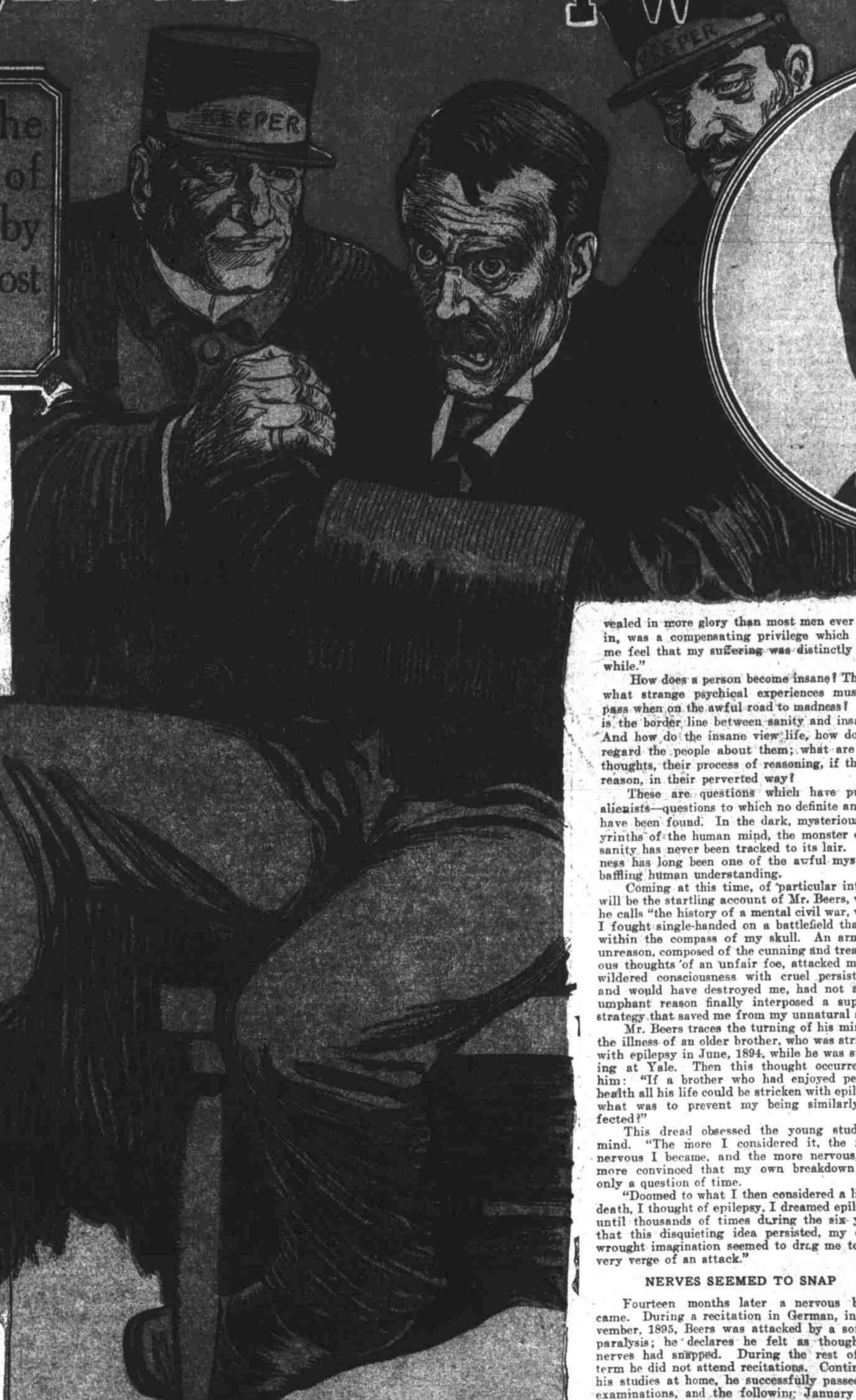


PORTLAND, OREGON, SUNDAY MORNING, MAY 3, 1908

MY SENSATIONS as I WENT CRAZY

Horrors of the Overthrow of Reason Told by a Man Who Lost His Mind

CAN you imagine a more terrible battle than that of insanity against reason; when the two forces grapple like warring demons in one's brain? This is the remarkable story of a man who tells "how it feels to go crazy." In plain words, in a clear, logical manner, he recalls his sensations as his mind turned; of the hallucinations and visions that filled his brain as it was assailed by grim insanity; of his impressions and emotions as reason deserted its throne. Never was penned, perhaps, a more dramatic history than this true tragedy of the human



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Clifford W. Beers, Who Wrote His Experiences.

brain. Professor William James, of Harvard University, calls it "a classic account, from within, of an insane person's psychology." For the strangest part of the whole story is the fact that when the narrator recovered his reason, he had not forgotten his experiences and agonies—the wonderful mental process that went on as insanity gained the victory.

