

## THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF NURSES CONGRESS.

The following Paper by Miss Effie J. Taylor, was read at the I.C.N. Congress in Paris.

### THE OPPORTUNITY OF THE NURSING PROFESSION IN RELATION TO THE MENTAL HYGIENE MOVEMENT

BY

Effie J. Taylor, President National League of Nursing Education.

In reviewing the history of many of the great public welfare movements, one is impressed by the fact that they have been born of suffering and adversity.

One is impressed, also, with the fact, that many, if not all, great movements have been developed through the thinking of some fearless man or woman, made vital by doing as well as by thinking.

The mental hygiene movement is a most striking example of the thinking and doing of one brave man, Clifford Beers, who turned his own adversity and suffering with almost super human courage and persistence into a force so powerful that to-day its influence has penetrated into all the leading countries of the world and in consequence has changed the views of millions of people.

The twenty-fifth birthday of the founding of the mental hygiene movement occurred a few weeks ago, on May 6th of this year. As many of you are aware, the first memorable meeting was held in New Haven, Connecticut, on May 6th, 1908, and as a resident of that city and state, I feel it is a great honour to present in this anniversary year an interpretation of the opportunity of the nursing profession in relation to the mental hygiene movement.

The name of Clifford Beers is known in practically every country throughout the world. He has received many awards of merit through both governmental and educational auspices. The French Government in 1932 conferred upon him the Cross of Knight of the Legion of Honour "in recognition of his international work."

I do not remember that one of the Beatitudes in the Scriptures reads, Blessed are the sick, for they shall because of their infirmities, cause great things to come to pass and the world shall be abundantly blest because of them. Notwithstanding, it is significant that the infirmity of Clifford Beers has made him one of the world's great

benefactors and through him many other sufferers have been abundantly blessed and saved from enduring the hardships and calamities which marked his own distressing experiences.

The roads over which great movements travel are strangely similar and the sequence of events proceeds in somewhat logical order. The experience of an individual or group of individuals provides the starting point and the attitudes assumed to that experience determines to a significant degree the results which follow.

The personally distressing experiences of Mr. Beers during his three years of illness in both private and state institutions for the mentally ill have been translated, through his insight into the factors which made these experiences real, into one of the most distinguished and

vitaly important movements for the benefit of mankind. Clifford Beers graduated from Yale University in 1897. Twenty-five years later his Alma Mater conferred upon him the honorary degree of Master of Arts in recognition of his notable service to humanity. In presenting Mr. Beers for this degree, Professor William Lyon Phelps said, "His life has been filled with spiritual adventures. He is the author of a book apparently destined to become a classic, *A Mind that Found Itself*. In this, with unmatched eloquence of sincerity, he has described his terrific experiences in that obscure borderland beyond the bounds of sanity. On his return to the world of causation, instead of trying to forget his sufferings, he determined to use them for the benefit of mankind. Besides the extraordinary influence of his book, both in the field of literature and human helpfulness, Mr. Beers has laboured incessantly for the cause of mental hygiene. No explorer on land or sea has shown more inflexible courage than Mr. Beers in penetrating beyond the frontiers of orderly thought." When President Angell conferred the

honorary degree he said it was "for indomitable courage and devotion in turning to the enduring benefit of mankind experiences that have driven most sufferers to silence and seclusion."

The foregoing statements express the road over which great movements proverbially travel and the sequence of events which follows as experience made vital by insight, courage and devotion to ideals through far-reaching vision is translated into the promotion of facilities which can be turned to the practical advantage of those who otherwise would have continued to suffer.

The story related in the pages of *A Mind that Found*



MISS EFFIE J. TAYLOR,  
President, National League of Nursing Education, U.S.A.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)