Nevertheless, had I felt sure that in my tremulous frenzy I could accomplish the act with skilful dispatch, I should at once have ended my troubles.

My imaginary attacks were now recurring with distracting frequency, and I was in constant fear of discovery. During these three or four days I slept scarcely at all—even the medicine given to induce sleep having little effect. Though inwardly frenzied, I gave no outward sign of my condition. Most of the time I remained quietly in bed. I spoke but seldom. I had practically, though not entirely, lost the power of speech; but my almost unbroken silence aroused no suspicions as to the seriousness of my condition.

By a process of elimination, all suicidal methods but one had at last been put aside. On that one my mind now centred. My room was on the fourth floor of the house—one of a block of five—in which my parents lived. The house stood several feet back from the street. The sills of my windows were a little more than thirty feet above the ground. Under one was a flag pavement, extending from the house to the front gate. Under the other was a rectangular coal-hole covered with an iron grating. This was surrounded by flagging over a foot in width; and connecting it and the pavement proper was another flag. So that all along the front of the house, stone or iron filled a space at no point less than two feet in width. It required little calculation to determine how slight the chance of surviving a fall from either of those windows.

About dawn I arose. Stealthily I approached a window, pushed open the blinds, and looked out —and down. Then I closed the blinds as noiselessly as possible and crept back to bed: I had not yet become so irresponsible that I dared to take the leap. Scarcely had I pulled up the covering when a

watchful relative entered my room, drawn thither perhaps by that protecting prescience which love inspires. I thought her words revealed a suspicion that she had heard me at the window, but speechless as I was I had enough speech to deceive her. For of what account are Truth and Love when Life itself has ceased to seem desirable?

The dawn soon hid itself in the brilliancy of a perfect June day. Never had I seen a brighter —to look at; never a darker—to live through—or a better to die upon. Its very perfection and the songs of the robins, which at that season were plentiful in the neighborhood, served but to increase my despair and make me the more willing to die. As the day wore on, my anguish became more intense, but I managed to mislead those about me by uttering a word now and then, and feigning to read a newspaper, which to me, however, appeared an unintelligible jumble of type. My brain was in a ferment. It felt as if pricked by a million needles at white heat. My whole body felt as though it would be torn apart by the terrific nervous strain under which I labored.

Shortly after noon, dinner having been served, my mother entered the room and asked me if she should bring me some dessert. I assented. It was not that I cared for the dessert; I had no appetite. I wished to get her out of the room, for I believed myself to be on the verge of another attack. She left at once. I knew that in two or three minutes she would return. The crisis seemed at hand. It was now or never for liberation. She had probably descended one of three flights of stairs when, with the mad desire to dash my brains out on the pavement below, I rushed to that window which was directly over the flag walk. Providence must have guided my movements, for in some otherwise unaccountable way, on the very point of hurling myself out bodily, I chose to drop feet foremost instead. With my fingers I clung for a moment to the sill. Then I let go. In falling my body turned so as to bring my right side toward the building. I struck the ground a little more than two feet from the foundation of the house, and at least three to the left of the point from which I started. Missing the stone pavement by not more than three or four inches, I struck on comparatively soft earth. My position must have been almost upright, for both heels struck the ground squarely. The concussion slightly crushed one heel bone and broke most of the small bones in the arch of each foot, but there was no mutilation of the flesh. As my feet struck the ground my right hand struck hard against the front of the house, and it is probable that these three points of contact, dividing the force of the shock, prevented my back from being broken. As it was, it narrowly escaped a fracture and, for several weeks afterward, it felt as if powdered glass had been substituted for cartilage between the vertebrae.

I did not lose consciousness even for a second, and the demoniacal dread, which had possessed me from June, 1894, until this fall to earth just six years later, was dispelled the instant I struck the ground. At no time since have I experienced one of my imaginary attacks; nor has my mind even for a moment entertained such an idea. The little demon which had tortured me relentlessly for so many years evidently lacked the stamina which I must have had to survive the shock of my suddenly arrested flight through space. That the very delusion which drove me to a death-loving desperation should so suddenly vanish would seem to indicate that many a suicide might be averted if the person contemplating it could find the proper assistance when such a crisis impends.

III

It was squarely in front of the dining-room window that I fell, and those at dinner were, of course, startled. It took them a second or two to realize what had happened. Then my younger brother rushed out, and with others carried me into the house. Naturally that dinner was permanently interrupted. A mattress was placed on the floor of the dining room and I on that, suffering intensely. I said little, but what I said was significant. "I thought I had epilepsy!" was my first remark; and several times I said, "I wish it was over!" For I believed that my death was only a question of hours. To the doctors, who soon arrived, I said, "My back is broken!"—raising myself slightly, however, as I said so.

An ambulance was summoned and I was placed in it. Because of the nature of my injuries it had to proceed slowly. The trip of a mile and a half seemed interminable, but finally I arrived at Grace Hospital and was placed in a room which soon became a chamber of torture. It was on the second floor; and the first object to engage my attention and stir my imagination was a man who appeared outside my window and placed in position several heavy iron bars. These were, it seems, thought necessary for my protection, but at that time no such idea occurred to me. My mind was in a delusional state, ready and eager to seize upon any external stimulus as a pretext for its wild inventions, and that barred window started a terrible train of delusions which persisted for seven hundred and ninety-eight days. During that period my mind imprisoned both mind and body in a dungeon than which none was ever more secure.

Knowing that those who attempt suicide are usually placed under arrest, I believed myself under legal restraint. I imagined that at any moment I might be taken to court to face some charge lodged against me by the local police. Every act of those about me seemed to be a part of what, in police parlance, is commonly called the "Third Degree." The hot poultices placed upon my feet and ankles threw me into a profuse perspiration, and my very active association of mad ideas convinced me that I was being "sweated"—another police term which I had often seen in the newspapers. I inferred that this third-degree sweating process was being inflicted in order to extort some kind of a confession, though what my captors wished me to confess I could not for my life imagine. As I was really in a state of delirium, with high fever, I had an insatiable thirst. The only liquids given me were hot saline solutions. Though there was good reason for administering these, I believed they were designed for no other purpose than to increase my sufferings, as part of the same inquisitorial process. But had a confession been due, I could hardly have made it, for that part of my brain which controls the power of speech was seriously affected, and was soon to be further disabled by my ungovernable thoughts. Only an occasional word did I utter.