VERY frankly and without reserve, Mr. Clifford Whittingham Beers, author of the recently published book, "A Mind That Found Itself," tells his startling story. As an interesting psychological study, no less than as a dramatic recital of facts, it has rarely been equaled. Mr. Beers, a graduate of Yale in 1897, was insane for a period of two years—from his twenty-fourth to his twenty-sixth year. Much of this time was spent in three asylums, where

according to his statements, inhuman atrocities were committed on the helpless insane. The book is written with the purpose of calling the public attention to the mistreatment of patients behind the bars of asylums, whether

privately conducted or supported by the state; it is an earnest, heartfelt plea for the suffering ones who have not had the fortune of Mr. Beers in regaining reason. Mr. Beers is now about 30 years of age. His return to sanity was sudden, instantaneous. "The molecules of my mental magnet had at last turned in the direction of right thinking," he says. "In a word, my mind had found itself. My memory might be likened to a photographic film 798 days long. Each impression seems to have been made in a negative way, and then, in a fraction of a second, miraculously developed and made positive. "No man can be born again, but I believe I came as near to it as ever a man did. To leave behind what, in reality, was a hell, and in less than one second have this good, green earth re-

vealed in more glory than most men ever see it in, was a compensating privilege which makes me feel that my suffering was distinctly worth while."

How does a person become insane? Through what strange psychological experiences must one pass when on the awful road to madness? What is the border line between sanity and insanity? And how do the insane view life, how do they regard the people about them; what are their thoughts, their process of reasoning, if they do reason, in their perverted way?

These are questions which have puzzled alienists—questions to which no definite answers have been found. In the dark, mysterious labyrinths of the human mind, the monster of insanity has never been tracked to its lair. Madness has long been one of the awful mysteries baffling human understanding.

Coming at this time, of particular interest will be the startling account of Mr. Beers, which he calls "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."

Mr. Beers traces the turning of his mind to the illness of an older brother, who was stricken with epilepsy in June, 1894, while he was studying at Yale. Then this thought occurred to him: "If a brother who had enjoyed perfect health all his life could be stricken with epilepsy, what was to prevent my being similarly affected?"

This dread obsessed the young student's mind. "The more I considered it, the more nervous I became, and the more nervous, the more convinced that my own breakdown was only a question 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 overwrought imagination seemed to drag me to the very verge of an attack."

NERVES SEEMED TO SNAP

Fourteen months later a nervous break came. During a recitation in German, in November, 1895, Beers was attacked by a sort of paralysis; he declares he felt as though his nerves had snapped. During the rest of the term he did not attend recitations. Continuing his studies at home, he successfully passed the examinations, and the following January took his place in the classroom. During the remainder of the term, he says, he never entered a classroom without a feeling of dread.

On June 30, 1897, Beers was graduated from Yale. He secured a position in the office of the collector of taxes in New Haven, and a year later another in New York city. Eight months afterward he became a clerk with one of the smaller insurance companies. There were many nervous periods, lasting days, weeks or months. A severe attack of grip precipitated the final crash, on June 23, 1900. He quit work on June 15.

"On that day I was compelled to stop," he writes. "I had reached a point where my will had to capitulate to unreason—that unscrupulous usurper. My previous neurasthenic condition 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.

"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."

Returning hurriedly to his home in New Haven, the unfortunate man went to bed. That night the dread of becoming an epileptic became a "false belief—a reality. What I had long expected I now became convinced had at last occurred.

TRIED TO END LIFE

"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."

On June 23 Beers attempted to commit suicide by jumping from the third-story window. The bones in his feet were broken, but not for a second did he lose consciousness. What was most strange was, that the dread of epilepsy, which had possessed him for six years, was dissipated as soon as he touched the ground. The shock, however, to the spine affected the brain, and within a few hours his mind was completely disordered.

He was taken to a hospital. The window of the room in which the patient was placed was barred with iron. "My mind was in a delusional state," declares Beers in his story, "ready and eager to adopt any external stimulus as a pretext for its wild inventions, and that barred window started a terrible train of delusions, which persisted for 798 days."

Having heard that persons who attempt suicide are placed under arrest, Beers became obsessed with the belief that he was under legal restraint, and that he would be taken into court and tried. This unhappy delusion persisted for months.

Believing that he was being tortured in order that he be compelled to make a confession, the deranged man imagined that the hot poultices placed on his feet were part of a "sweating process." Hot saline solutions administered were regarded as part of the excruciating process; the nurses and visitors were believed to be detectives; in fact, he felt that he was continually under scrutiny.

"But had a confession been due I could hardly have made it," he declares, "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 reach of my understanding there was a hellish vocal-hum. Now and then I would recognize the subdued voice of a former friend; now and then I would hear the voices of some who I believed were not my friends.

"All these referred to me and uttered what I could not clearly distinguish, but knew must be imprecations. Ghostly rappings on the walls (CONTINUED ON INSIDE PAGE)