

THE poet sings somewhere of "divine discontent"; and in some cases it is a positive duty to be discontented. The contented person never does anything or gets anywhere; and in some people a contented nature is but an indication of slackness, inertia, and lack of energy and ambition. The great reformers, inventors, discoverers, and explorers were all discontented people—discontented with the world as they found it.

There is, however, discontent and discontent. One is the noble quality which urges men and women on to try to leave the world better than they found it—the "divine discontent" of which the poet wrote. The other is petty, sordid, and ignoble; and, so far from being divine, seems to have a directly opposite origin. This is the discontent with circumstances and surroundings which affects so many modern women, and is concerned solely with material things. The woman who is discontented with her home, with her clothes, with her circumstances generally is now a far more familiar figure in the world than in bygone days. How she would have shocked our mothers! Not so very many years ago it was thought "wicked" to be discontented with one's lot. To-day the very opposite obtains, and many women deem it the sign of a proper spirit to be dissatisfied and grumbling, and spend their days in envying other and luckier women their possessions. For it will be observed that it is always possessions—material things—that are the subject of discontent. The discontented

wife does not say: "I wish I had a disposition like Norah's." No; she says, "I wish I had a sable coat like Norah's."

IT is always luxuries that the discontented wife craves for; and it is a sign of the times that the modern woman has lost all sense of proportion. In place of "cutting her coat according to her cloth," she is desirous of everything that she sees other women enjoying, regardless of the fact that the other women's social and financial positions may be far superior to hers. All sense of value is lost, and women wish to be on a level as regards clothes, amusements, and holidays with the wives of men with ten times the incomes of their husbands.

It is beyond contradiction that this is the attitude of many wives of to-day: an intense and bitter envy of people who are luckier, or a sullen discontent with their own lot in life. What, then, is the explanation of this position? It is so different from the attitude of women of the earlier part of this century, when a "treat" was a thing to be eagerly anticipated and happily discussed afterwards—not an essential part of the day's routine. Modern women take everything for granted,

and demand a life of hectic pleasure—so-called—as their right and just due.

THE habit of reckless pleasure-seeking, regardless of all consequences—moral, social, and financial—has become too strong. Women do not wish to forgo their enjoyments, in spite of the fact that circumstances are entirely changed.

The whole standard of living has changed; the luxuries of yesterday are the necessities of to-day. The ordinary middle-class wife was content to go out for the evening now and then; to-day she is inclined to demand a dance, a theatre, or a dinner every week. There is a constant craving for change, for amusement, for excitement at any cost. This has an effect on the nerves, which cannot fail to be disastrous in the long run. Late hours, constant excitement, and an atmosphere of alcohol and tobacco combine to act with toxic effect upon the nervous system. The effect is soon seen in the lined and weary face, the constant headaches, and the uncertainty and irritability of temper which mark the woman who is "fond of life," as the sardonic phrase goes.

These, alas, are not the only evils

which lie in wait for the discontented, pleasure-seeking woman. Given up to depression, and that nervous irritability which is so often the aftermath of the feverish pursuit of pleasure, she finds her powers of resistance are lowered, and she becomes an easy prey to disease. Illness and even premature death—certainly premature old age—lie in wait for the discontented woman.

AS regards premature old age, there is nothing so inimical to the preservation of youth as discontent, worry, and pessimism. It stamps its brand upon the face, in the drooping mouth, the lack-lustre eyes, and the lines which quickly etch themselves upon the skin of the discontented woman. It is a fact that contentment and mental satisfaction act like sunshine on the body, prolonging life and keeping old age at bay. A woman whose will-power has not been weakened by continual self-indulgence is also enabled to throw off an illness more quickly than the peevish, discontented woman; and she has likewise more capacity for resistance to the attacks of disease.

Worry is a great shortener of life; and the woman who continually frets because she is not as well off as the people whose pictures she sees in the daily illustrated papers will never make old bones. The mind has a greater influence on the body than many people imagine; and the heart, the blood-vessels, and the breathing are easily affected by the emotions. Hence the pallor and

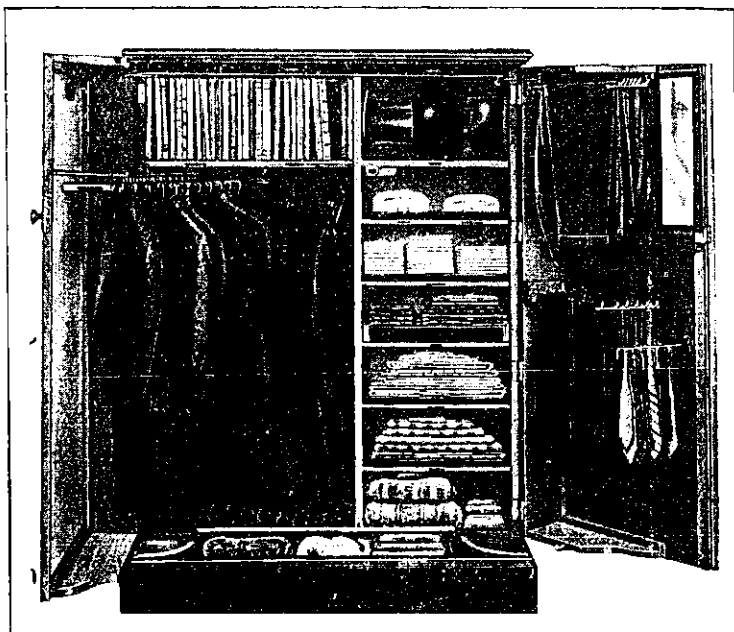
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