Certain hallucinations of hearing, or "false voices," added to my torture. Within my range of hearing, but beyond the reach of my understanding, there was a hellish vocal hum. Now and then I would recognize the subdued voice of a friend; now and then I would hear the voices of some I believed were not friends. All these referred to me and uttered what I could not clearly distinguish, but knew must be imprecations. Ghostly rappings on the walls and ceiling of my room punctuated unintelligible mumblings of invisible persecutors.

I remember distinctly my delusion of the following day—Sunday. I seemed to be no longer in the hospital. In some mysterious way I had been spirited aboard a huge ocean liner. I first discovered this when the ship was in mid-ocean. The day was clear, the sea apparently calm, but for all that the ship was slowly sinking. And it was I, of course, who had created the situation which must turn out fatally for all, unless the coast of Europe could be reached before the water in the hold should extinguish the fires. How had this peril overtaken us? Simply enough: During the night I had in some way—a way still unknown to me—opened a porthole below the water-line; and those in charge of the vessel seemed powerless to close it. Every now and then I could hear parts of the ship give way under the strain. I could hear the air hiss and whistle spitefully under the resistless impact of the invading

waters; I could hear the crashing of timbers as partitions were wrecked; and as the water rushed in at one place I could see, at another, scores of helpless passengers swept overboard into the sea—my unintended victims. I believed that I, too, might at any moment be swept away. That I was not thrown into the sea by vengeful fellow-passengers was, I thought, due to their desire to keep me alive until, if possible, land should be reached, when a more painful death could be inflicted upon me.

While aboard my phantom ship I managed in some way to establish an electric railway system; and the trolley cars which passed the hospital were soon running along the deck of my ocean liner, carrying passengers from the places of peril to what seemed places of comparative safety at the bow. Every time I heard a car pass the hospital, one of mine went clanging along the ship's deck.

My feverish imaginings were no less remarkable than the external stimuli which excited them. As I have since ascertained, there were just outside my room an elevator and near it a speaking-tube. Whenever the speaking-tube was used from another part of the building, the summoning whistle conveyed to my mind the idea of the exhaustion of air in a ship-compartment, and the opening and shutting of the elevator door completed the illusion of a ship fast going to pieces. But the ship my mind was on never reached any shore, nor did she sink. Like a mirage she vanished, and again I found myself safe in my bed at the hospital. "Safe," did I say? Scarcely that—for deliverance from one impending disaster simply meant immediate precipitation into another.

My delirium gradually subsided, and four or five days after the 23d the doctors were able to set my broken bones. The operation suggested new delusions. Shortly before the adjustment of the plaster casts, my legs, for obvious reasons, were shaved from shin to calf. This unusual tonsorial operation I read for a sign of degradation—associating it with what I had heard of the treatment of murderers and with similar customs in barbarous countries. It was about this time also that strips of court-plaster, in the form of a cross, were placed on my forehead, which had been slightly scratched in my fall, and this, of course, I interpreted as a brand of infamy.

Had my health been good, I should at this time have been participating in the Triennial of my class at Yale. Indeed, I was a member of the Triennial Committee and though, when I left New York on June 15th, I had been feeling terribly ill, I had then hoped to take part in the celebration. The class reunions were held on Tuesday, June 26th—three days after my collapse. Those familiar with Yale customs know that the Harvard baseball game is one of the chief events of the commencement season. Headed by brass bands, all the classes whose reunions fall in the same year march to the Yale Athletic Field to see the game and renew their youth—using up as much vigor in one delirious day as would insure a ripe old age if less prodigally expended. These classes, with their bands and cheering, accompanied by thousands of other vociferating enthusiasts, march through West Chapel Street—the most direct route from the Campus to the Field. It is upon this line of march that Grace Hospital is situated, and I knew that on the day of the game the Yale thousands would pass the scene of my incarceration.

I have endured so many days of the most exquisite torture that I hesitate to distinguish among them by degrees; each deserves its own unique place, even as a Saint's Day in the calendar of an olden Spanish inquisitor. But, if the palm is to be awarded to any, June 26th, 1900, perhaps has the first claim.

My state of mind at that time might be pictured thus: The criminal charge of attempted suicide stood against me on June 23rd. By the 26th many other and worse charges had accumulated. The public believed me the most despicable member of my race. The papers were filled with accounts of my misdeeds. The thousands of collegians gathered in the city, many of whom I knew personally, loathed the very thought that a Yale man should so disgrace his Alma Mater. And when they approached the hospital on their way to the Athletic Field, I concluded that it was their intention to take me from my bed, drag me to the lawn, and there tear me limb from limb. Few incidents during my unhappiest years are more vividly or circumstantially impressed upon my memory. The fear, to be sure, was absurd, but in the lurid lexicon of Unreason there is no such word as "absurd." Believing,

as I did, that I had dishonored Yale and forfeited the privilege of being numbered among her sons, it was not surprising that the college cheers which filled the air that afternoon, and in which only a few days earlier I had hoped to join, struck terror to my heart.

IV

NATURALLY I was suspicious of all about me, and became more so each day. But not until about a month later did I refuse to recognize my relatives. While I was at Grace Hospital, my father and eldest brother called almost every day to see me, and, though I said little, I still accepted them in their proper characters. I remember well a conversation one morning with my father. The words I uttered were few, but full of meaning. Shortly before this time my death had been momentarily expected. I still believed that I was surely about to die as a result of my injuries, and I wished in some way to let my father know that, despite my apparently ignominious end, I appreciated all that he had done for me during my life. Few men, I believe, ever had a more painful time in expressing their feelings than I had on that occasion. I had but little control over my mind, and my power of speech was impaired. My father sat beside my bed. Looking up at him, I said, "You have been a good father to me."

"I have always tried to be," was his characteristic reply.

After the broken bones had been set, and the full effects of the severe shock I had sustained had worn off, I began to gain strength. About the third week I was able to sit up and was occasionally taken out of doors But each day, and especially during the hours of the night, my delusions increased in force and variety. The world was fast becoming to me a stage on which every human being within the range of my senses seemed to be playing a part, and that a part which would lead not only to my destruction (for which I cared little), but also to the ruin of all with whom I had ever come in contact. In the month of July several thunder-storms occurred. To me the thunder was "stage" thunder, the lightning man-made, and the accompanying rain due to some clever contrivance of my persecutors. There was a chapel connected with the hospital—or at least a room where religious services were held every Sunday. To me the hymns were funeral dirges; and the mumbled prayers, faintly audible, were in behalf of every sufferer in the world but one.

