



A Mind That Found Itself: The Complete Work Plus an Overview, Summary, Analysis and Author Biography

Clifford Whittingham Beers, Heidi L

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The success of an autobiography can be measured by many different aspects. Some works are of merit for entertainment purposes alone. Many Hollywood celebrities find an audience for their life's story due to their willingness to share closely held secrets and peculiarities. We are drawn in because of the salacious promise of a glimpse into a life more glamorous or unusual than our own. There are autobiographies that are written in order to record a person's contributions to fields such as science or politics. Still, more find their way into publication in order to tell an inspiring story, to uplift, to stand as an example to humanity of the limitless potential of the human spirit and our ability to overcome adversity.

Clifford Whittingham Beers' *A Mind that Found Itself - An Autobiography*, fulfills all of these goals and yet achieves a much higher purpose. Beers records his personal journey to a place that few will ever visit, and far fewer will ever return. Beers' personal, detailed account of his descent into insanity, his two-year journey within public and private institutions, and his unusual recovery and mission afterward elevates this to much more than an autobiography. Beers' story invites us to see both the enormous shortcomings of the mental institutions of his time, but also the inner workings of his mind as he lost his grip on reality. Early in his institutional experiences, he vows to explore every ward and record every injustice.

Despite Beers' own acknowledgement of his loss of reason, he maintained enough direction to willfully contrive situations that would get him committed to wards with more advanced levels of security for patients deemed violent. He did this deliberately, for the purpose of his research. This autobiography, published when Beers emerged from his institutional life, led to a revolution in an understanding of insanity and the way the insane are treated in the United States.

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