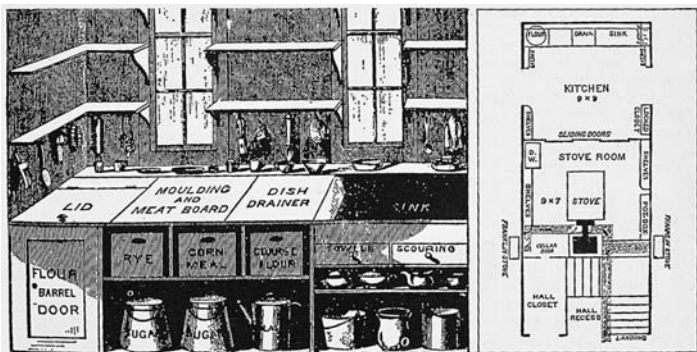


## Catherine Beecher

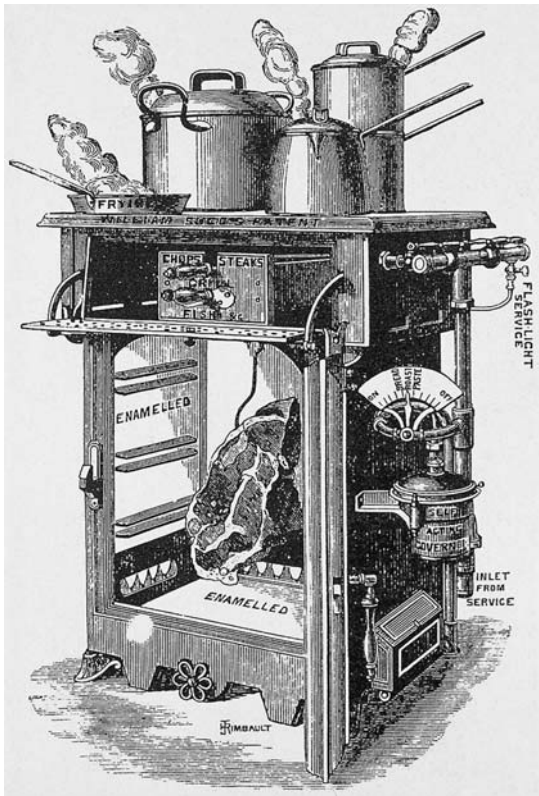
Alongside these early technological innovations, society was changing fast due to the advent of the industrial revolution which provided work for country girls who would otherwise have gone into service for middle class families. These social trends were recognised in America by a truly remarkable woman called Catherine Beecher (sister of Harriet Beecher Stowe). She was a reformer and early feminist. In 1841 she published a *Treatise on Domestic Economy*, which was a text book for girls schools which met with great success. She blamed many women's disappointments on the fact that they were not trained for their profession. She also remarked on the paradox of having servants in a democratic society, and suggested that housework should be divided up amongst members of the family. In 1869, she wrote *The American Woman's Home* in which, with amazing foresight, she proposed a kitchen where the central table and isolated dresser have disappeared. Instead she has a row of compact working surfaces arranged at waist height along the wall, properly lit by windows. To avoid discomfort in the hot American summers and because, unlike in Europe, bread was still mainly baked at home, the range was positioned in a separate room divided from the preparation area by sliding doors.



Kitchen layout advised by Catherine Beecher in 1869

## Gas cooking

Gas cookers were invented in the first decade of the nineteenth century but were not in general use until 1850. At first they were regarded with great suspicion – people feared explosions, poisoning or food tasting of gas. To begin with they were used in hotels and institutions, but it was not until 1924 that an oven regulator or thermostat appeared which made possible, for the first time, the accurate control of the temperature of the oven. The other great advantage was that the gas cooker did not need a flue, so could be placed anywhere within a room, even in a room without a fireplace.



Charing Cross gas kitchener c. 1850