It was my eldest brother who looked after my care and interests during my entire illness. Toward the end of July, he informed me that I was to be taken home again. I must have given him an incredulous look, for he said, "Don't you think we can take you home? Well, we can and will." Believing myself in the hands of the police, I did not see how that was possible. Nor did I have any desire to return. That a man who had disgraced his family should again enter his old home and expect his relatives to treat him as though nothing were changed, was a thought against which my soul rebelled; and, when the day came for my return, I fought my brother and the doctor feebly as they lifted me from the bed. But I soon submitted, was placed in a carriage, and driven to the house I had left a month earlier.

For a few hours my mind was calmer than it had been. But my new-found ease was soon dispelled by the appearance of a nurse—one of several who had attended me at the hospital. Though at home and surrounded by relatives, I jumped to the conclusion that I was still under police surveillance. At my request my brother had promised not to engage any nurse who had been in attendance at the hospital. The difficulty of procuring any other led him to disregard my request, which at the time he held simply as a whim. But he did not disregard it entirely, for the nurse selected had merely acted as a substitute on one occasion, and then only for about an hour. That was long enough, though, for my memory to record her image.

Finding myself still under surveillance, I soon jumped to a second conclusion, namely, that this was no brother of mine at all. He instantly appeared in the light of a sinister double, acting as a detective. After that I refused absolutely to speak to him again, and this repudiation I extended to all other relatives, friends and acquaintances. If the man I had accepted as my brother was spurious, so was everybody—that was my deduction. For more than two years I was without relatives or friends, in fact, without a world, except that one created by my own mind from the chaos that reigned within it.

While I was at Grace Hospital, it was my sense of hearing which was the most disturbed. But soon after I was placed in my room at home, *all* of my senses became perverted. I still heard the "false voices"—which were doubly false, for Truth no longer existed. The tricks played upon me by my senses of taste, touch, smell, and sight were the source of great mental anguish. None of my food had its usual flavor. This soon led to that common delusion that some of it contained poison—not deadly poison, for I knew that my enemies hated me too much to allow me the boon of death, but poison sufficient to aggravate my discomfort. At breakfast I had cantaloupe, liberally sprinkled with salt. The salt seemed to pucker my mouth, and I believed it to be powdered alum. Usually, with my supper, sliced peaches were served. Though there was sugar on the peaches, salt would have done as well. Salt, sugar, and powdered alum had become the same to me.

Familiar materials had acquired a different "feel." In the dark, the bed sheets at times seemed like silk. As I had not been born with a golden spoon in my mouth, or other accessories of a useless luxury, I believed the detectives had provided these silken sheets for some hostile purpose of their own. What that purpose was I could not divine, and my very inability to arrive at a satisfactory conclusion stimulated my brain to the assembling of disturbing thoughts in an almost endless train.

Imaginary breezes struck my face, gentle, but not welcome, most of them from parts of the room where currents of air could not possibly originate. They seemed to come from cracks in the walls and ceiling and annoyed me exceedingly. I thought them in some way related to that ancient method of torture by which water is allowed to strike the victim's forehead, a drop at a time, until death releases him. For a while my sense of smell added to my troubles. The odor of burning human flesh and other pestilential fumes seemed to assail me.

My sense of sight was subjected to many weird and uncanny effects. Phantasmagoric visions made their visitations throughout the night, for a time with such regularity that I used to await their coming with a certain restrained curiosity. I was not entirely unaware that something was ailing with my mind. Yet these illusions of sight I took for the work of detectives, who sat up nights racking their brains in order to rack and utterly wreck my own with a cruel and unfair Third Degree.

Handwriting on the wall has ever struck terror to the hearts of even sane men. I remember as one of my most unpleasant experiences that I began to see handwriting on the sheets of my bed staring me in the face, and not me alone, but also the spurious relatives who often stood or sat near me. On each fresh sheet placed over me I would soon begin to see words, sentences, and signatures, all in my own handwriting. Yet I could not decipher any of the words, and this fact dismayed me, for I firmly believed that those who stood about could read them all and found them to be incriminating evidence.

I imagined that these visionlike effects, with few exceptions, were produced by a magic lantern controlled by some of my myriad persecutors. The lantern was rather a cinematographic contrivance. Moving pictures, often brilliantly colored, were thrown on the ceiling of my room and sometimes on the sheets of my bed. Human bodies, dismembered and gory, were one of the most common of these. All this may have been due to the fact that, as a boy, I had fed my imagination on the sensational news of the day as presented in the public press. Despite the heavy penalty which I now paid for thus loading my mind, I believe this unwise indulgence gave a breadth and variety to my peculiar psychological experience which it otherwise would have lacked. For with an insane ingenuity I managed to connect myself with almost every crime of importance of which I had ever read.

Dismembered human bodies were not alone my bedfellows at this time. I remember one vision of vivid beauty. Swarms of butterflies and large and gorgeous moths appeared on the sheets. I wished that the usually unkind operator would continue to show these pretty creatures. Another pleasing vision appeared about twilight several days in succession. I can trace it directly to impressions gained in early childhood. The quaint pictures by Kate Greenaway—little children in attractive dress, playing in old-fashioned gardens—would float through space just outside my windows. The pictures were always accompanied by the gleeful shouts of real children in the neighborhood, who, before being

sent to bed by watchful parents, devoted the last hour of the day to play. It doubtless was their shouts that stirred my memories of childhood and brought forth these pictures.

In my chamber of intermittent horrors and momentary delights, uncanny occurrences were frequent. I believed there was some one who at fall of night secreted himself under my bed. That in itself was not peculiar, as sane persons at one time or another are troubled by that same notion. But *my* bed-fellow—under the bed—was a detective; and he spent most of his time during the night pressing pieces of ice against my injured heels, to precipitate, as I thought, my overdue confession.

The piece of ice in the pitcher of water which usually stood on the table sometimes clinked against the pitcher's side as its center of gravity shifted through melting. It was many days before I reasoned out the cause of this sound; and until I did I supposed it was produced by some mechanical device resorted to by the detectives for a purpose. Thus the most trifling occurrence assumed for me vast significance.

