

4 THE NERVOUS HOUSEWIFE

Is the average man's impression the correct one? Or are we dealing with the incorrigible disposition of man to glorify the past? To the majority of people their youth was an era of stronger, braver men, more wholesome, beautiful women. People were better, times were more natural, and there is a grim satisfaction in predicting that the "world is going to the dogs." "The good old days" has been the cry of man from the very earliest times.

Yet read what a contemporary of the housewife of three quarters of a century ago says,—the wisest, wittiest, sanest doctor of the day, Oliver Wendell Holmes. The genial autocrat of the breakfast table observes: "Talk about military duty! What is that to the warfare of a married maid of all work, with the title of mistress and an American female constitution which collapses just in the middle third of life, comes out vulcanized India rubber, if it happens to live through the period when health and strength are most wanted?"

And then, if one looks in the advertisements of half a century ago, one finds the nostrum dealer loudly proclaiming his capacity to cure