

# Psychical Adaptation

Clifford Whittingham Beers's *A Mind That Found Itself* and the  
Manufacture of Health, Happiness  
and Efficiency in Modern America

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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.

— C. W. Beers, *A Mind That Found Itself*

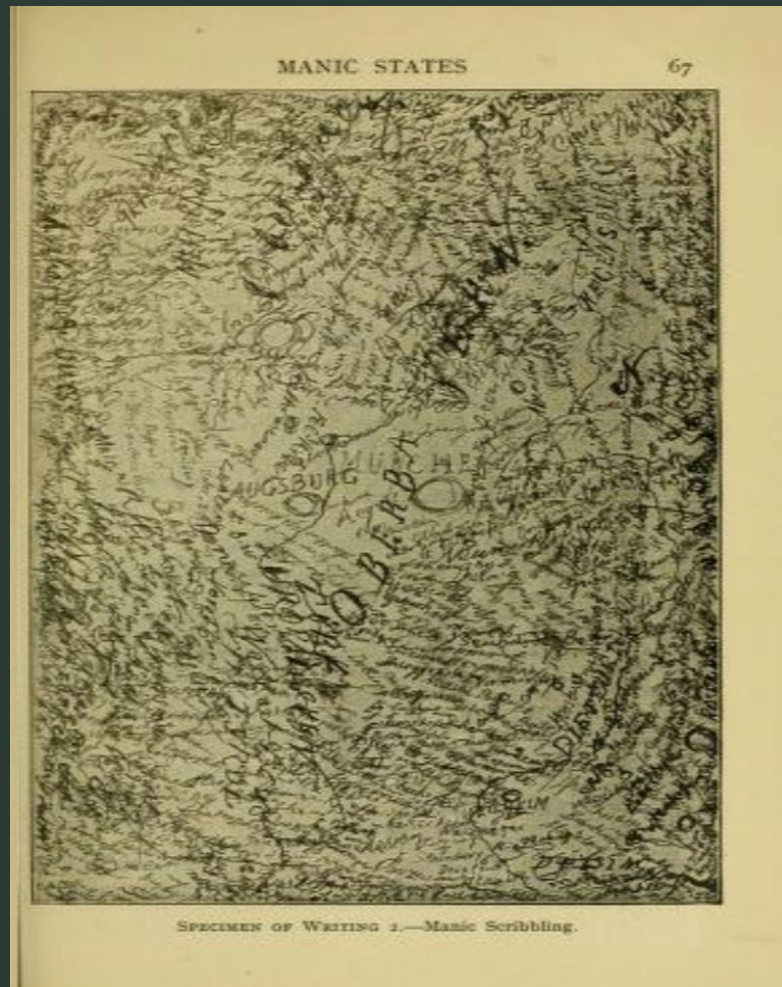
tion for the reader ; the letters run through one another, are scribbled ; more words are underlined ; there are more marks of exclamation ; the flourishes become bolder. All those

From Kraepelin's *Psychiatrie* - 1898  
*Handwritten text in German, showing extreme disorder, including words like 'Hochlöchlig', 'Vollst', and 'Brüder'. The writing is heavily scribbled and includes a vertical marginal note 'From Kraepelin's Psychiatrie - 1898'.*

SPECIMEN OF WRITING.—I, MANIA.

disorders, those of substance as well as those of form, are well shown in the accompanying specimen of writing. The number of documents produced by manic patients is some-

Emil Kraepelin, Manic-Depressive Psychosis (1920)



Emil Kraepelin, Manic-Depressive Psychosis (1920)




From sheer excess of emotion, I would burst into verse, of a quality not to be doubted [...] Before writing these lines I had never attempted verse in my life—barring intentionally inane doggerel. And, as I now judge these lines, it is probably true that even yet I have never written a poem. Nevertheless, my involuntary, almost automatic outburst is at least suggestive of the fervor that was in me. These fourteen lines were written within thirty minutes of the time I first conceived the idea; and I present them substantially as they first took form. From a psychological standpoint at least, I am told, they are not without interest.

— C. W. Beers, *A Mind That Found Itself*

## LIGHT

Man's darkest hour is the hour before he's born,  
Another is the hour just before the Dawn;  
From Darkness unto Life and Light he leaps,  
To Life but once,—to Light as oft as God wills he should.  
'Tis God's own secret, why  
Some live long, and others early die;  
For Life depends on Light, and Light on God,  
Who hath given to Man the perfect knowledge  
That Grim Despair and Sorrow end in Light;  
But not the Light Man knows,  
Which only is Light,  
Because God told Man so.



The part played by mental factors in certain kinds of failure in social adaptation has long been recognised. Society, in even its most primitive phases, has always been ready to modify its method of dealing with those in whom mental disease or mental defect is obviously responsible for difficulties in adaptation. Today, however, a general realisation is coming into existence that mental factors underlie not only inability to make a living and the gross disorders of conduct but all the social activities of man. Today we realise that human behaviour can be neither successfully studied nor effectively directed without taking into account the facts of mental life', providing a new linking, as it were, of the 'mechanisms of the mind' and the 'affairs of the individual and of society.

— *Mental Hygiene*, Vol. 1