V

After remaining at home for about a month, during which time I showed no improvement mentally, though I did gain physically, I was taken to a private sanatorium. My destination was frankly disclosed to me. But my habit of disbelief had now become fixed, and I thought myself on the way to a trial in New York City, for some one of the many crimes with which I stood charged.

My emotions on leaving New Haven were, I imagine, much the same as those of a condemned but penitent criminal who looks upon the world for the last time. The day was hot, and, as we drove to the railway station, the blinds on most of the houses in the streets through which we passed were seen to be closed. The reason for this was not then apparent to me. I thought I saw an unbroken line of deserted houses, and I imagined that their desertion had been deliberately planned as a sign of displeasure on the part of their former occupants. As citizens of New Haven, I supposed them bitterly ashamed of such a despicable townsman as myself. Because of the early hour, the streets were practically deserted. This fact, too, I interpreted to my own disadvantage. As the carriage crossed the main business thoroughfare, I took what I believed to be my last look at that part of my native city.

From the carriage I was carried to the train and placed in the smoking car in the last seat on the right-hand side. The back of the seat next in front was reversed so that my legs might be placed in a comfortable position, and one of the boards used by card-playing travelers was placed beneath them as a support. With a consistent degree of suspicion I paid particular attention to a blue mark on the face of the railroad ticket held by my custodian. I took it to be a means of identification for use in court.

That one's memory may perform its function in the grip of Unreason itself is proved by the fact that my memory retains an impression, and an accurate one, of virtually everything that befell me, except when under the influence of an anaesthetic or in the unconscious hours of undisturbed sleep. Important events, trifling conversations, and more trifling thoughts of my own are now recalled with ease and accuracy; whereas, prior to my illness and until a strange experience to be recorded later, mine was an ordinary memory when it was not noticeably poor. At school and in college I stood lowest in those studies in which success depended largely upon this faculty. Psychiatrists inform me that it is not unusual for those suffering as I did to retain accurate impressions of their experiences while ill. To laymen this may seem almost miraculous, yet it is not so; nor is it even remarkable. Assuming that an insane person's memory is capable of recording impressions at all, remembrance for one in the torturing grip of delusions of persecution should be doubly easy. This deduction is in accord with the accepted psychological law that the retention of an impression in the memory depends largely upon the intensity of the impression itself, and the frequency of its repetition. Fear to speak, lest I should incriminate myself and others, gave to my impressions the requisite intensity, and the daily recurrence of the same general line of thought served to fix all impressions in my then supersensitive memory.

Shortly before seven in the morning, on the way to the sanatorium, the train passed through a manufacturing center. Many workmen were lounging in front of a factory, most of them reading newspapers. I believed these papers contained an account of me and my crimes, and I thought everyone along the route knew who I was and what I was, and that I was on that train. Few seemed to pay any attention to me, yet this very fact looked to be a part of some well-laid plan of the detectives.

The sanatorium to which I was going was in the country. When a certain station was reached, I was carried from the train to a carriage. At that moment I caught sight of a former college acquaintance, whose appearance I thought was designed to let me know that Yale, which I believed I had disgraced, was one of the powers behind my throne of torture.

Soon after I reached my room in the sanatorium, the supervisor entered. Drawing a table close to the bed, he placed upon it a slip of paper which he asked me to sign. I looked upon this as a trick of the detectives to get a specimen of my handwriting. I now know that the signing of the slip is a

legal requirement, with which every patient is supposed to comply upon entering such an institution —private in character—unless he has been committed by some court. The exact wording of this "voluntary commitment" I do not now recall; but, it was, in substance, an agreement to abide by the rules of the institution—whatever *they* were—and to submit to such restraint as might be deemed necessary. Had I not felt the weight of the world on my shoulders, I believe my sense of humor would have caused me to laugh outright; for the signing of such an agreement by one so situated was, even to my mind, a farce. After much coaxing I was induced to go so far as to take the pen in my hand. There I again hesitated. The supervisor apparently thought I might write with more ease if the paper were placed on a book. And so I might, had he selected a book of a different title. One more likely to arouse suspicions in my mind could not have been found in a search of the Congressional Library. I had left New York on June 15th, and it was in the direction of that city that my present trip had taken me. I considered this but the first step of my return under the auspices of its Police Department. "Called Back" was the title of the book that stared me in the face. After refusing for a long time I finally weakened and signed the slip; but I did not place it on the book. To have done that would, in my mind, have been tantamount to giving consent to extradition; and I was in no mood to assist the detectives in their mean work. At what cost had I signed that commitment slip? To me it was the act of signing my own death-warrant.

VI

During the entire time that my delusions of persecution, as they are called, persisted, I could not but respect the mind that had laid out so comprehensive and devilishly ingenious and, at times, artistic a Third Degree as I was called upon to bear. And an innate modesty (more or less fugitive since these peculiar experiences) does not forbid my mentioning the fact that I still respect that mind.

Suffering such as I endured during the month of August in my own home continued with gradually diminishing force during the eight months I remained in this sanatorium. Nevertheless my sufferings during the first four of these eight months was intense. All my senses were still perverted. My sense of sight was the first to right itself—nearly enough, at least, to rob the detectives of their moving pictures. But before the last fitful film had run through my mind, I beheld one which I shall now describe. I can trace it directly to an impression made on my memory about two years earlier, before my breakdown.

Shortly after going to New York to live, I had explored the Eden Musée. One of the most gruesome of the spectacles which I had seen in its famed Chamber of Horrors was a representation of a gorilla, holding in its arms the gory body of a woman. It was that impression which now revived in my mind. But by a process strictly in accordance with Darwin's theory, the Eden Musée gorilla had become a man—in appearance not unlike the beast that had inspired my distorted thought. This man held a bloody dagger which he repeatedly plunged into the woman's breast. The apparition did not terrify me at all. In fact I found it interesting, for I looked upon it as a contrivance of the detectives. Its purpose I could not divine, but this fact did not trouble me, as I reasoned that no additional criminal charges could make my situation worse than it already was.

For a month or two, "false voices" continued to annoy me. And if there is a hell conducted on the principles of my temporary hell, gossippers will one day wish they had attended strictly to their own business. This is not a confession. I am no gossipper, though I cannot deny that I have occasionally gossipped—a little. And this was my punishment: persons in an adjoining room seemed to be repeating the very same things which I had said of others on these communicative occasions. I supposed that those whom I had talked about had in some way found me out, and intended now to take their revenge.

