

SHELL-SHOCKED NEW YORKERS

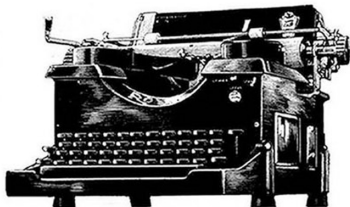
“PEACE SHELL-SHOCK” is the ailment from which New Yorkers suffer, according to Dr. Arthur P. Payne, psychoanalyst, and consulting psychologist of the City College of New York. In an address at the School of Opinion in Siasconset, Massachusetts, he recently psychoanalyzed New York. Peace shell-shock, said Dr. Payne, renders people restless, ambitious, and different. Under its influence, they build up fortunes, win world renown, commit murders, and enrich the producers of musical comedy. They catch the malady largely from rivets, and they don't know they've got it. As quoted by Jessie Henderson, in an article prepared for the Consolidated Press Association, Dr. Payne said:

“The New Yorker is a product of noise, the incessant noise of rushing traffic, whistles, and riveting-machines. Soldiers get war shell-shock; New Yorkers get peace shell-shock, a condition of nerves less obvious, but more insidious. It makes the New Yorker smoke more cigarets than any one else in the world, it eggs him on to splendid achievement, or shatters his morale, it keeps the speak-easies open, it builds sky-scrapers, and it makes a quiet evening at home with a book as rare on Manhattan as a buttercup on Broadway.

“Perhaps something will be done to muffle the rivets before long, but New York will always be noisy. By the same token, it will always be wet. You can't dry up New York, because the tired business man demands at the end of the day some release from reality; after eight hours packed with raucous hurry, he feels the necessity of being taken out of himself. So he drinks, he swallows a bromid, he goes to a musical comedy, he drops in at the movies or he breaks the conventions. He doesn't grow deaf, for the adaptability

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The Literary Digest
for
September 21, 1929
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usually leave the country districts for the city where their ambitions have a better chance to be satisfied. Look over a list of one hundred New Yorkers who have made a definite impression, financially or otherwise, upon national affairs. Almost the only outstanding New Yorker born within the city precincts is Al Smith.

"Peace shell-shock, you see, is not altogether harmful. The omnipresent noise reminds a New Yorker subconsciously that other men are rushing onward to success. It makes him rush too. And that's what makes New York."

of the human physiology is amazing, but he changes psychologically; sometimes for better, sometimes not.

"You hear much about the evils of liquor in New York. But you don't hear about the evils of drugs with which New Yorkers try to induce sleep. The habit of taking sleep-inducing drugs is a bigger danger to New Yorkers at present even than bootleg liquor. It is a danger both serious and wide-spread.

"Thousands find their release at the theater. Movies and plays of the lighter sort are invariably crowded in New York by people who are trying to forget that they live in New York, tho they wouldn't live anywhere else. The tired business man doesn't want Ibsen; the tired business man has had too much of real life during office hours. He wants to project himself into a Wild West movie, or be plunged into impossible romance by a musical revue. If it were not for the noise of Manhattan, Ziegfeld wouldn't be a rich man now.

"New York is a tonic to ambition, but it is hard on ideals. To the idealistic writer or artist it is often very cruel, gradually wearing down the courage and moral fiber of all but the strongest. For the ordinary man, it can do one of two things. It can satisfy his ego so that he will climb high; or it can give him a fatal inferiority complex. At one end of the curve stands the capitalist; at the other, the ruthless gangster.

"The gangster is not the least remarkable product of New York. In a country town, he might be a loafer, but he'd never be a professional killer. I am not afraid of an insane man, but I am afraid of the gangster. He suffers so acutely from a feeling of inferiority that he wants to kill some one in order to experience a thrill of power. A gangster is a weakling with an inferiority complex.

"The typical gangster is that anomaly which New Yorkers sometimes say doesn't exist; a native son of New York City. For New York is owned, run, built, and inhabited by people from the country towns. State-wide tests have proved that the average of intelligence in country districts is invariably lower than that in cities. It isn't because no intelligent people are born in country districts, but because the more intelligent people usually leave the country districts for the city where their ambitions have a better chance to be satisfied. Look over a list of one hundred New Yorkers who have made a definite impression, financially or otherwise, upon national affairs. Almost the only outstanding New Yorker born within the city precincts is Al Smith.

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