

# THE SUBWAY CRUSH CAUSES MENTAL STRAIN.

WHEN one fights his way in or out of a Subway car in the rush hours the momentary discomfort of the struggle may not be its most serious effect. Apart from the mere physical strain or the possible menace to life and limb there is likely to be a distinct mental influence, which in many cases may lead to serious disorders. The psychological effect of this overcrowding is explained by Dr. Carlos F. MacDonald, the expert in nervous disorders, whose experience in such cases has been very general.

"The Subway crush may be set down as a serious, exciting cause," said Dr. MacDonald. "There can be no doubt that this mental strain has an exceedingly injurious effect upon many people. Taken in connection with other influences, it may develop very serious mental disorders. There is an unconscious mental strain in the overcrowding and physical effort, which we may not realize at the moment, but which later, if continued, will be certain to make itself felt.

"We have all had the experience and can testify as to the physical discomfort of these rush hours. I have found myself literally fighting my way through the crowd in the cars for several minutes

before the station is reached, and repeating the struggle in making my way through the crowd on the platforms.

"The sensation of being wedged in so tightly, while the train swings back and forth, again, is bad as regards one's mental as well as physical health. One uses up mental energy very rapidly at such a time.

"It is conceivable that a certain type of men or women would expend as much mental energy in these hours on the Subway as during an entire working day. Coming as does this strain, after a day's work, its influence is likely to be the more serious.

"The problem is peculiar to New York.

In London, for instance, there is great congestion in the streets, the crowds are astonishing, but there is less mental energy exerted than in New York.

"The English take things in a more leisurely manner. Our working hours are longer, we move more rapidly. The Subway crush is an exaggerated phase of the so-called American spirit of rush and hurry. Its effect upon the tissues at the end of a day's work, and particularly if the subject be especially nervous, cannot be foreseen.

"Many foreigners on first visiting New York," for instance, remark the peculiar and abnormal set expression of the faces. It is pointed out again that a large pro-

portion of New Yorkers talk to themselves on the streets, and that this is an evidence of a highly nervous condition. The large percentage of insanity cases in New York and their increase in recent years has been attributed to this overstimulated atmosphere.

"On the other hand, we learn to adjust ourselves to very trying conditions. As the Subway crush becomes a habit its injurious influence, for most of us, becomes less serious. One can become accustomed to almost anything.

"According to the statistics, insanity is increasing in New York. It must be remembered, however, that many people are pronounced insane to-day who were allowed their liberty in the past.

"There are many factors to be considered, and the subject is a very complicated one. It is impossible to point to this case of paresis or to some other form of insanity and say that the sufferers are victims of the Subway crush. But the mental strain of riding under such conditions for an hour or more a day constitutes undoubtedly a seriously exciting cause which in connection with other injurious influences, such as an hereditary taint, for instance, may have ~~more grave effects.~~