My sense of smell, too, became normal; but my sense of taste was slow in recovering. At each meal, poison was still the *pièce de résistance*, and it was not surprising that I sometimes dallied one, two, or three hours over a meal, and often ended by not eating it at all.

There was, however, another reason for my frequent refusal to take food, in my belief that the detectives had resorted to a more subtle method of detection. They now intended by each article of food to suggest a certain idea, and I was expected to recognize the idea thus suggested. Conviction or acquittal depended upon my correct interpretation of their symbols, and my interpretation was to be signified by my eating, or not eating, the several kinds of food placed before me. To have eaten a burnt crust of bread would have been a confession of arson. Why? Simply because the charred crust suggested fire; and, as bread is the staff of life, would it not be an inevitable deduction that life had been destroyed—destroyed by fire—and that I was the destroyer? On one day to eat a given article of food meant confession. The next day, or the next meal, a refusal to eat it meant confession. This complication of logic made it doubly difficult for me to keep from incriminating myself and others.

It can easily be seen that I was between several devils and the deep sea. To eat or not to eat perplexed me more than the problem conveyed by a few shorter words perplexed a certain prince, who, had he lived a few centuries later (out of a book), might have been forced to enter a kingdom where kings and princes are made and unmade on short notice. Indeed, he might have lost his principality entirely—or, at least, his subjects; for, as I later had occasion to observe, the frequency with which

a dethroned reason mounts a throne and rules a world is such that self-crowned royalty receives but scant homage from the less elated members of the court.

For several weeks I ate but little. Though the desire for food was not wanting, my mind (that dog-in-the-manger) refused to let me satisfy my hunger. Coaxing by the attendants was of little avail; force was usually of less. But the threat that liquid nourishment would be administered through my nostrils sometimes prevailed for the attribute of shrewdness was not so utterly lost that I could not choose the less of two evils.

What I looked upon as a gastronomic ruse of the detectives sometimes overcame my fear of eating. Every Sunday ice cream was served with dinner. At the beginning of the meal a large pyramid of it would be placed before me in a saucer several sizes too small. I believed that it was never to be mine unless I first partook of the more substantial fare. As I dallied over the meal, that delicious pyramid would gradually melt, slowly filling the small saucer, which I knew could not long continue to hold all of its original contents. As the melting of the ice cream progressed, I became more indifferent to my eventual fate; and, invariably, before a drop of that precious reward had dripped from the saucer, I had eaten enough of the dinner to prove my title to the seductive dessert. Moreover, during its enjoyment, I no longer cared a whit for charges or convictions of all the crimes in the calendar. This fact is less trifling than it seems; for it proves the value of strategy as opposed to brute and sometimes brutal force, of which I shall presently give some illuminating examples.

VII

Choice of a sanatorium by people of limited means is, unfortunately, very restricted. Though my relatives believed the one in which I was placed was at least fairly well conducted, events proved otherwise. From a modest beginning made not many years previously, it had enjoyed a mushroom growth. About two hundred and fifty patients were harbored in a dozen or more small frame buildings, suggestive of a mill settlement. Outside the limits of a city and in a state where there was lax official supervision, owing in part to faulty laws, the owner of this little settlement of woe had erected a nest of veritable fire-traps in which helpless sick people were forced to risk their lives. This was a necessary procedure if the owner was to grind out an exorbitant income on his investment.

The same spirit of economy and commercialism pervaded the entire institution. Its worst manifestation was in the employment of the meanest type of attendant—men willing to work for the paltry wage of eighteen dollars a month. Very seldom did competent attendants consent to work there, and then usually because of a scarcity of profitable employment elsewhere. Providentially for me, such an attendant came upon the scene. This young man, so long as he remained in the good graces of the owner-superintendent, was admittedly one of the best attendants he had ever had. Yet aside from a five-dollar bill which a relative had sent me at Christmas and which I had refused to accept because of my belief that it, like my relatives, was counterfeit—aside from that bill, which was turned over to the attendant by my brother, he received no additional pecuniary rewards. His chief reward lay in his consciousness of the fact that he was protecting me against injustices which surely would have been visited upon me had he quitted his position and left me to the mercies of the owner and his ignorant assistants. To-day, with deep appreciation, I contrast the treatment I received at his hands with that which I suffered during the three weeks preceding his appearance on the scene. During that period, no fewer than seven attendants contributed to my misery. Though some of them were perhaps decent enough fellows outside a sickroom, not one had the right to minister to a patient in my condition.

The two who were first put in charge of me did not strike me with their fists or even threaten to do so; but their unconscious lack of consideration for my comfort and peace of mind was torture. They were typical eighteen-dollar-a-month attendants. Another of the same sort, on one occasion, cursed me with a degree of brutality which I prefer not to recall, much less record. And a few days later the climax was appropriately capped when still another attendant perpetrated an outrage which a sane man would have resented to the point of homicide. He was a man of the coarsest type. His hands would have done credit to a longshoreman—fingers knotted and nearly twice the normal size. Because I refused to obey a peremptory command, and this at a time when I habitually refused even on pain of imagined torture to obey or to speak, this brute not only cursed me with abandon, he deliberately spat upon me. I was a mental incompetent, but like many others in a similar position I was both by antecedents and by training a gentleman. Vitriol could not have seared my flesh more deeply than the venom of this human viper stung my soul! Yet, as I was rendered speechless by delusions, I could offer not so much as a word of protest. I trust that it is not now too late, however, to protest in behalf of the thousands of outraged patients in private and state hospitals whose mute submission to such indignities has never been recorded.

Of the readiness of an unscrupulous owner to employ inferior attendants, I shall offer a striking illustration. The capable attendant who acted as my protector at this sanatorium has given me an affidavit embodying certain facts which, of course, I could not have known at the time of their occurrence. The gist of this sworn statement is as follows: One day a man—seemingly a tramp—approached the main building of the sanatorium and inquired for the owner. He soon found him, talked with him a few minutes, and an hour or so later he was sitting at the bedside of an old and infirm man. This aged patient had recently been committed to the institution by relatives who had labored under the common delusion that the payment of a considerable sum of money each week would insure

kindly treatment. When this tramp-attendant first appeared, all his visible worldly possessions were contained in a small bundle which he carried under his arm. So filthy were his person and his clothes that he received a compulsory bath and another suit before being assigned to duty. He then began to earn his four dollars and fifty cents a week by sitting several hours a day in the room with the aged man, sick unto death. My informant soon engaged him in conversation. What did he learn? First, that the uncouth stranger had never before so much as crossed the threshold of a hospital. His last job had been as a member of a section-gang on a railroad. From the roadbed of a railway to the bedside of a man about to die was indeed a change which might have taxed the adaptability of a more versatile being. But coarse as he was, this unkempt novice did not abuse his charge—except in so far as his inability to interpret or anticipate wants contributed to the sick man's distress. My own attendant, realizing that the patient was suffering for the want of skilled attention, spent a part of his time in this unhappy room, which was but across the hall from my own. The end soon came.

