

10 THE NERVOUS HOUSEWIFE

This industrial period of a girl's life is important psychologically, for it profoundly influences her reaction to her status and work as homekeeper.

Of even greater importance to our study than the influence of the factory is the rise of what is known as feminism. Of all the living creatures in the world the female of the human species has been the most down-trodden, for to every wretched class of man there was a still inferior, more wretched group, their wives. She was a slave to the slaves, a dependent of the abjectly poor. When men passed through the stage where woman's life might be taken at a whim, she remained a creature without rights of the wider kind. Men debated whether she had a soul, made cynical proverbs about her, called her the "weaker vessel," and debarred her from political and economic equality, classing her up to this very moment in rights with the idiot, the imbecile, and the criminal. Worse than this, they gave her a spurious homage, created a lop-sided chivalry, and caused her to accept as her ideal goal of womanhood the achievement of beauty and the entrance into wifedom. After they tied