My attendant, who had had training as a nurse, detected the unmistakable signs of impending death. He forthwith informed the owner of the sanatorium that the patient was in a dying condition, and urged him (a doctor) to go at once to the bedside. The doctor refused to comply with the request on the plea that he was at the time "too busy." When at last he did visit the room, the patient was dead. Then came the supervisor, who took charge of the body. As it was being carried from the room the supervisor, the "handy man" of the owner, said: "There goes the best paying patient the institution had; the doctor" (meaning the owner) "was getting eighty-five dollars a week out of him." Of this sum not more than twenty dollars at most, at the time this happened, could be considered as "cost of maintenance." The remaining sixty-five dollars went into the pocket of the owner. Had the man lived for one year, the owner might have pocketed (so far as this one case was concerned) the neat but wicked profit of thirty-three hundred and eighty dollars. And what would the patient have received? The same privilege of living in neglect and dying neglected.

VIII

For the first few weeks after my arrival at the sanatorium, I was cared for by two attendants, one by day and one by night. I was still helpless, being unable to put my feet out of bed, much less upon the floor, and it was necessary that I be continually watched lest an impulse to walk should seize me. After a month or six weeks, however, I grew stronger, and from that time only one person was assigned to care for me. He was with me all day, and slept at night in the same room.

The earliest possible dismissal of one of my two attendants was expedient for the family purse; but such are the deficiencies in the prevailing treatment of the insane that relief in one direction often occasions evil in another. No sooner was the expense thus reduced than I was subjected to a detestable form of restraint which amounted to torture. To guard me at night while the remaining attendant slept, my hands were imprisoned in what is known as a "muff." A muff, innocent enough to the eyes of those who have never worn one, is in reality a relic of the Inquisition. It is an instrument of restraint which has been in use for centuries and even in many of our public and private institutions is still in use. The muff I wore was made of canvas, and differed in construction from a muff designed for the hands of fashion only in the inner partition, also of canvas, which separated my hands, but allowed them to overlap. At either end was a strap which buckled tightly around the wrist and was locked.

The assistant physician, when he announced to me that I was to be subjected at night to this restraint, broke the news gently—so gently that I did not then know, nor did I guess for several months, why this thing was done to me. And thus it was that I drew deductions of my own which added not a little to my torture.

The gas jet in my room was situated at a distance, and stronger light was needed to find the keyholes and lock the muff when adjusted. Hence, an attendant was standing by with a lighted candle. Seating himself on the side of the bed, the physician said: "You won't try again to do what you did in New Haven, will you?" Now one may have done many things in a city where he has lived for a score of years, and it is not surprising that I failed to catch the meaning of the doctor's question. It was only after months of secret puzzling that I at last did discover his reference to my attempted suicide. But now the burning candle in the hands of the attendant, and a certain similarity between the doctor's name and the name of a man whose trial for arson I once attended out of idle curiosity, led me to imagine that in some way I had been connected with that crime. For months I firmly believed I stood charged as an accomplice.

The putting on of the muff was the most humiliating incident of my life. The shaving of my legs and the wearing of the court-plaster brand of infamy had been humiliating, but those experiences had not overwhelmed my very heart as did this bitter ordeal. I resisted weakly, and, after the muff was adjusted and locked, for the first time since my mental collapse I wept. And I remember distinctly why I wept. The key that locked the muff unlocked in imagination the door of the home in New Haven which I believed I had disgraced—and seemed for a time to unlock my heart. Anguish beat my mind into a momentary sanity, and with a wholly sane emotion I keenly felt my imagined disgrace. My thoughts centred on my mother. Her (and other members of the family) I could plainly see at home in a state of dejection and despair over her imprisoned and heartless son. I wore the muff each night for several weeks, and for the first few nights the unhappy glimpses of a ruined home recurred and increased my sufferings.

It was not always as an instrument of restraint that the muff was employed. Frequently it was used as a means of discipline on account of supposed stubborn disobedience. Many times was I roughly overpowered by two attendants who locked my hands and coerced me to do whatever I had refused to do. My arms and hands were my only weapons of defence. My feet were still in plaster casts, and my back had been so severely injured as to necessitate my lying flat upon it most of the

time. It was thus that these unequal fights were fought. And I had not even the satisfaction of tongue-lashing my oppressors, for I was practically speechless.

My attendants, like most others in such institutions, were incapable of understanding the operations of my mind, and what they could not understand they would seldom tolerate. Yet they were not entirely to blame. They were simply carrying out to the letter orders received from the doctors.

To ask a patient in my condition to take a little medicated sugar seemed reasonable. But from my point of view my refusal was justifiable. That innocuous sugar disc to me seemed saturated with the blood of loved ones; and so much as to touch it was to shed their blood—perhaps on the very scaffold on which I was destined to die. For myself I cared little. I was anxious to die, and eagerly would I have taken the sugar disc had I had any reason to believe that it was deadly poison. The sooner I could die and be forgotten, the better for all with whom I had ever come in contact. To continue to live was simply to be the treacherous tool of unscrupulous detectives, eager to exterminate my innocent relatives and friends, if so their fame could be made secure in the annals of their craft.

But the thoughts associated with the taking of the medicine were seldom twice alike. If before taking it something happened to remind me of mother, father, some other relative, or a friend, I imagined that compliance would compromise, if not eventually destroy, that particular person. Who would not resist when meek acceptance would be a confession which would doom his own mother or father to prison, or ignominy, or death? It was for this that I was reviled, for this, subjected to cruel restraint.

They thought I was stubborn. In the strict sense of the word there is no such thing as a stubborn insane person. The truly stubborn men and women in the world are sane; and the fortunate prevalence of sanity may be approximately estimated by the preponderance of stubbornness in society at large. When one possessed of the power of recognizing his own errors continues to hold an unreasonable belief—that is stubbornness. But for a man bereft of reason to adhere to an idea which to him seems absolutely correct and true because he has been deprived of the means of detecting his error—that is not stubbornness. It is a symptom of his disease, and merits the indulgence of forbearance, if not genuine sympathy. Certainly the afflicted one deserves no punishment. As well punish with a blow the cheek that is disfigured by the mumps.

The attendant who was with me most of the time while I remained at the sanatorium was the kindly one already mentioned. Him I regarded, however, as a detective, or, rather, as two detectives, one of whom watched me by day, and the other—a perfect double—by night. He was an enemy, and his professed sympathy—which I now know was genuine—only made me hate him the more. As he was ignorant of the methods of treatment in vogue in hospitals for the insane, it was several weeks before he dared put in jeopardy his position by presuming to shield me against unwise orders of the doctors. But when at last he awoke to the situation, he repeatedly intervened in my behalf. More than once the doctor who was both owner and superintendent threatened to discharge him for alleged officiousness. But better judgment usually held the doctor's wrath in check, for he realized that not one attendant in a hundred was so competent.

Not only did the friendly attendant frequently exhibit more wisdom than the superintendent, but he also obeyed the dictates of a better conscience than that of his nominal superior, the assistant physician. On three occasions this man treated me with a signal lack of consideration, and in at least one instance he was vicious. When this latter incident occurred, I was both physically and mentally helpless. My feet were swollen and still in plaster bandages. I was all but mute, uttering only an occasional expletive when forced to perform acts against my will.

One morning Doctor No-name (he represents a type) entered my room.

"Good morning! How are you feeling?" he asked.

No answer.

"Aren't you feeling well?"

No answer.

"Why don't you talk?" he asked with irritation.

Still no answer, except perhaps a contemptuous look such as is so often the essence of eloquence. Suddenly, and without the slightest warning, as a petulant child locked in a room for disobedience might treat a pillow, he seized me by an arm and jerked me from the bed. It was fortunate that the bones of my ankles and feet, not yet thoroughly knitted, were not again injured. And this was the performance of the very man who had locked my hands in the muff, that I might not injure myself!

"Why don't you talk?" he again asked.

Though rather slow in replying, I will take pleasure in doing so by sending that doctor a copy of this book—my answer—if he will but send me his address.

It is not a pleasant duty to brand any physician for cruelty and incompetence, for the worst that ever lived has undoubtedly done many good deeds. But here is the type of man that has wrought havoc among the helpless insane. And the owner represented a type that has too long profited through the misfortunes of others. "Pay the price or put your relative in a public institution!" is the burden of his discordant song before commitment. "Pay or get out!" is his jarring refrain when satisfied that the family's resources are exhausted. I later learned that this grasping owner had bragged of making a profit of $98,000 in a single year. About twenty years later he left an estate of approximately $1,500,000. Some of the money, however, wrung from patients and their relatives in the past may yet benefit similar sufferers in the future, for, under the will of the owner, several hundred thousand dollars will eventually be available as an endowment for the institution.

IX

It was at the sanatorium that my ankles were finally restored to a semblance of their former utility. They were there subjected to a course of heroic treatment; but as to-day they permit me to walk, run, dance, and play tennis and golf, as do those who have never been crippled, my hours of torture endured under my first attempts to walk are almost pleasant to recall. About five months from the date of my injury I was allowed, or rather compelled, to place my feet on the floor and attempt to walk. My ankles were still swollen, absolutely without action, and acutely sensitive to the slightest pressure. From the time they were hurt until I again began to talk—two years later—I asked not one question as to the probability of my ever regaining the use of them. The fact was, I never expected to walk naturally again. The desire of the doctors to have me walk I believed to be inspired by the detectives, of whom, indeed, I supposed the doctor himself to be one. Had there been any confession to make, I am sure it would have been yielded under the stress of this ultimate torture. The million needle points which, just prior to my mental collapse, seemed to goad my brain, now centred their unwelcome attention on the soles of my feet. Had the floor been studded with minute stilettos my sufferings could hardly have been more intense. For several weeks assistance was necessary with each attempt to walk, and each attempt was an ordeal. Sweat stood in beads on either foot, wrung from my blood by agony. Believing that it would be only a question of time when I should be tried, condemned, and executed for some one of my countless felonies, I thought that the attempt to prevent my continuing a cripple for the brief remainder of my days was prompted by anything but benevolence.

The superintendent would have proved himself more humane had he not peremptorily ordered my attendant to discontinue the use of a support which, until the plaster bandages were removed, had enabled me to keep my legs in a horizontal position when I sat up. His order was that I should put my legs down and keep them down, whether it hurt or not. The pain was of course intense when the blood again began to circulate freely through tissues long unused to its full pressure, and so evident was my distress that the attendant ignored the doctor's command and secretly favored me. He would remove the forbidden support for only a few minutes at a time, gradually lengthening the intervals until at last I was able to do without the support entirely. Before long and each day for several weeks I was forced at first to stagger and finally to walk across the room and back to the bed. The distance was increased as the pain diminished, until I was able to walk without more discomfort than a comparatively pleasant sensation of lameness. For at least two months after my feet first touched the floor I had to be carried up and downstairs, and for several months longer I went flat-footed.

Delusions of persecution—which include "delusions of self-reference"—though a source of annoyance while I was in an inactive state, annoyed and distressed me even more when I began to move about and was obliged to associate with other patients. To my mind, not only were the doctors and attendants detectives; each patient was a detective and the whole institution was a part of the Third Degree. Scarcely any remark was made in my presence that I could not twist into a cleverly veiled reference to myself. In each person I could see a resemblance to persons I had known, or to the principals or victims of the crimes with which I imagined myself charged. I refused to read; for to read veiled charges and fail to assert my innocence was to incriminate both myself and others. But I looked with longing glances upon all printed matter and, as my curiosity was continually piqued, this enforced abstinence grew to be well-nigh intolerable.

It became again necessary to the family purse that every possible saving be made. Accordingly, I was transferred from the main building, where I had a private room and a special attendant, to a ward where I was to mingle, under an aggregate sort of supervision, with fifteen or twenty other patients. Here I had no special attendant by day, though one slept in my room at night.

Of this ward I had heard alarming reports—and these from the lips of several attendants. I was, therefore, greatly disturbed at the proposed change. But, the transfer once accomplished, after a few days I really liked my new quarters better than the old. During the entire time I remained at the sanatorium I was more alert mentally than I gave evidence of being. But not until after my removal to this ward, where I was left alone for hours every day, did I dare to show my alertness. Here I even went so far on one occasion as to joke with the attendant in charge. He had been trying to persuade me to take a bath. I refused, mainly because I did not like the looks of the bath room, which, with its cement floor and central drain, resembled the room in which vehicles are washed in a modern stable. After all else had failed, the attendant tried the rôle of sympathizer.

"Now I know just how you feel," he said, "I can put myself in your place."

"Well, if you can, do it and take the bath yourself," was my retort.

The remark is brilliant by contrast with the dismal source from which it escaped. "Escaped" is the word; for the fear that I should hasten my trial by exhibiting too great a gain in health, mental or physical, was already upon me; and it controlled much of my conduct during the succeeding months of depression.

Having now no special attendant, I spent many hours in my room, alone, but not absolutely alone, for somewhere the eye of a detective was evermore upon me. Comparative solitude, however, gave me courage; and soon I began to read, regardless of consequences. During the entire period of my depression, every publication seemed to have been written and printed for me, and me alone. Books, magazines, and newspapers seemed to be special editions. The fact that I well knew how inordinate would be the cost of such a procedure in no way shook my belief in it. Indeed, that I was costing my persecutors fabulous amounts of money was a source of secret satisfaction. My belief in special editions of newspapers was strengthened by items which seemed too trivial to warrant publication in any except editions issued for a special purpose. I recall a seemingly absurd advertisement, in which the phrase, "Green Bluefish," appeared. At the time I did not know that "green" was a term used to denote "fresh" or "unsalted."

During the earliest stages of my illness I had lost count of time, and the calendar did not right itself until the day when I largely regained my reason. Meanwhile, the date on each newspaper was, according to my reckoning, two weeks out of the way. This confirmed my belief in the special editions as a part of the Third Degree.

Most sane people think that no insane person can reason logically. But this is not so. Upon unreasonable premises I made most reasonable deductions, and that at the time when my mind was in its most disturbed condition. Had the newspapers which I read on the day which I supposed to be February 1st borne a January date, I might not then, for so long a time, have believed in special editions. Probably I should have inferred that the regular editions had been held back. But the newspapers I had were dated about two weeks *ahead*. Now if a sane person on February 1st receives a newspaper dated February 14th, be will be fully justified in thinking something wrong, either with the publication or with himself. But the shifted calendar which had planted itself in my mind meant as much to me as the true calendar does to any sane business man. During the seven hundred and ninety-eight days of depression I drew countless incorrect deductions. But, such as they were, they were deductions, and essentially the mental process was not other than that which takes place in a well-ordered mind.

My gradually increasing vitality, although it increased my fear of trial, impelled me to take new risks. I began to read not only newspapers, but also such books as were placed within my reach. Yet had they not been placed there, I should have gone without them, for I would never ask even for what I greatly desired and knew I could have for the asking.

Whatever love of literature I now have dates from this time, when I was a mental incompetent and confined in an institution. Lying on a shelf in my room was a book by George Eliot. For several days I cast longing glances at it and finally plucked up the courage to take little nibbles now and then.

These were so good that I grew bold and at last began openly to read the book. Its contents at the time made but little impression on my mind, but I enjoyed it. I read also some of Addison's essays; and had I been fortunate enough to have made myself familiar with these earlier in life, I might have been spared the delusion that I could detect, in many passages, the altering hand of my persecutors.

The friendly attendant, from whom I was now separated, tried to send his favors after me into my new quarters. At first he came in person to see me, but the superintendent soon forbade that, and also ordered him not to communicate with me in any way. It was this disagreement, and others naturally arising between such a doctor and such an attendant, that soon brought about the discharge of the latter. But "discharge" is hardly the word, for he had become disgusted with the institution, and had remained so long only because of his interest in me. Upon leaving, he informed the owner that he would soon cause my removal from the institution. This he did. I left the sanatorium in March, 1901, and remained for three months in the home of this kindly fellow, who lived with a grandmother and an aunt in Wallingford, a town not far from New Haven.

It is not to be inferred that I entertained any affection for my friendly keeper. I continued to regard him as an enemy; and my life at his home became a monotonous round of displeasure. I took my three meals a day. I would sit listlessly for hours at a time in the house. Daily I went out —accompanied, of course—for short walks about the town. These were not enjoyable. I believed everybody was familiar with my black record and expected me to be put to death. Indeed, I wondered why passers-by did not revile or even stone me. Once I was sure I heard a little girl call me "Traitor!" That, I believe, was my last "false voice," but it made such an impression that I can even now recall vividly the appearance of that dreadful child. It was not surprising that a piece of rope, old and frayed, which someone had carelessly thrown on a hedge by a cemetery that I sometimes passed, had for me great significance.

During these three months I again refused to read books, though within my reach, but I sometimes read newspapers. Still I would not speak, except under some unusual stress of emotion. The only time I took the initiative in this regard while living in the home of my attendant was on a bitterly cold and snowy day when I had the temerity to tell him that the wind had blown the blanket from a horse that had been standing for a long time in front of the house. The owner had come inside to transact some business with my attendant's relatives. In appearance he reminded me of the uncle to whom this book is dedicated. I imagined the mysterious caller was impersonating him and, by one of my curious mental processes, I deduced that it was incumbent on me to do for the dumb beast outside what I knew my uncle would have done had he been aware of its plight. My reputation for decency of feeling I believed to be gone forever; but I could not bear, in this situation, to be unworthy of my uncle, who, among those who knew him, was famous for his kindliness and humanity.

My attendant and his relatives were very kind and very patient, for I was still intractable. But their efforts to make me comfortable, so far as they had any effect, made keener my desire to kill myself. I shrank from death; but I preferred to die by my own hand and take the blame for it, rather than to be executed and bring lasting disgrace on my family, friends, and, I may add with truth, on Yale. For I reasoned that parents throughout the country would withhold their sons from a university which numbered among its graduates such a despicable being. But from any tragic act I was providentially restrained by the very delusion which gave birth to the desire—in a way which signally appeared on a later and, to me, a memorable day.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.